

The March to War: Was September 11 2001 the Start of World War III?

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The tragic attacks of September 11, 2001 have resulted in almost ten years of perpetual war. September 11, 2001 was the first drum beats, or the opening salvos, of a much wider conflict. The deployment of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan has secured a bridgehead into the Eurasian Heartland, which is geographically positioned on or near the borders of Iran, China, India, Pakistan, Russia, and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

Was Afghanistan the starting battle of a global war? The invasion of Afghanistan can be compared to the landing of the Western Allies, specifically the Americans, in North Africa as a bridgehead into Italy and Europe. At the same time NATO has been pushing from Europe towards the Eurasian Heartland, like the landing of the invading forces of the Western Allies in France.

Was September 11th, 2001 the start of the Third World War?

Historically speaking, it should be noted that distinctions between times of war and peace are not always clear-cut and conflicts do not always correspond to the dates set and standardized by historians. War was not even declared in the cases of many past conflicts, such as in the early 1700s when Augustus II of Saxony-Poland invaded Livonia or when Frederick IV of Denmark invaded Holstein-Gottorp. Also, in the cases of many conflicts, attempts were always made to cloak or hide the nature of the conflict as being a war or an act of aggression. The Romans and other imperial powers regularly engaged in this type of conduct.

Examples in history are the abstract chronological dates customarily used by historians to note important points in the Second World War and the start of the Cold War. In Western Europe and North America, the starting date for World War II is considered to be September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland. For the former Czechoslovakia, March 16, 1939 (the date Germany invaded Czechoslovakia) was the starting date for the Second World War. In Russia and the former U.S.S.R. the start date of the Second World War is 1941, the date the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Even the end date for World War II in Europe is different, because Germany officially surrendered to the Western Allies (namely the U.S., Britain, and France) on May 8, 1945 and to the Soviet Union on May 9, 1945.

The above dates are all set from an ethnocentric European perspective, which leaves out Asia. The history of World War II starts much earlier in Asia. Many consider the start of the Second World War to have been when Japan invaded China in the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, two years before 1939. Even before 1937, since 1931 the Chinese and Japanese

were in conflict and 1931 too can be seen as the start of World War II.

The various dates and events for the start of the Cold War also vary, because of the identification of various events as the Cold War's opening salvo(s). The 1945 American-Soviet tensions over the occupation of the Korean Peninsula, the Azerbaijan Crisis (1947-1948) arising from the Soviet occupation of Iranian provinces, the near wins for the communists in national elections held in France and Italy (1947-1948), the struggle for power between the communists and the non-communists in Czechoslovakia (1947-1948), and the West Berlin Blockade (1948-1949) are also viewed as starting dates for the Cold War. Even events taking place during the Second World War, such as the Yalta Conference, the Tehran Conference, and the dropping of the atom bomb on the Japanese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by President Harry Truman as a threat to the Soviets (about U.S. supremacy in the post-war order) are considered as the starting dates of the Cold War.

This question about dates also gives rise to another point in historiography. The nature of history is seamless and not the arbitrary one unintentionally made out by historians and history textbooks. One set of events leads to another. Just as how the First World War led to the Second World War and the Second World War led to the Cold War, the Cold War has led to the "Global War on Terrorism."

The point is that in retrospect, historical dates and events are defined by people in the future and that sometimes people need to stand back to see the bigger picture.

The NATO and Anglo-American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq are clearly tied to September 11, 2001. These events are also related to the military threats directed against Iran and Syria, the tensions in Lebanon and East Africa, as well as U.S. and NATO threats directed against China and Russia. In this regard, the historians of the future may say that World War III could have started on September 11, 2001 or that the tragic events on September 11, 2001 were a prelude to World War III.

Revelations from the U.S. Media on the Dawn of the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War: Are We in a World War?

As a note on the subject of whether World War III is currently being waged, the U.S. media watchdog *Media Matters for America* made a note that much of the mainstream media was touting that the U.S. was in the midst of a global war days after Israel began its war against Lebanon. *Media Matters for America* reported as follows on July 14, 2006:

Most recently, on the July 13 [2006] edition of Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor, host Bill O'Reilly said "World War III ... I think we're in it." Similarly, on the July 13 [2006] edition of MSNBC's Tucker, a graphic read: "On the verge of World War III?" As *Media Matters for America* has noted, CNN Headline News host Glenn Beck began his program on July 12 [2006] with a discussion with former CIA officer Robert Baer by saying "we've got World War III to fight," while also warning of the "impeding apocalypse." Beck and [former] officer Robert Baer had a similar discussion on July 13 [2006], in which Beck said: "I absolutely know that we need to prepare ourselves for World War III. It is here." [1]

The mainstream media serves as a tool for the economic and political elite. It falls into line in propagating and supporting state domestic and foreign policy. In this sense the mainstream media is a vital component of a military-industrial-financial-media complex

that helps shape the views of what the sociologist C. Wright Mills has termed a mass society.

It is clear that a World War III scenario was possible in 2006. The Israeli attack on Lebanon could have expanded into Syria. This would have seen Iranian intervention, which would have seen the U.S. and NATO entering the war to come to the aid of Tel Aviv as combatants. This could have resulted in a dangerous global war scenario arising from the Middle East, which will be examined later.

The dangers of a military intervention by the U.S. and NATO were very real. The Pentagon had planned to launch a NATO invasion of Lebanon, which would have included the deployment of U.S. Marines to fight the Lebanese Resistance. This has also been confirmed by Alain Pellegrini, the former military commander of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), in an interview with the newspaper *As-Safir*.



The Valleys and Mountains of Afghanistan: Just the Beginning of the “Long War”

The Weekly Standard, in the following month after September 11, 2001, ominously went on to outline the broader military campaign that was to come in an editorial by Robert Kagan and William Kristol published on October 29, 2001:

When all is said and done the conflict in Afghanistan will be to the war on terrorism what the North Africa campaign was to World War II: an essential beginning on the path to victory. But to what looms over the horizon — a wide-range war in locales from Central Asia to the Middle East and, unfortunately, back again to the United States — Afghanistan will prove but an opening battle. [2]

The Weekly Standard editorial, like a script, went on to clearly state that the multi-front war that was in the works would develop to become or resemble the “Clash of Civilizations” post-Cold War conflict model outlined by Samuel P. Huntington:

[T]his war will not end in Afghanistan. It is going to spread and engulf a number of countries in conflicts of varying intensity. It could well require the use of American military power in multiple places simultaneously. It is going to resemble the clash of civilizations that everyone has hoped to avoid. And it is going to put enormous and perhaps unbearable strain on parts of an

international coalition that basks in contented consensus. [3]

In 2001, both Robert Kagan and William Kristol were well aware of the conflagration of war in Eurasia. Both men are U.S. political insiders that were aware of what direction U.S. foreign policy would take the U.S. military. After all Kagan and Kristol were associates with Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz through the political think-tank the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) that outlined a global military roadmap for a “new American century.”

World War III in the Horizon?

Since the invasion of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan war has spread from Central Asia to the Middle East, Pakistan, the Caucasus, and East Africa. What is looming in the horizon? Is the “Global War on Terror” another name for the “Great Game?”

The “Great Game” for control of all Eurasia, from Eastern Europe and the Middle East to Central Asia, is underway. International tensions are building. In Eurasia and worldwide there is geo-political rivalry between a U.S. led military alliance and bloc and a Russian-Chinese-Iranian counter-alliance.

There are numerous fronts that can ignite a global war, but the Middle East has the highest risk. If Israeli attacks in 2006 threatened to lead to a global war, what would an attack on Iran lead to? An Israeli-U.S. attack against Iran and its allies could develop rapidly into a global war with the use of nuclear weapons.

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NOTES

[1] “Right-wing media divided: Is U.S. now in World War III, IV, or V?”, *Media Matters for America*, July 14, 2006: <http://mediamatters.org/research/200607140017>.

[2] Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “The Gathering Storm”, *The Weekly Standard*, October 29, 2001, p.13.

[3] *Ibid.*

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