

Where next for the USA? A Cosmic Handover

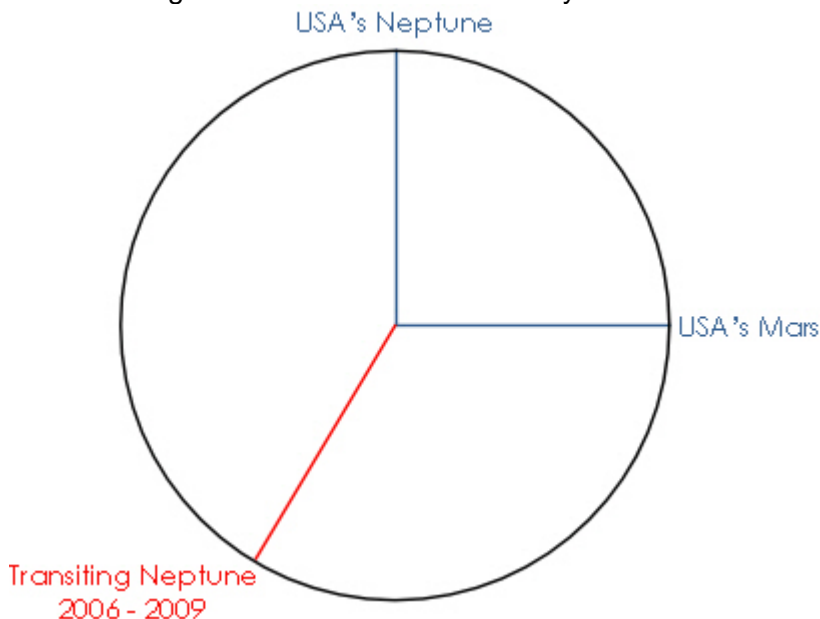
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While the USA and its allies say they have handed over sovereignty in Afghanistan and Iraq, there is an astrological handover taking place between Pluto and Neptune. This is a major challenge for the USA during the next four years.

About Pluto and Neptune

These two planets have a lot in common: they are both about surrendering to a higher power; they are both about re-discovering, respecting, and living from so-called 'feminine values'; they are both about transcending the ego's battles and weaknesses, flaws and wars, thirsts and hungers, and washing away the old self.

When aspecting Mars they bring all this into the sphere of the 'male ego' and the warring self. The 'yang' meets the 'yin' during these transits. Wherever the yang is excessive, the challenge is greater - and more urgent - to re-balance it with the yin.



The so-called 'war on terror' is an excessively yang project, and it is arguable that the USA's national culture is excessively yang too, because it elevates competition and 'every man for himself' above other ways of life, and above other human values.

When some people say that 'everything changed on 11th September 2001', did it really? There does not seem to be anything new in these wars. In fact, history seems to be repeating itself, time and time again. Are we ready to try something new?

Handing Over from Pluto to Neptune

On a material level, both Pluto and Neptune are to do with resources that can be dug out of the Earth. Pluto is associated with anything that provides power and wealth. Neptune is associated with oil and gas, as well as water. As they say in the USA, 'you do the math(s)'.

Transiting Pluto: Opposing Mars, squaring Neptune

During 2006 the transit of Pluto to the USA's Mars comes to a close. This closing period takes place from around June to approximately November, with August and particularly September being the peak times (Pluto will station and change direction during August/September). This is the phase when the USA needs to make a major turnaround in the use of its Martian energy.

This transit has been within orb since March 2003 when the invasion of Iraq began. The evidence to date shows that the USA is using the energy of this transit along the path of least resistance. It is a textbook Pluto-Mars transit: monstrous aggression, killing, wounding, torturing, raping, bullying, dominating, controlling, manipulating, abusing power.

Transiting Neptune: Trining Mars, quincunxing Neptune

The USA is now moving into a new phase of growth. The lessons to be learned are changing from Plutonic to Neptunian. The theme remains, however, one of surrender to a higher power. What is increasing is the need to uncover peace, to bring salvation, to encourage compassion, to uplift rather than tear down.

There are still risks: Neptune transits are associated with deceit, falseness, illusions, charades, scandals. They correlate with undermining and/or being undermined, and with globalising, spreading, making all-pervading the planet which is aspected by transit. The victim/persecutor theme runs through Neptune transits every bit as much as it does through Pluto transits. The difference is that where Pluto breaks down to break through, walking through the fires of hellish nightmares towards renewal, Neptune instead drowns the ego, washing away its attachments, dissipating its structures and eroding its sense of safety and security, and wearing down resistance like a dripping tap.

The experience of Pluto is usually quite dramatic and explosive, extremist and radical. Neptune's experience is more one of slowly ebbing away, leaking, going under, losing consciousness, numbing out, anaesthetising, drifting off course, being pulled under by tidal currents, lured onto rocks by siren songs. In place of Pluto's 'rape and pillage' is Neptune's false hopes raised and dashed, false promises made and betrayed, saviours and redeemers turning out to be frauds and cheats. The potential for certain visions - e.g. the USA government's vision of 'full-spectrum dominance', its idea that 'our global hegemony is good for the world', and its desire to be able to 'engage the enemy' in 'multiple theatres of war' simultaneously - to intensify is certainly there.

Enough of the negative. What is the positive potential of this transit?

Potential for Redemption

At its highest level there is the possibility of redemption. The sacrifice of the ego's conflicts can allow a healing salve to be applied. A wellspring of compassion can arise, understanding can begin, inclusiveness can take root and flower. What is envisioned can be enacted, it does not have to be a sham. What is hoped for can be done, it does not have to be delusion. The light can be switched back on, rather than turning the dimmer switch further towards the 'off' setting. Where there has been war, there can be peace. The dream can be put into action. But as the famous film title tells us, something's got to give.

Both Pluto and Neptune ask that we give up something. Usually stubborn pride and the desire to save face get in the way. The ego resists. The habits of a lifetime die hard. When these planets transit Mars what must be given up is the addiction to fight-or-flight, win-or-lose, 'with us or against us', do-or-die,

'my way or the highway', 'I'm the king of the castle'. Is the USA ready to do that?

Where on Earth?

Transits can be mapped onto the Earth. When we map Neptune onto the Earth from 2006 to 2009, from the USA's point of view, where do we find it? It runs in a straight vertical line down through the area around Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan.

During the earlier part of Neptune's trine to Mars (2006-2008), transiting Saturn will be opposite Neptune and therefore also aspecting Mars. This Saturn-Neptune opposition will, for the USA, encompass Iran and Afghanistan and the areas directly north and south of those countries.

Later on (2008-2009), Neptune will still be highlighting the Afghanistan area but Saturn will have moved on, across India, and will be opposing Uranus. From the USA's point of view, this Saturn-Uranus opposition will be 'earthed' in China and the Burma/Thailand/Vietnam area.

Neptune Transit Dates: 2006 to 2009

Using an orb of 3 degrees, transiting Neptune will be trine to the USA's natal Mars from 7th March 2006 until 24th December 2009.

At various points during that nearly 4-year period the transit will peak. At other points it will lessen in intensity, but throughout this period the themes will be in play. Experience shows that a 3 degree orb is most useful, and so the table below gives dates accordingly, however the 'within 1 degree orb' dates are also included because they often correlate with the most intense period of change and the concomitant resistance to and struggle with the changes taking place.

The 2006 phase is an introductory period, but because it coincides with the final phase of the Pluto opposition to Mars, and Pluto's change of direction, it is likely to be quite intense. This is the planetary handover period.

During 2007 Neptune is within 1 degree, and stations within that 1 degree orb. This is likely to be very intense and perhaps chaotic, depending on how the transit is 'lived' up until that point. 2008 has a similar period towards the end of the year. 2009 is the closing phase.

(NB some astrologers only use 1 degree orbs for transits and so will tell you that this transit does not start until 2007 and ends in 2008 - watch how things unfold and see for yourself!)

2006	
7th March	Neptune moves within 3 degrees of the trine to Mars
22nd May	Neptune turns retrograde within orb of trine to Mars
12th August	Neptune retrogrades out of the 3 degree orb
2007	
8th January	Neptune moves within 3 degrees of the trine to Mars
4th March	Neptune moves within 1 degree of orb of trine to Mars
5th April	Neptune exactly trines Mars for the first time
25th May	Neptune turns retrograde within orb of trine to Mars
16th July	Neptune exactly trines Mars for the second time

23rd August	Neptune moves out of 1 degree orb of trine to Mars
31st October	Neptune turns direct within orb of trine to Mars
2008	
4th January	Neptune moves within 1 degree orb again
2nd February	Neptune exactly trines Mars for the third time
28th February	Neptune moves out of 1 degree orb
26th May	Neptune turns retrograde within 3 deg's of trine to Mars
2nd September	Neptune moves within 1 degree orb again
2nd November	Neptune turns direct within 1 deg. orb of trine to Mars
30th December	Neptune moves out of 1 degree orb for the last time
2009	
24th February	Neptune moves out of the 3 degree orb
13th September	Neptune retrogrades back within the 3 degree orb
4th November	Neptune turns direct within orb of trine to Mars
24th December	Neptune moves out of the 3 degree orb for the last time

NB Despite containing a lot of information, this table is a simplified version of the transits to the USA's Mars during these years. Space precludes a full treatment of them, so this table focuses on the major movements of transiting Neptune.

The themes of the transit will probably play out on various levels; transits usually do that. These levels can be subtle, such as social, intellectual and cultural, or they can be in areas such as the economy or the military. Political policies and debates are likely to centre on these issues too, fluctuating as the transit reaches its turning points and other key dates. Concrete events might take place that incorporate the issues that the nation will be working through.

Most astrologers consider that the more people consciously work through the issues being raised, the more it is likely that the transit can be experienced as a positive developmental and even evolutionary period, rather than as unsettling, anxiety-producing, or chaotic.

Taking the initiative by willingly letting go of the desire to make war and seeking to put peace into action, in accordance with Neptunian watery symbolism, is generally seen as a beneficial way to flow with this transit and make the most of it. The choice remains, however, ours.

Neptune poses the question: sink or swim? But only we can respond with the answer.