

2011/3/2 Abstract: The Great Game in the 21st century About the struggle for dominance over Central Asia

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In the 19th century, the historical Great Game for dominance over Central Asia was a conflict between the European powers Russia and Great Britain. Today, however, Europe - apart from Russia - does not play a decisive part any longer. In comparison with the forces, ideas and nations determining the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, the 21st century experiences a new alignment. Today Europe represents at best a marginal power which cannot contribute much to a solution, and ends up in the role of an assistant at the side of the Great Players. Thus, the clustering of the European forces, which have been strongly fragmented until today, especially in the fields of security and defence, remains the more important in order to preserve this influence at least. The Euro-centric age has been brought to an end. China represents the empire with the oldest civilization of the world and has appropriate self-confidence as the everlasting central empire. From a Chinese point of view, in the 21st century China again will take its place in the world it is entitled to, as the greatest decisive power, a place China actually held from Ancient Europe until the Renaissance era. In contrast to our Western civilization, which is determined by quickly measurable rhythms of quarterly figures, annual balances, and four-years election periods, in Asian civilizations time will always be an ally for those proceeding long term. Since its beginnings European civilization has always been a civilization of either-or-decisions, even in strategic thinking, expressed already in the political-military realism of the Athenians and Melians. At about the same time knowledge as a symbiosis of wisdom and smartness was established, which corresponds to a stately tradition going back to Confucius, opposing us as the doctrine of stratagems. Here one must not mix up stratagems with the strategic thinking common in Europe. In China experiences are interpreted and knowledge is assessed in order to derive actions, using those internalized and age-old stratagems. In the age-old stratagems which go back to Confucius (551-479 BC) master Sun Tzu describes the three kinds of gaining victory in his oldest known treatise of the world on the art of war:

- Military victory over the enemy comes third.
- Victory by diplomatic means comes second.
- Victory by means of stratagems comes first.

In China, but at the Frunse Academy in Moscow as well, Sun Tzu as a knowledge base has been taught in the course of officers' education up to now.

