

astrological-cultural-spiritual-political
views & commentary...

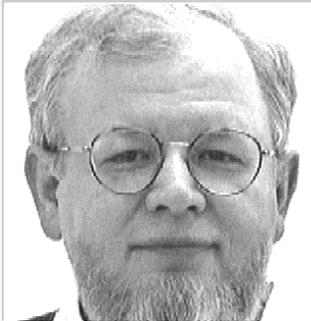
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THE HERBST NEWSLETTER



Thoughts, dates, & reminders about our lives as members of the craziest species on this lovely planet. Like a message in a bottle washing up on the sandy shores of consciousness...

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Dear friends,

Anyone who has read these newsletters over the past months knows where I stand on war. I'm against it, flat-out. On the scale of doing good versus doing harm, war inevitably ends up on the extreme end of harm. There is no such thing as a "good" war. The price is always catastrophic, measured in almost any terms we can conceive. Tragically, however, war remains an inevitable fact of human affairs, given the sorry state of our species' current evolution.

As I repeat over and over, life is bigger than astrology. Because it is a system of pure symbolism, astrology is insufficient to accurately predict future events in real life. What we can't know about life always outweighs whatever we know or think we know. Prediction, therefore, is a risky business, especially where collective events are concerned. Despite every human system of understanding and interpreting reality, life remains infinitely mysterious.

Astrology does extraordinarily well, however, at revealing the tone of vibrational energies flowing through our individual and collective lives, as well as the areas where that energy will likely manifest and the timing for when and how those expressions will change shape.

So, given life's uncertainties, what can astrology tell us about the shadow of apparently impending war? This newsletter lays out the extended timeline for what I've been writing about since last August. I don't claim to know what will happen, but here's what I've been looking at these past months.

THE TIMELINE OF CONFLICT

1. The Cauldron of Heaven (July-August 2002)

Sun conjunct Mars—exact 10 Aug (15 July-2 Sept)
Sun oppose Uranus—exact 20 Aug (12-28 Aug)
Mars oppose Uranus—exact 24 Aug (12 Aug-4 Sept)

These three astrological events are quite commonplace when they happen separately, but their simultaneous alignment in the fixed signs of Leo and Aquarius in August, 2000, had not occurred for more than 1,000 years. Considered individually, they trigger the potential for aggression, belligerence, or radical upheavals. Taken together as a single, extraordinarily rare alignment, however, the configuration symbolizes something altogether more extreme and sinister, namely, the gestation of a virtual pressure cooker of

willful passions that well up from the collective unconscious and evolve toward violent expression over a 1-2 year period.

During July, 2002, the Bush administration privately formalizes plans to overturn the regime of Saddam Hussein. August sees the first public disclosures from Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld about a war with Iraq through a preemptive American invasion to disarm that mideast nation of “weapons of mass destruction.”

2. War Rumbblings and Initial Opposition (September-October 2002)

Sun conjunct Venus and square Neptune—exact 31 Oct (23 Oct-8 Nov)

Venus square Neptune—exact 19 Sept (d), 30 Oct (rx), 14 Dec (d)

September fans the flames of aggression as pressure builds. Congress caves during October with a joint resolution giving the President a free hand to invade Iraq at his discretion. Democrats are then crushed in the national election, emboldening the Republican agenda. As Venus and Neptune enter the picture, however, the United Nations expresses doubts about America’s unilateral stance. Germany protests by electing a socialist government that disavows American imperialism. A global peace movement also begins to grow, though it is given almost no coverage in the corporate-controlled American media.

3. The Hardening of Intentions (November 2002)

Sun square Uranus—exact 17 November (9-25 Nov)

President Bush responds to challenges to his authority by stubbornly digging in his heels. While promises are made concerning “proof” of Iraqi violations, the Bush administration uses its political and economic power to apply pressure to the UN Security Council. By mid-November, the die is cast. If the UN approves Bush’s plan, fine. If not, Bush will go it alone with American military might—a classic Sun-Uranus standoff. Ideologically entrenched positions are a hallmark of this entire period in world affairs.

4. The Cauldron Simmers (December 2002-January 2003)

Mercury Retrograde—(17 Dec-22 Jan)

Mars square Uranus—exact 12 January (30 Dec-19 Jan)

Military deployments accelerate. Troops, ships, supplies, and armaments are sent overseas as plans for the invasion of Iraq are urgently stepped up (Mars-Uranus). The Mercury retrograde occurring in this period keeps much of these developments clouded or in limbo by the intrusion of new factors (North Korea and the UN discussion) that complicate strategy, stir debate, and force delays.

5. A Contradictory Crossroads (February 2003)

Sun conjunct Uranus—exact 17 February (9-25 Feb)

Mars conjunct Pluto—exact 16 February

Mars oppose Saturn—exact 20 February

Throughout the previous months, the media first predicted an American military invasion in January, then later shifted the timetable to February. Astrologically, however, a major attack in this midwinter time period is unlikely. Uranus’ prominence indicates unexpected and mounting resistance to war, in part through massive grassroots peace demonstrations around the world, but even more because of the stubborn refusal of foreign governments to go along, especially NATO allies in Europe. Contention over strategy—war or containment?—does not prevent down-and-dirty haggling over the price our allies demand for their support and cooperation.

6. The Final Countdown (March 2003)

New Moon—2 March; Full Moon—18 March

The March new and full moons represent the last stage of the conflict between preparations for war and resistance to the use of violent force. Venus is strong in both charts (unaspected at the new moon and the release of the grand cross at the full moon), so last-minute efforts to maintain peace and avert war are likely. The full moon chart, however, shows Mars in Capricorn nearly unaspected, except for an exact and potent inconjunct to Jupiter, which cuts both ways, indicating that aggression is delayed by issues of legality but fueled by righteous (or self-righteous) justifications for action.

My sense of the astrology here is that full-scale hostilities won't break out in early March because the Sun is not yet square Mars (see #7 below). Pragmatically, the huge task of massing forces—troops, munitions, and supplies—may require more time for readiness. The full moon on March 18th is the fulcrum. Past that date, the balance tips increasingly toward action.

7. The Cauldron Boils (late March-early May 2003)

*Sun square Mars—exact 18 April (28 Mar-6 May)
Mercury Retrograde—(12 Apr-20 May)*

Astrology holds that the beginnings of cycles generate passionate feeling, but that the plans stimulated by those feelings do not take full concrete form in physical manifestation until the first-quarter phase shift, when the two bodies in the unfolding cycle reach an arc of 90° (called a 'square'). It's as if the emotions finally cure and harden, like ceramics in a kiln furnace, and then push into external reality. The Sun-Mars cycle that began in August of 2002 comes to that first-quarter point here, between March 28th and May 6th. The precise date of the angular transition is April 18th. Those six weeks are the peak crisis, when push comes to shove. Something has to give.

Late March through early May is the most potent astrological timing for the full shift from preparations and threats to outright hostilities, where the aggressive energies first generated last summer finally explode into full expression. Diplomacy falters, and outbursts of intense violence can be expected from this point on.

Another Mercury retrograde brings unforeseen elements of uncertainty starting in mid-April, however, with backfiring strategies and unpredicted outcomes. The situation may be dramatically fluid, careening from crisis to crisis on a week by week basis.

8. The BIG Surprise (June-October 2003)

*Mars conjunct Uranus—exact 23 June (5 June-29 Oct)
Mars Retrograde—setup 18 June-29 July, retro 29 July-27 Sept
Sun oppose Mars—exact 29 August (22 Aug-4 Sept)*

No matter what happens during the spring, the summer is the most unpredictable wild-card period. Mars enters the setup phase of its retrograde on June 18th, then conjuncts Uranus on June 23rd in early Pisces. At the end of July, Mars goes retrograde for two months, returning to direct motion on September 28th less than one degree away from another conjunction with Uranus. In the middle of this long period, the Sun opposes Mars on August 29th, indicating the culmination of what began a year earlier and inflaming possibilities for belligerent conflict even further. Astrologically, that is a very complex four months containing sudden eruptions alternating with long lulls. Apparent resolutions could give way to unforeseen new conflicts.

The entire summer into the fall represents the reaping of what was sown in the cauldron of radical and aggressive energies brewing since July-August of 2002. One way or another, we should see the tangible results all the arguments, plans, and passions—for better or for worse—whether in the triumphs of renewed diplomacy or through the horrors of escalating warfare.

Beyond the sense of culmination, however, astrology suggests that the specific nature of events in this time period are—by definition—unpredictable. Once again, life will prove mysterious.



Quotes of the Month:

"You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake."

—Jeanette Rankin

*"There is nothing that war has ever achieved
that we could not better achieve without it."*

—Henry Havelock Ellis

*"Men like war: they do not hold much sway over birth, so they make up for it
with death. Unlike women, men menstruate by shedding other people's blood."*

—Lucy Ellman

*“The direct use of force is such a poor solution to any problem,
it is generally employed only by small children and large nations.”*
—David Friedman

*“Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary.
What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless,
whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism
or the holy name of liberty or democracy?”*
—M. K. Gandhi

*“Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified,
is not a crime.”*
—Ernest Hemingway

*“War will exist until that distant day when the conscientious objector
enjoys the same reputation and prestige that the warrior does today.”*
—John F. Kennedy

*“We have war when at least one of the parties to a conflict
wants something more than it wants peace.”*
—Jeanne J. Kirkpatrick

“War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.”
—Thomas Mann

“When the rich wage war, it’s the poor who die.”
—Jean-Paul Sartre

*“I’m fed up to the ears with old men dreaming up wars
for young men to die in.”*
—Senator George McGovern

*“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired,
signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed,
those who are cold and are not clothed.”*
—Dwight D. Eisenhower

*“Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war
than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.”*
—General Omar Bradley

“If we let people see that kind of thing, there would never again be any war.”
—Pentagon official, (on why the U.S. military
censored graphic footage from the Gulf War)

“All war is deception.”
—Sun Tzu



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