

The New Great Game – Blood and Oil in Central Asia.  
By Lutz Kleveman. Atlantic Books 2003.

Anyone interested in the conflicting forces at work in the Middle East and Central Asia needs to read this meticulously researched and engaging book. Lutz Kleveman, a print and television journalist who has extensive experience of war zones, travelled throughout Central Asia, as well as visiting China Pakistan and Iran to analyse the growing struggle to utilise the great natural oil and gas wealth of the region –a resource that is of sufficient size and durability to offer the promise of weaning America off its dependence on Gulf oil.

Kleveman speaks to ordinary citizens, oil workers and entrepreneurs, and the global players from Britain and America, and elsewhere. The combination of power politics, financial rewards of incalculable proportions, political tensions, fundamentalist Islam, global terrorism and local problems – as witnessed recently in Georgia – as well as the potential for a regional conflagration that could have wider repercussions, is not going to make anyone sleep better at night.

Lutz Kleveman has nevertheless done us all a service by reminding his readers that the Middle East and Central Asia are the source not just of political problems but potentially huge contributors of oil and gas to Western economies – providing they are approached and handled in the right way. And that, he suggests, is a big proviso.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh