



The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia

By Lutz Kleveman

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Crude oil, once seen as a wealth-creating blessing for mankind, is fast turning into the “devil’s tears.” The struggle to control the world’s remaining energy reserves increasingly culminates in bloody conflicts and the killing of innocent civilians, with the war in Iraq being only the latest example. In *The New Great Game*, Lutz Kleveman gives us a fearless, insightful, and exacting portrait of a new battleground in the violent politics and passion of oil: Central Asia, known as the “black hole of the earth” for much of the last century. The Caspian Sea contains the world’s largest amount of untapped oil and gas resources. It is estimated that there might be as much as 100 billion barrels of crude oil in the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan alone.

Using the concept of the “Great Game” that Rudyard Kipling immortalized in his novel *Kim*, Kleveman argues that now a New Great Game rages in the region, a modern variant of the nineteenth-century clash of imperial ambitions of Great Britain and Tsarist Russia. Only this time the stakes are raised. Desperate to wean itself from dependence on the powerful OPEC cartel, the United States is now pitted in this struggle against Russia, China, and Iran, all competing for dominance of the Caspian region, its resources and pipeline routes.

Complicating the playing field are transnational energy corporations with their own agendas and the brash new, Wild West–style entrepreneurs who have taken control after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Traveling thousands of miles, from the Caucasus peaks across the central Asian plains down to the Afghan Hindu Kush, Kleveman met with the principal Great Game actors between Kabul and Moscow: oil barons, generals, diplomats, and warlords.

Based on extensive research and travel in the Caucasus, the Caspian, and Central Asia, *The New Great Game* is a gripping narrative and a savvy and incisive analysis of the power struggle for the world’s remaining energy resources.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Conventional thinking on a possible confrontation between the U.S. and China assumes that the geography of conflict will be off of China's coast over the Taiwan issue or as competition for the Spratly Islands heats up. In his first book, veteran war correspondent Kleveman makes the intriguing argument that the challenge to U.S. primacy will in fact take place to the west of China's hinterland province Xingjiang over the resources of the energy-rich Caspian Sea and the surrounding Central Asian republics. The central thesis, that the U.S., China, Russia and Iran are now engaged in a New Great Game, a power struggle for control of the region's vast oil and gas reserves, is thinly woven through the narrative in what is largely a war zone travel diary. Kleveman, who readily admits his conviction that the recent war in Iraq was motivated by the interests of Houston oilmen, similarly treats the war on terrorism as little more than a pretext for the presence of U.S. troops in the region to secure oil interests and pipeline routes. Thus, the book gives the impression that Kleveman has selectively presented interviews with oil ministers and locals that lend his argument the most weight, while giving short shrift to those with opposing views. The work draws attention to a little understood and increasingly important part of the world where oil, Islam and terrorism converge to create havoc, but in the end, Kleveman fails to show that competition and not cooperation will mark the development of the region's resources.

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Review

"A timely and daring book to remind us that the Great Game is alive and well in the 21st century." -- *Jason Elliot, author of An Unexpected Light: Travels in Afghanistan*

"A well-argued, well-observed journey into a little-known area likely to be of much importance in days to come." -- *Kirkus Reviews*

"An urgent, vigorous insight into a vital issue of the new century. Undertaken with clear sight and bulldog energy." -- *Colin Thubron, Author of The Lost Heart of Asia*

"Kleveman's odyssey...reveals that this conflict is just one front in a global oil war." -- *Jonathan Kaplan, author of The Dressing Station*

"Part reportage part essay, written with journalistic wit....A book that will provide us with ideas and analysis for some years." -- *Riccardo Orizio*

About the Author

Lutz Kleveman was born in Germany and studied at the London School of Economics. He has reported from war zones for the Daily Telegraph, Newsweek, CNN, The Independent, Der Spiegel, and Die Zeit. He lives in New York.

Users Review

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Melba More:

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