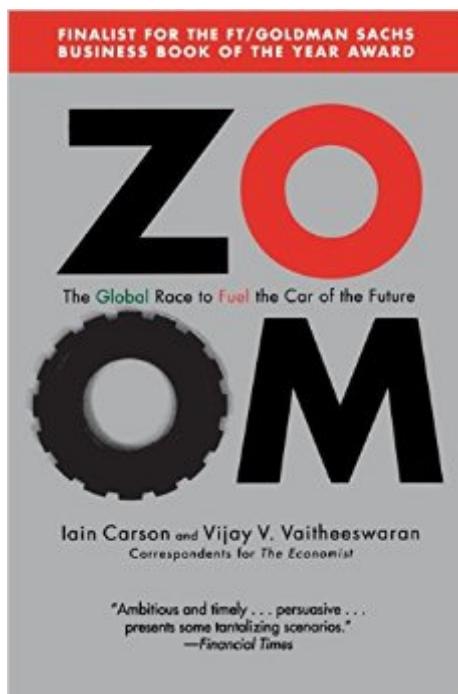


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ZOOM: The Global Race To Fuel The Car Of The Future



Synopsis

"Oil is the problem. Cars are the solution." Those two simple sentences by the authors of *Zoom* define the scope of their illuminating and important book, an examination of a transformation in business and culture that is occurring before our eyes. We are living in the midst of a Great Awakening. People are seeking environmentally-sound alternatives to gas guzzlers. Detroit's reign is over. Oil companies, despite their billion-dollar profits, could be on the brink of extinction if they don't adapt. And citizens, all too aware that these industries have lobbied politicians into gridlock over energy policy, are mobilizing to support leaders who advocate new policies. In *Zoom*, Iain Carson and Vijay V. Vaitheeswaran, award-winning correspondents for *The Economist*, show why and how geopolitical and economic forces are compelling the linked industries of oil and autos to change as never before. Drawing on years of industry research-including dozens of interviews with motor and energy executives, top policymakers, and latter-day Fords and Edisons-Carson and Vaitheeswaran explain: -How Toyota became the world's largest automaker through innovation and superior performance. -Why American politicians have, for decades failed to address our energy issues and global warming-and how grassroots movements, along with individual entrepreneurs, innovators, and outsiders, are making real reform possible.-How these Green revolutionaries are creating new products powered by hydrogen, electricity, bio-fuels, and digital technology. As political leaders debate our energy, environmental and economic future, *Zoom* offers a lucid and visionary portrait of what that future could be. Anyone planning to vote will find compelling truth in its assertions and conclusions.

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Customer Reviews

Zoom is not what I expected. I thought I'd get a survey of the various alt-fuel vehicle approaches that are being pursued today. Instead what I mostly got is an examination of all that's wrong with Big Oil, Big Auto, and Washington DC. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. I certainly learned a lot. The book does seem a bit rambling and unfocused, certainly in contrast to the laser-like focus of Cool It. Some have criticized it for including large tracts of text from earlier articles that appeared in The Economist. Well. . . I don't subscribe to The Economist, so this was all new to me. As we are led down this winding path, we get a schooling in how Big Oil and Big Auto have corrupted the political process. We see how dependent the world has become on the Middle East. We find that both Big Oil and Big Auto -- squabbling partners, like siamese twins who detest one another yet can't be separated -- are facing serious problems in the coming decades. The authors believe that grassroots political pressure, a great awakening, will eventually force a change to overwhelm the armies of lobbyists and fountains of campaign money that they have showered on politicians. Pressure is rising up from consumers, it's rising up from voters, it's rising up from the states and local governments, and Washington DC will be the last place to come around. One big insight here relates to global warming. The authors don't see global warming as a critical problem -- provided that we move away from gas guzzlers toward more efficient cars and energy sources. However, that is only one path that industry could follow. The other path leads to tar sands, oil shale, and coal-to-liquids. If these become the replacement for conventional oil, then our global CO2 emissions could skyrocket.

The problem with oil and the internal combustion engine can be understood by a few statistics. Car ownership in the US is more than one per person - 1,148 cars for every 1,000 Americans. In China and India it is about 10 cars per 1,000 persons. Current global oil consumption is about 86 million barrels per day. If car ownership and oil consumption levels in China and India reached half the US-level, an extra 100 million barrels daily would be required; if they equaled the US-level, yet another 100 million barrels daily would be needed. You don't even need to believe in global warming to see that this trend is unsustainable. The authors, Iain Carson and Vijay V Vaitheeswaran, are transportation journalists and techno-optimists. They love cars and see a bright future for car ownership, provided that one or more of the host of new fuel and energy technologies are embraced - everything from flex-fuel ethanol engines to plug-in hybrids. They are pessimists,

however, about the will of Big Oil and Detroit - and politicians - to meet the challenges of carbon emissions, declining oil reserves, and the rising energy demands of newly developing nations such as China and India. This is very telling since both authors worked for the pro-business magazine The Economist. Although their sharp criticisms of business will have them pegged as anti-business or "leftist," their censure of politicians is across the spectrum. The story about the Clinton/Gore initiative in 1993 with the Big Three, known as the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles, would have been funny were it not so tragic. The Big Three went through more than a billion dollars worth of subsidies to produce new fuel-efficient vehicles.

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