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Fall 9-1-2007

PSC 381.01: Geopolitics in Central Asia

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Recommended Citation

Hayes, Louis, "PSC 381.01: Geopolitics in Central Asia" (2007). *University of Montana Course Syllabi*. 6699.

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Textbook: R. Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann H. Sinmonian,
Troubled Waters: The Geopolitics of the Caspian Basin I.B.
Tauris, 2003.

Rudyard Kipling invented the term "Great Game" in reference to the strategic relationship between Britain and Russia in the 19th century. The term is appropriate and now includes three phases. The first phase was that described by Kipling. The second occurred during the Cold War involving the Soviet Union and the United States. The third phase is the current one in which the US is the central player in a game involving numerous countries in the region. In all three phases the central focus has been Afghanistan.

Since the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, Central Asia and the areas surrounding it have assumed greater importance in international relations. Many of the "Central Asian Republics" of the former Soviet Union are now independent countries and in various ways are dealing with the problems of political development. The Palestine problem, the war in Iraq, the "clash of civilizations", and related matters have resulted in, among other things, heightened sensitivity among Muslims regarding their political and economic status.

A new element in the Great Game is oil. The first two phases had more to do with territorial control. Imperial undertakings are now out of date but control of the world's oil supply now occupies center stage.

First Phase - The "Great Game" in the 19th century

- A. Britain in India
- B. Russia in Central Asia
- C. The First Anglo-Afghan War
- D. The Imperial Paradigm
- E. The Second Anglo-Afghan War
- F. Disintegration of the Euro-Centric World
- G. Third Anglo-Afghan War

Second Phase - Central Asia and the Cold War

- A. Sovietization
- B. World War II and After
- C. Containment
- D. Iranian revolution
- E. Communism in Afghanistan

Third Phase - Central Asia, Oil and the War on Terror

- A. Demise of the Soviet Union
- B. Social and political characteristics
- C. Geo-strategic issues:
 - 1. Gulf Wars
 - 2. Radical Islam
- D. War on Terror
- E. The big picture
 - A. China
 - B. Russia
 - C. Iran
 - D. Afghanistan
- F. US interests
 - A. Oil
 - B. Terrorism
 - C. Bush doctrine

Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* NY: Perennial, 2002. 958.1 E943a

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Chayes, Sarah. *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan after the Taliban*. NY: Penguin Press, 2006.