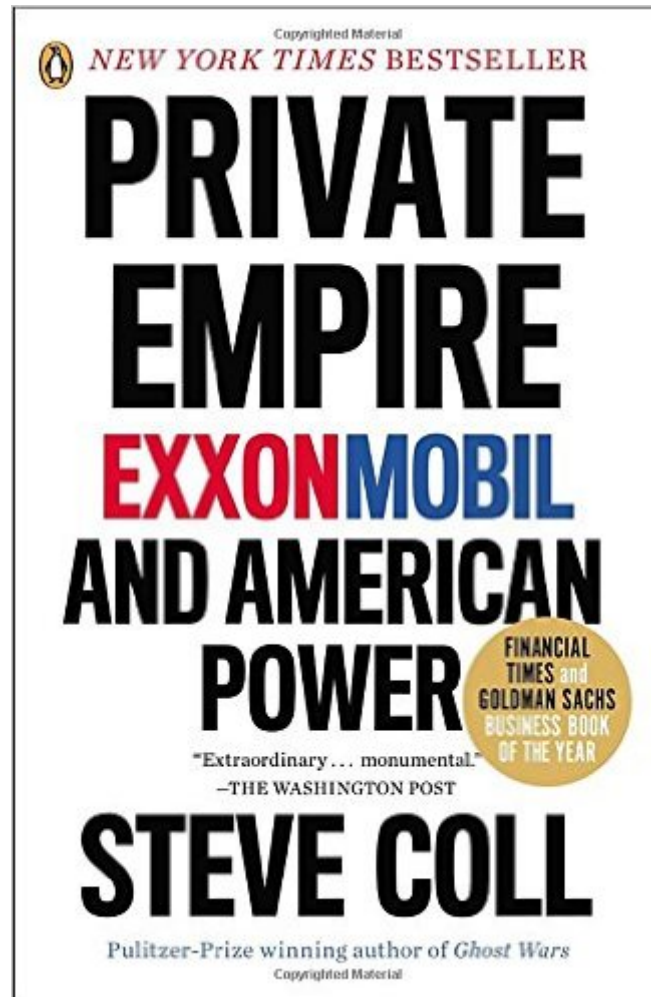


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Private Empire: ExxonMobil And American Power



Synopsis

An extraordinary and monumental exposé of Big Oil from two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Steve Coll (The Washington Post) In this, the first hard-hitting examination of ExxonMobil "the largest and most powerful private corporation in the United States" Steve Coll reveals the true extent of its power. Private Empire pulls back the curtain, tracking the corporation's recent history and its central role on the world stage, beginning with the Exxon Valdez accident in 1989 and leading to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. The action spans the globe "featuring kidnapping cases, civil wars, and high-stakes struggles at the Kremlin" and the narrative is driven by larger-than-life characters, including corporate legend Lee Raymond, ExxonMobil's chief executive until 2005. A penetrating, news-breaking study, Private Empire is a defining portrait of Big Oil in American politics and foreign policy.

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Customer Reviews

As a reader you can never really explain it, but a truly great author can make anything come alive while others will put you to sleep. Steve Coll is a Pulitzer Prize winner author of Ghost Wars - the Secret History of the CIA, which is another book you just can't put down. Private Empire is special, and the title is so appropriate, a company that has been in business for over a 100 years. It has seen 19 American Presidents come and go, and yet it remains the dominant energy company in the world, and this book covers the whole story. There is very little devoted to the early history of the

company. As we all probably know John D. Rockefeller created the Standard Oil Trust and when it was broken up by the Trust Busters in the early 20th century, one of the spin-offs was the early ancestor to what is now Exxon which eventually combined with Mobil Oil to form ExxonMobil. Rockefeller controlled 14% of the American economy at one point, and oil has remained our dominant energy source ever since. What a book, what a story for Exxon is the tale of 20th century America and our country's rise to both prominence and dominance in the world both politically and economically. A company so powerful that it considers itself in many ways a state within a state with an internal security force the equivalent of the Secret Service that guards our President. And why not, Exxon has recruited the best of the retired Secret Service agents to develop, install, and maintain a security shield around this company's behavior and its employees. The book devotes a chapter to the kidnapping and death of Exxon executive Sidney Reso and how CEO Lee Raymond completely revamped the entire company to ensure that it would not happen again.

A Pulitzer Prize winning New Yorker author writes a vast book about the largest corporation in the United States. You can picture the book, you say. Long on research, including large numbers of interviews with people who refuse to be quoted by name? Yes. Engaging distillation of technical information into a readily understood summary? Yes. Characters and scenes drawn with a cinematic vividness? Yes. Revelations that require the reader to rethink his or her basic understanding of the book's subject? Well no. I spent most of the book's 700 pages waiting for The Revelation. The Secret. The...well, anything. This is certainly more the fault of my expectations than any deficiency in the book. But it is odd that the author would have spent such a huge amount of time and energy writing such a detailed book about two decades of ExxonMobil corporate history without a central theme. Maybe I have simply read too many books about the oil industry and spend too much of life reading business newspapers and magazines, but the general tale told in this book is very well known. What is less well known is the details of the various strands of the story, and those strands are told with exquisite detail, well supported by copious footnotes, even though many (most?) of the cited interviews fail to name the individuals cited. The book starts crisply with a factual description of the hours leading to the Exxon Valdez disaster and ends two decades later with BP's Deepwater Horizon fiasco. In between we are given an inside look at the corporate culture and operating environment of ExxonMobil. The book consists almost entirely of dozens of intimate scenes.

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