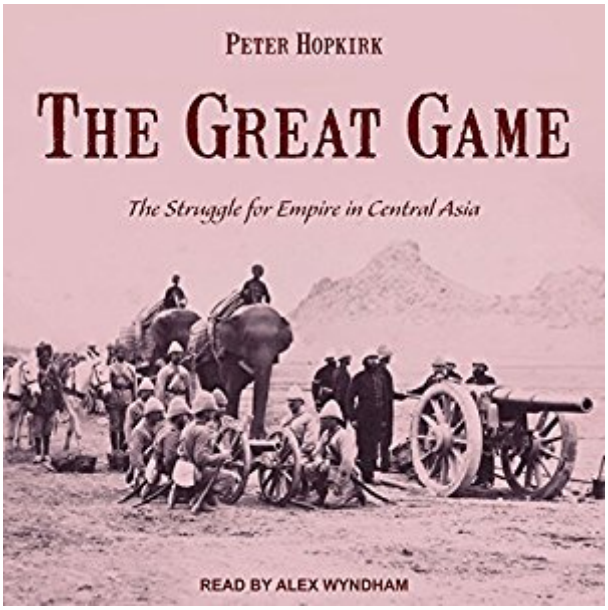
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The Great Game: The Struggle For Empire In Central Asia



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Synopsis

The Great Game between Victorian Britain and Tsarist Russia was fought across desolate terrain from the Caucasus to China, over the lonely passes of the Parmirs and Karakorams, in the blazing Kerman and Helmund deserts, and through the caravan towns of the old Silk Road - both powers scrambling to control access to the riches of India and the East. When play first began, the frontiers of Russia and British India lay 2000 miles apart; by the end, this distance had shrunk to 20 miles at some points. Now, in the vacuum left by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there is once again talk of Russian soldiers "dipping their toes in the Indian Ocean." The Washington Post has said that "every story Peter Hopkirk touches is totally engrossing." In this gripping narrative he recounts a breathtaking tale of espionage and treachery through the actual experiences of its colorful characters. Based on meticulous scholarship and on-the-spot research, this is the history at the core of today’s geopolitics.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

IÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve never read or studied a lot about the exploits and conflicts of the British Empire and Russian Tsars in the 19th century. But I am a fan of well written history and was intrigued by this era of conflict known as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The Great GameÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•. If there is a book out there that better tells the tale of the successes, failures and misadventures of the British and Russians over this century, I have a hard time imagining what it would be as Peter HopkirkÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book by the same title is stellar. Hopkirk is a strong and accessible writer who cut his teeth as a journalist working extensively in the Middle East and then went on to write a

handful of histories about noteworthy eras in that region. This book is sweeping in scale as it tells the far ranging and extensive conflict between Russia and Britain, primarily a cold war that occasionally turned hot, as they vied for influence in the areas between Russia and India. The English primarily worried about defending their profitable colony, India, from Russian conquest. The Russians were primarily interested in extending their influence south into the Middle East to expand trade and also pushing toward Constantinople and access to the Mediterranean. Hopkirk excels at veering between the very specific stories of individuals who ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“played the great gameÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and then how their actions helped shape the more strategic actions and decisions of the two governments. Hopkirk also skillfully navigates the twisting tides as changes in leadership and influence in both governments shaped The Great Game. All of the detailed exploits of the many individuals are thrilling and enthralling. The hardships that many faced; whether scorching deserts, mountainous snowy passes, or duplicitous counterparties; are inspiring and amazing in their intensity. Although told more from the British point of view, Hopkirk gives an honest reading of the actions and motivations of the English but also does so with the Russians. In addition, he shows great insight and perspective on the various natives that are equal players of the great game. There are numerous Shahs and Emirs and others that had a significant impact on The Great Game, some for the good and some for the worse. Throughout the story there are many stories of heroism and sadism that give the tales dramatic punch and Hopkirk deftly handles all of these. As I worked my way through this sweeping tale, I kept thinking about the current state of relations throughout the Middle East and about some of the recent dealings with Russia. There are numerous lessons to be gleamed from The Great Game for our current relations with many countries in the Middle East and around the world and for that matter our own perspective on American influence. I wonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t take the time to detail the ones that I gleamed from the book but offer that if you embrace this book you will find a very enjoyable read but also come away from it with a better perspective on some of the issues our nation faces today.

ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¢ Many boys (and probably many girls too) grow up dreaming about adventure: exploration, seizing opportunity, exotic locations, solitary travels in wild locales, especially to foreign enclaves never before visited by westerners (or only by mythic predecessors) with strange customs and filled with riches and danger and invariably ruled by mercurial despots. Since these no longer exist, or, more probably, have been de-romanticized, much of this longing is now transferred to science fiction. But in the 18th and 19th century it was all very real. In Asia, between the dominions of the great powers Russia and Great Britain, much of the continent was ruled by medieval political

entities fragmented by deserts, rivers, and mountain ranges whose names themselves are the ultimate romantic evocation: The Himalayas, Hindu Kush, Karakoram, Oxus, the lands and cities of the Sild Road, Samarkand, Bokhara, Tashkent, Kandahar. It was a time when a single intrepid adventurer could make a heroic journey, bluff, impress, and bribe his way into the good graces of the local potentate, and make a treaty that would shift world power. Or perhaps explore and survey the unknown geography and customs to prepare for the next traveler. This was the Great Game. As the quotes on the cover attest, Peter Hopkirk is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“truly the laureate of the Great Game.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• A former top-shelf reporter, he has also sufficient historian cred and sense of drama to combine research, analysis, synthesis, and storytelling into a fantastic, entertaining, and informative book. A series of adventure stories for grown up boys. The tapestry is the vastness of central Asia in what are now Russian, India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Xinxiang, Tibet, Nepal, and all the ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœestansÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ of the former Soviet Union. As the decades progress the expeditions get larger. From the single adventurer to pairs to squadrons to occupation and frontier war. But (in retrospect this is obvious) never a major war between the principals. What cliff hangers: From a random page (242): ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“But is was far from over yet. Worse ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ much worse ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ was yet to follow.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• And just plain excitement: on one random page (104) -- ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“where `all the horrors and abominations of Sodom and GomorrahÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ were practicedÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•; ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“EversmannÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s disguise ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| must have been remarkably convincing, for the EmirÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s secret police ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| suspected nothing ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• And sweep: another chapter begins, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“in the beginning of the 19th century, the three warring khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand between them ruled the vast region ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â| half the size of America ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â|.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• This is the flavor of the book. There is no pretense to making a larger point other than the obvious ones: clash of cultures, the mind of the adventurer, 19th century imperialism, the methods of exploration. This is a good thing. In fact, the only criticism is the huge number of stories. No part is too long or drags. But in the end 500 pages is a lot of Saturday afternoon movie excitement to read straight through. It may be best enjoyed over a year of Saturdays!

More fun than anything I've read for a while. The history of Russian expansion in Central Asia during the 19th century and the resulting conflict with Britain. If you've ever wondered how Kazakhstan became part of the Soviet Union then this book will give you the answer. Along the way

you'll be introduced to some of the bravest, toughest and occasionally unluckiest men who ever served her Majesty. I couldn't put it down.

"The Great Game", by Peter Hopkirk, is one of the most enjoyable, educational and fascinating books I've read in a long, long time. I enjoyed it so much that I'll likely be reading the remainder of Hopkirk's tomes over the next few years (of which there are quite a few). This has been on my reading list for a long time, but I wish I read it long ago. "The Great Game" is essentially a spy story played out on the Central Asia/South Asia continental area over the course of an entire century between the Russian and British Empires. It reads like the best of Cold War spy fiction. Indeed, the Great Game was the Cold War of the 19th Century - one that very few people are familiar with today, but which still echoes in importance with the current situation in Afghanistan. It is the story of many different men from both Britain and Russia, explorers and adventurers all. The overall theme is the conflict between the two Empires as they merged closer and closer to each other in Central Asia, each constantly alarmed by the moves of the other. The micro-theme, played out in each chapter, is the story of individuals who played the Great Game. Their stories are remarkable. While the book could have used more maps to follow the little known geography, I simply recommend an Atlas of Central Asia to accompany the read. I cannot recommend this book enough. You will not be disappointed!

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