



Oil, Power, and War

A Dark History

Matthieu Auzanneau

foreword by Richard Heinberg

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“This is the new, definitive work on oil and its historic significance—
supplanting even Daniel Yergin’s *The Prize*.”

—**RICHARD HEINBERG**, from the foreword

In this sweeping history, award-winning French journalist Matthieu Auzanneau takes a fresh, thought-provoking look at the way oil interests have commandeered politics and economies, changed culture, disrupted power balances across the globe, and spawned wars. Upending commonly held assumptions about key political and financial events over the past 150 years, he sheds light on what our oil-constrained and eventually post-oil future might look like.

First published in French in 2016 as *Or Noir*, *Oil, Power, and War* follows the oil industry from its heyday when the first oil wells were drilled, to the quest for new sources as some of the old ones dried up. It traces the rise of the Seven Sisters and other oil cartels and exposes oil’s key role in the crises that have shaped our time: two world wars, the Cold War, the Great Depression, Bretton Woods, the 2008 financial crisis, wars in the Middle East, the race for Africa’s oil riches, and more. And it defines the oil-born trends shaping our current moment, such as the jockeying for access to Russia’s vast oil resources, the search for extreme substitutes for declining conventional oil, the rise of terrorism, and the changing nature of economic growth.

We meet a long line of characters from John D. Rockefeller to Dick Cheney and Rex Tillerson, and hear lesser-known stories like how New York City taxes were once funneled directly to banks run by oil barons. We see how oil and power, once they became inextricably linked, drove actions of major figures like Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Kissinger, and the Bush family. We also learn the fascinating backstory sparked by lesser-known but key personalities including British-Armenian businessman Calouste Gulbenkian, Saudi politician Abdullah al-Tariki, and Marion King Hubbert, the once-silenced oil industry expert who warned his colleagues that oil production was facing its peak.

Oil, Power, and War is a story of the dreams and hubris that spawned an era of economic chaos, climate change, war, and terrorism—as well as an eloquent framing from which to consider our options as our primary source of power, in many ways irreplaceable, grows ever more constrained.



Matthieu Auzanneau, is the director of The Shift Project, a European think tank focusing on energy transition. Previously he was a journalist, based in Paris, and mostly writing for *Le Monde*. He continues to write his *Le Monde* blog, *Oil Man*, which he describes as ‘a chronicle of the beginning of the end of petroleum.’ The original French edition of this book, *Or Noir: La grande histoire du pétrole*, was awarded the Special Prize of the French Association of Energy Economists in 2016.

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