

Why the United States Has Already Lost the War

In his best selling book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, historian Paul Kennedy looked at continental and colonial empire's from the year 1500 to the present. From the Habsburgs and Spain to Napoleon and Great Britain, he found they all had two things in common. First, they all had a source of great wealth which they used to expand their domain. Second, they all over-extended themselves militarily even as that wealth was being exhausted.

In 1956, the United States Military Academy at West Point published a book entitled *Summaries of Selected Military Campaigns*. One of the campaigns they looked at was Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. Although Napoleon was able to take Moscow, he was eventually forced to retreat because his supply lines were over extended. The *Summaries'* conclusions:

"Results of the Russian Campaign

This campaign contributed to Napoleon's ultimate downfall by:

1. Exhausting the French reservoir of men and material.
2. Destroying the nucleus of trained officers and soldiers.
3. Strengthening and uniting as enemies those nations which were only waiting for the signs of weakness in the French Empire."

After the end of the Cold War, the United States reaped a peace dividend which helped spur economic growth both here and abroad. Budget deficits were eliminated and surpluses allowed us to work down the debt while providing services to those in need. But now the surpluses are gone and programs are cut back, including schools and health care. Just mobilizing for war has disrupted the economy while draining money from worthwhile projects. The billions already spent on bombs and other weapons are gone forever. Meanwhile, nations from Turkey to the Philippines are already turning down our requests to base troops, refusing to be bullied or bought.

If President Bush orders an attack on Iraq without the support of the United Nations, it will mark the beginning of the end of the United States as a great power. Like Napoleon in Moscow, he might well take Baghdad, but will be surrounded by enemies of his own making and ultimately forced to retreat at great cost.

These are the practical reasons for avoiding war. We will lose, if we have not lost already.