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Book Reviews

Leif Wenar, Blood Oil: Tyrants, Violence, and the Rules that Run the World*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, 552 pp.*

Oil is everywhere (xxxvi), in our clothes, cosmetics, roads, toys, electronics, household items. We use 1000 barrels of oil every second (xxxii). It is the most valuable traded commodity, worth more than 1 trillion dollars every year (xxxvi). Extracting, refining and selling oil is extremely profitable, and this business leads to large concentrations of power. The politics of dealing with oil and other highly valuable resources, such as gems, gas, minerals and diamonds, is thus sensitive and complex.

The analysis that Leif Wenar provides, building on rich literature and his previous work on *resource curse*, shows that trading with resources is intertwined with large amounts of unaccountable power which has imminent potential to destabilize the world—of which the Syrian refugee crisis is the most recent example (xliv). Countries that are rich with and dependent on natural resources and oil, such as Algeria, Angola, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea and many others, are at the same time countries with unstable governments and economies, suffering from conflicts, power abuse, corruption, authoritarianism and poverty. Research into international trade with resources, points to a role Western governments and their citizens have in bringing these "curses" on resource rich countries. *Blood Oil* is thus targeting primarily consumers from rich Western democracies that are largely unaware of origin of resources used to make everyday commodities.

Any time we fill up our cars, fly an airplane, or buy food and other products in our local stores, we might be sending some of our money to some of the worst dictators and strongmen in the world. This, as a result, brings enormous suffering to some of the poorest people, but also brings "curses" on us, manifested in terrorism, extremism, wars, climate change, economic crises and many other adversities (xxi). Political elites of countries rich in oil extract it and sell it on markets, avoiding any accountability to citizens of these countries; using that resource to strengthen their power; and not seldom, additionally oppress their subjects—as the cases of Theodoro Obiang of Equatorial Guinea and Saudi Arabia show. Once the global network of supply chains (xi), that connect our cell phones, laptops, cosmetics, jewelry or clothes to authoritarian regimes, conflict areas and countries hit by severe poverty is made obvious, a moral question arises: What should we do as consumers, knowing that our consumer choices affect poor living conditions of citizens of oil- and resource-exporting countries? This is a question that Wenar addresses systematically and cautiously, not only providing an analysis of trade processes often-times hidden from us, but also proposing concrete courses of action that not only we as consumers, but also our governments and corporations should undertake. His book sets the stage for difficult policy changes that he claims must occur in the realm of oil and resource trade.

The book consists of 4 parts. The first and second part of the book trace causes of the resource curse and our contributions to it (xxvii). Furthermore, they show the effects of these curses and the complicated relationships and divisions that result from the unaccountable power derived from trade in oil and resources that affect everyone. Part three lays out basic principles on which change to the global trade market can be set forth. These principles pose a challenge to the current system of "coercion-based legal rights" (li), allowed by "might makes right" (xlv). The last part of the book is forward-looking, setting out policy proposals for a more just international trade praxis that should positively affect the countries struck by the resource curse and bring longer-term benefits to the rich importing countries and consumers.

The basic principle that Wenar uses in his analysis and policy proposals is "popular resource sovereignty". Popular resource sovereignty is a part of popular sovereignty (193), or the power of the people to freely determine their political status and pursue their development (196). Popular resource sovereignty, or right of peoples to their national resources and wealth, is codified in major human right conventions and thus recognized and ratified by most countries in the world. People have property rights over the natural resources of their country (203) and should be able to create and exercise laws that uphold that right.

However, as Wenar shows throughout the book, popular resource sovereignty is not at all the reality. For people to be able to authorize (or give tacit approval to) government or regime management of their resources, some minimal conditions must obtain (227–228): 1. Citizens need to have access to reliable, general information about the management of their resources; 2. They must not be subject to coercion, violence, brainwashing or extreme manipulation; 3. They must be able to deliberate and share information about resource management without fear of harm; and 4. They must be able to dissent to management of their resources without incurring severe costs. This translates to them having "at least bare-bones civil liberties and basic political rights" (228), that, without a doubt, many of the largest oil exporting countries do not provide for their subjects. Buying oil from these countries, where authorization of citizens is absent or highly unlikely, amounts to "carrying away stolen goods" (230). This theft is allowed, as Wenar stresses, by a fault in our international trade system—by a customary "might makes right", or the "effectiveness" rule.

It is this rule, a remnant from the old Westphalian era, that allows us to legally buy goods whose components are made from resources stolen from citizens by unaccountable regimes. Might translates into a legal right to sell resources (xlv). It is by this rule that "blood diamonds" were able to be legally sold on markets, or by which buying oil or resources from militias controlling some parts of territory, or authoritarians holding power over land and people, is recognized as lawful. This is a rule, Wenar shows, by which our money is sent to coercive regimes and by which goods taken by force are declared legally clean (p. 122). This is a rule that allows violation of property rights, that legitimises and incentivises unaccountable power over territory and people, and that contributes to resource curse. Revealing of that rule is a basis for designing a change in trade system that Wenar dedicated a considerable amount of research to—as well as Thomas Pogge, who influenced his work.

From a moral standpoint, according to Wenar, there is no doubt that "might makes right" must be abandoned and international trade system reformed so as to recognize and respect popular resource sovereignty. However, difficulties are more than apparent, since oil business and trade in natural resources are highly lucrative and profit driven. Policy proposals should thus be carefully designed in order to address these obstacles. Principles of action for reform need to be strong enough to be recognized by the major global market players. Wenar believes that they are. Property rights are the pillars of free trade (266) while popular sovereignty, peace, human rights and rule of law (267) are principles already acknowledged by the majority of countries.

Clean Trade Policy proposal is perhaps the most important contribution of this book. The overall aim of these policies is to "end the global trade in stolen natural resources and to support public accountability over resources everywhere" (281). Wenar divides Clean Trade Policy into two parts. One set of policies is reserved for those countries where public accountability is severely lacking, while the other is aimed at countries where citizens have at least some degree of control over their national resources (283). For countries where minimal conditions of popular resource sovereignty do not obtain, importing countries can pass a Clean Trade Act, by which they can disengage commercially from unaccountable regimes, by making illegal the purchase of resources from these countries, and by denying entry into home jurisdiction and preventing any type of commercial and financial business with regime members and militants (284). This policy is "dramatic" (284), since regimes will retaliate in hope of protection of their interests. However, since the change applies solely to the laws of importing country and does not directly challenge legitimacy of foreign leaders and diplomatic recognition of resource-exporting countries, Wenar feels it is less dramatic than many other, familiar foreign policy options (285), such as sanctions. For this policy to be feasible, it is essential to establish reliable and bright-line standards for identifying countries where public accountability conditions are not met. Wenar proposes using already recognized indexes such as Freedom House report *Freedom in the World*, that ranks countries as *free*, *not free* and *partly free*, where *not free* oil exporting countries can be disqualified from trade. Clean Trade Acts need not immediately be passed for each exporting country where public accountability is lacking. To enable feasibility and avoid painful commercial shocks for importing countries, minimal steps may be taken, for example by first disqualifying "worst of the worst" (286). Clean Trade Act is thus used to enforce property rights of citizens of resource cursed countries and to stop dirtying hands of the consumers in importing countries.

Due to a realistic concern that many of the major players, such as China, will not block trade with these regimes, other measures are proposed to encourage trade partners to stop buying stolen resources (288–289). Apart from various popular campaigns and boycotts (291–292) that consumers may engage in, countries that enforced Clean Trade Act may set up Clean Trade Trusts. These Trusts are bank accounts credited by the amount of money corresponding to the amount paid by other importing countries for natural resources *stolen* from the citizens of unaccountable exporting countries (290). This money is to be collected by tariffs on imported goods from countries that continue trading with regimes. It should be kept in the Trusts as a compensation to citizens whose property rights are being violated and returned once minimal conditions of accountability arise. This should ideally work as an incentive for trade partners to stop trading with these regimes and for citizens of unaccountable regimes to bring about positive changes in their home countries.

The other set of policies is targeting countries where citizens are at least partially free with the aim of supporting public accountability (321). Legal standards and sets of rules for companies operating both at home and abroad should be established. These would deal with the issues of bribery, corruption, money laundering, human rights violations, and lack of transparency (324). Various conditions could be built in the trading policies with the designated countries in order to reinforce their public accountability. One option is to introduce People's Funds or Sovereign Wealth Funds, which would accrue part of the profit from the oil revenue and distribute it directly to citizens in the form of "citizen share" (325–329).

Many concerns can be raised to some of these policies targeting efficiency, possible destabilizations of overall economy, possibility of violent regimes to retaliate or possibility of other unanticipated effects of these policies arising. Perhaps some additional concerns may be raised from standpoint of justice. If it is the citizens of these countries whom we should have to consider as recipients of remedy for violation of their property and human rights from which we all benefit, then Clean Trade Policy may be considered as too mild and too cautious of a proposal. Effects of the proposed policies seem very long-term and cannot be expected to ameliorate the circumstances of many individuals currently suffering under the regimes powered by trade in oil and resources. It is doubtful whether setting up Clean Trade Trusts is going to incentivise positive changes in resource-exporting countries, which are needed to bring about and elect more just governments. Therefore, many years may pass before a more accountable government is elected and the money collected from tariffs as compensation for property right violations is returned to the citizens. Additionally, in line with his laudable concern with feasibility, Wenar is primarily focused on proposing reforms based on internal policies of importing countries. These policies mirror his concern with non-intervention. By enforcing Clean Trade Policy importing country does not challenge political or diplomatic recognition of foreign regimes. It does not explicitly challenge the right of any regime to rule (285), no matter how it treats their subjects or whether it is democratically governed. It simply disengages from trading with these regimes. This caution can seem incompatible with human rights standards Wenar heavily leans on.

Clean Trade Policies may thus be supplemented by additional measures, such as sending material aid, investing in development projects or taking action where human right abuses are extremely severe. Another option is promoting more open immigration policies in rich Western countries that benefit from the resource trade. This reform would acknowledge the more short-term considerations of concrete individuals that are owed duties of justice. Furthermore, it would sidestep direct intervention in the internal affairs of countries that severely violate human rights.

Many of the possible worries to these policies are raised and addressed in the book: worries about measures or standards proposed (293); interference in internal affairs of regimes (294–295); compatibility with WTO rules (297), some negative effects on countries banned from trade and on worst-off in both export and import countries (298–300); readiness of people for change (300–302); effects on energy supplies for importing countries; climate change (302–305), and others. *Beyond Blood Oil: Philosophy, Policy and The Future*, published in 2018 presents some additional criticism and answers provided by Wenar. Even with these issues taken into account, this book is a great contribution to the field of international resource trade. It systemises considerable body of literature and gives detailed analysis of the current praxis, with special consideration given to the contextualising of and to historical perspective on the issues. Wenar's writing is clear, revealing and accessible both to professionals and general public. His moral argument is compelling, inviting, and is built on widely shared values. More just international trade system is not merely an ideal, but the goal we should strive for and work on, as Wenar is doing—not just by his careful and precise writing, but also by other more practical activities he engages in.

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Justin Garson, A Critical Overview of Biological Functions*, New York: Springer, 113 pp.*

In the book entitled *A Critical Overview of Biological Functions*, Justin Garson provides an accessible overview of the functions debate and delineates three canonical theories in the debate—the *selected effects theory*, the *fitness-contribution theory* and the *causal role theory*—and their specific ramifications, such as the *goal-contribution theory* and the *"weak" etiological theory*. In this critical overview, Garson also includes his preferred theory termed the *generalized selected effects theory*.

In the first chapter, entitled "What Is a Theory of Function Supposed to Do?", Garson emphasizes the important role that the notion of function plays in biology, philosophy, medicine, psychiatry, and ecology. An important philosophical task is to develop a theory which will best accommodate the notion of function in each of those disciplines. In line with this task, the author spells out three desiderata that every theory of biological function should satisfy. These desiderata are as follows: first, a theory should be able to distinguish a function of a trait from its accidental byproducts. For instance, "the function of my nose is to help me to breathe, but not to hold up my glasses, despite the fact that it does both and both are good for me, the latter is just a lucky accident." (4). Second, it should accommodate the explanatory dimension, i.e., "when we attribute a function to a trait, we purport to explain why the trait is there, that is, why organisms possess the