

## How To Win a War by Dan Jacoby

Going back over the various wars the United States has fought, a glaring fact stands out. Every war that began by someone else attacking us (regardless of provocation), or an ally whom we went to war to protect, we won. Every war that began with the United States attacking someone else, we lost. Specifically:

- The American Revolution truly began with the battles of Lexington and Concord, in which British “regulars” marched north from Boston to capture “rebel” supplies.
- The War of 1812 may be the silliest war in American history. In theory, this war was caused by British capture of American merchant ships; in fact, things are far messier. But there is no doubt that the British not only captured American merchant vessels in violation of international law (such as it was), but also impressed American sailors into British service, an intolerable situation.
- The Mexican-American war was primarily about Texas, and again there was provocation on both sides. The first military action, however, occurred on April 24, 1846, when a large Mexican cavalry force attacked a small American patrol.
- The U.S. Civil War officially began when South Carolina forces attacked Fort Sumter.
- The Spanish-American War began with the destruction of the U.S.S. Maine on February 15, 1898. There is a lot of debate over who actually blew up the battleship. (William Randolph Hearst’s famous line, “You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war,” indicates a yearning for war regardless of the reason.) The fact is, however, that we were attacked by someone.
- Our entry into World War I was not precipitated by the sinking of the H.M.S. Lusitania, as so many people believe. By the time President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war, nearly two years later, German naval forces had sunk several American merchant ships (the Lusitania was a British ship). In addition, the German High Command was proven to be plotting with Mexico to invade the United States.
- We entered World War II after the Japanese bombed our naval base at Pearl Harbor.
- The Korean War began on June 25, 1950, when North Korean forces crossed the line at 38° North latitude (the “38<sup>th</sup> parallel”). Our mission in Korea was to drive them back above that line, and we succeeded.
- The beginning of the Vietnam War is exceedingly difficult to determine. It is certain that the early actions were taken by South Vietnamese “President” Ngo Dinh Diem against Communists in the country. When Diem and his brother were executed, things fell apart so quickly that it is impossible to tell who attacked whom. All that is certain is that we lost that war.
- The “Gulf War” was started with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein invaded neighboring Kuwait. We went to war to remove his forces from Kuwait, and were successful.
- The “war in Bosnia” was fought to stop genocides occurring throughout the Baltic region. It was so successful that not one American life was lost.

Which brings us to the current occupation of Iraq. The original reasons for invading that country, that they were linked to al Qaeda and the attacks of 9/11, and that they were developing “weapons of mass destruction,” proved false. In other words, we started this war for no reason at all.

No wonder we can’t win this one.