Natural resources are the biggest source of unaccountable power in the world. Autocrats like Putin and the Saudis spend oil money on weapons and repression. ISIS and the Congo’s militias spend resource money on atrocities and ammunition. For decades resource-fueled authoritarians and extremists have forced endless crises on the West—and the ultimate source of their resource money is consumers, paying at the gas station and the mall.

Leif Wenar explores how the ‘resource curse’ threatens the West—and searches for the hidden global rule that puts shoppers into business with today’s most dangerous men. He discovers the same rule that once licensed the slave trade and genocide and apartheid—a rule whose abolition has marked humanity’s greatest victories, yet that still breeds tyranny and war and extremism through today’s global resource trade. Australia could now abolish this archaic law for resources—and lead the world to lift its oil curse.

Leif Wenar holds the Chair of Philosophy and Law at King’s College London. He earned his degrees in Philosophy from Stanford and Harvard, where he wrote his thesis with T.M. Scanlon and Robert Nozick. He has been a Visiting Professor at ANU, Stanford and Princeton, and a Fellow of the Carnegie Council Program in Justice and the World Economy.