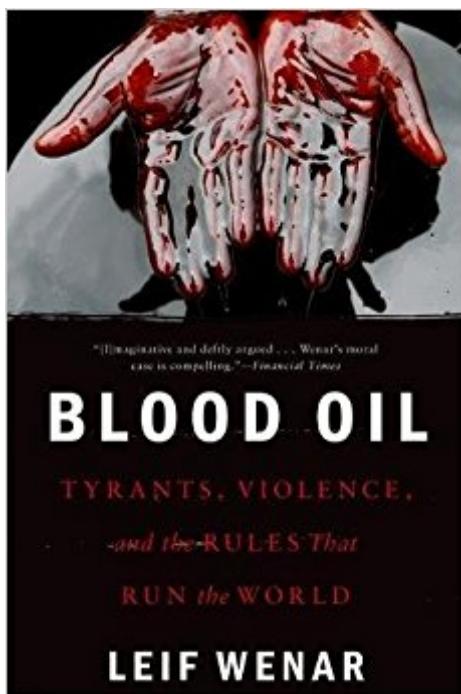


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# Blood Oil: Tyrants, Violence, And The Rules That Run The World



## **Synopsis**

Natural resources like oil and minerals are the largest source of unaccountable power in the world. Petrocrats like Putin and the Saudis spend resource money on weapons and oppression; militants in Iraq and in the Congo spend resource money on radicalization and ammunition. Resource-fueled authoritarians and extremists present endless crises to the West-and the source of their resource power is ultimately ordinary consumers, doing their everyday shopping at the gas station and the mall. In this sweeping book, one of today's leading political philosophers, Leif Wenar, goes behind the headlines in search of the hidden global rule that thwarts democracy and development-and that puts shoppers into business with some of today's most dangerous men. Wenar discovers a rule that once licensed the slave trade and apartheid and genocide, a rule whose abolition has marked some of humanity's greatest triumphs--yet a rule that still enflames tyranny and war and terrorism through today's multi-trillion dollar resource trade. *Blood Oil* shows how the West can now lead a peaceful revolution by ending its dependence on authoritarian oil, and by getting consumers out of business with the men of blood. The book describes practical strategies for upgrading world trade: for choosing new rules that will make us more secure at home, more trusted abroad, and better able to solve pressing global problems like climate change. *Blood Oil* shows citizens, consumers, and leaders how we can act together today to create a more united human future.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Philosophers rarely write big books that could change the world, but *Blood Oil* is such a book.

Wenar does not shy away from the horrific consequences of current trade practices, nor from the philosophical arguments needed to show that this trade rests on ethically indefensible assumptions. Yet instead of leaving us to despair, he offers realistic ways of bringing about change that would make the world a better and fairer place." --Peter Singer, Princeton University, author of *One World* and *The Most Good You Can Do*"Have you ever worried that your spending might be supporting the 'sociopathic rulers and sadistic militias' that blight so many countries in Africa and around the world? Or that your purchases of oil are supporting injustice and oppression, just as British purchases of sugar once supported the enslavement of Africans? Leif Wenar has written the indispensable guide, combining politics, economics, and ethics to tell us just how and why we are all involved, and what we ought to do to make the world a better place." --Angus Deaton, Princeton University, 2015 Nobel Prize Winner in Economics, and author of *The Great Escape: Health, Wealth, and the Origins of Inequality*"This book is one of those rare manifestos that awaken people to a pressing ethical issue by changing the way they see the world. Whether or not its recommendations are practicable today, *Blood Oil* is a fantastically stimulating read: analytic, informative, rationally optimistic, and written with erudition and panache." --Steven Pinker, Harvard University, author of *The Better Angels of Our Nature* and *How the Mind Works*"Leif Wenar's objective is to devise ways in which the vicious circle at heart of many development failures can be broken, so that odious regimes can be prevented from appropriating natural resources to their own advantage and saddling future generation with much diminished national wealth. Most importantly the book derives practical proposals on how such objectives are to be achieved. The book's conclusions will be of great interest to all those working in international development, and particularly to national governments and international organizations." --Branko Milanovic, CUNY Graduate School, former World Bank Lead Economist, Author of *Worlds Apart* and *The Haves and the Have-Nots*"It is time that we woke up to the fact that the level of our dependence on certain resources means that we let ourselves be blackmailed by tyrants. Our comfort is purchased by collusion with regimes that are responsible for high levels of human misery, injustice and bigotry. This courageous and forceful book challenges us to make the hard decision that might change this worsening situation. It is a serious and urgent appeal to the conscience of the West." --Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury and Leader of the Anglican Communion"*Blood Oil* is an inspiring book. It will make you think differently about everything you buy- from cell phones to children's toys- and make you realize just how complicit we have become in the rights-crushing autocracies that produce the raw materials from which these everyday products are made. But *Blood Oil* also lays out, in careful detail, a clean trade strategy that will bring our complicity to an end and help poor people recover sovereignty over their

resources. It is also a delight to read: free of jargon and ideology, an engaging, ironic and eloquent tour de force of moral passion." --Michael Ignatieff, Harvard University, author of *The Lesser Evil: Political Ethics in an Age of Terror*"This is a long-awaited study of power in the contemporary world, in oil markets and the often corrupted power-plays that they engender. Leif Wenar is a philosopher with profound understanding of the daily, practical world. His big book should become required reading." --Lord Carlile of Berriew, Independent Reviewer of UK Terrorism Legislation 2001-11"As consumers we depend every day on global supply chains tainted by exploitation and injustice. Leif Wenar's detailed and incisive study of the trade in oil and other "blood" resources, and of its moral and legal background, is the most sustained analysis yet of the responsibilities we bear as beneficiaries of the plunder of authoritarians and kleptocrats. Not everyone will agree with Wenar's moral arguments and policy recommendations but anyone who reads this book will see the urgency of the problem." --Charles Beitz, Princeton University, author of *Political Theory and International Relations* and *The Idea of Human Rights*"Leif Wenar puts the oldest principles of ownership and justice to new use in his attack on the human disaster that is the notorious 'resource curse.' His proposal is original, exact, and morally admirable. It should stir us away from the coldly comforting idea that some peoples will always be poor and tyrannically governed. This is a fine marriage of moral seriousness and institutional imagination." --Jedediah Purdy, Duke University, author of *For Common Things* and *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*"Telling the person in the seat next to you that you are interested in philosophy,' observes Leif Wenar, 'will often result in an uninterrupted flight.' This lively book gives strong evidence that interruption is sometimes a wise course of action. Writing in an engaging, conversational style, Wenar trenchantly and provocatively explores one of the great moral challenges of our time. Although the benefits from development and global connectedness-in which we are all inescapably complicit-have been huge, some of those benefits have flowed to people who have systematically made the lives of others desperate and miserable." --John Mueller, Ohio State University and the Cato Institute, co-author of *Chasing Ghosts: The Policing of Terrorism*"Blood Oil is a brilliant inquiry into ethical implications of our dependence on the petroleum trade-and the uncomfortable fact that it fuels many violent conflicts and funds a large fraction of the world's autocrats. Wenar shows that much of this oil has been stolen from the citizens who rightfully own it, nests this issue in the historic struggle for the right of self-determination, and suggests a way to rectify this injustice that is surprisingly practical. This book is not merely a major scholarly achievement; it is both politically urgent and compulsively readable." --Michael Ross, UCLA, author of *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*"LOOK at the tablet or the paper that you are reading. Its making will probably involve oil,

minerals or metals. Some of those resources will have come from a country whose government steals from and oppresses its citizens. By one estimate, almost 10% of what the average American household spends on petrol each year goes directly into the coffers of such regimes. This is a nasty, if familiar, thought. But Leif Wenar, a philosopher at King's College London, pushes these ideas further, with uncomfortable consequences . . . In jargon-free prose, Mr Wenar argues persuasively that Western consumers are blinded to the fact that international trade still operates according to the 'law of the jungle' . . . He reveals a horrible truth: that global free trade is, at times, bound up in blood." --The Economist "Leif Wenar's Blood Oil prompts us all to think a little more closely about the terrible side effects of oil production and about the role that our own consumption plays in that cycle . . . by putting a human face on the 'resource curse' - a discussion which is too often confined to dry academic and statistical texts - the book's central contribution is in forcing us to confront our own role in enabling the damaging domestic and international effects of oil production. For those who think that the only tie between oil and U.S. foreign policy is the question of energy security, this book offers a valuable corrective. For that alone, it is well worth reading." --War on the Rocks"Informative, thoughtful, exceptionally well organized and presented, thoroughly researched and impressively argued from beginning to end...Very highly recommended." --Midwest Book Review

Leif Wenar holds the Chair of Philosophy and Law at King's College London. He earned his degrees in Philosophy from Stanford and from Harvard, where he worked with John Rawls and with Robert Nozick. He has been a Visiting Professor at Princeton and at Stanford, and has been a Fellow of the Carnegie Council Program in Justice and the World Economy.

All too often philosophers stop short worrying about problems at a theoretical level. Blood Oil takes a foundational problem of rights and sees it through in great detail into the world in which we live and works through the ramifications there of. Written in an engaging and conversational style the authors walks us through detailed analyses of how our unthinking behavior is making the world a much worse place than it needs to be and how through conscious efforts, using existing legal apparatus and international frameworks, we can right this wrong and see justice for billions who presently suffer at the hands of oligarchs and despots. Read this book! You will be better for it.

Well written, carefully thought through discussion of our current shared planetary conundrum we have gotten ourselves into.

This book was very informative. Author did his homework & gave great opinions based on the facts.

This book is a lens. It sharpens blurry thinking. Let me give an example. Last week Friday, while listening to Marketplace on NPR, a segment was aired about Saudi Arabia and Its Oil. I remembered from reading this book that rent addicted regimes spend a lot on the military, between two and ten times more on their armed forces than others -- and this military force serves in part to suppress dissent that would threaten the current political structure. In 2011, in fact, I learned from this book that Saudi Arabia spent over 15% of its official budget on weapons from the US. This made me ponder issues that might have gone otherwise unquestioned. My point is that by reading this book, one does not walk away with a shallow overview as much as a deeper understanding of a multitude of facets of this complex problem posed by rent addicted countries. This is not the kind of book that one should read in an hour minus the commercials. It needs to be read and mulled over. I do not hold any advanced degrees in Philosophy or International Relations -- I'm just a curious minded person. What I can say is that by taking the time to pull from the book all that it offers, I think a little differently about the world. And for that I am grateful.

IT is an extraordinary book

Amazing.

Excellent historical perspective. Literate societies handle money well while feudals go crazy.

A masterpiece

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