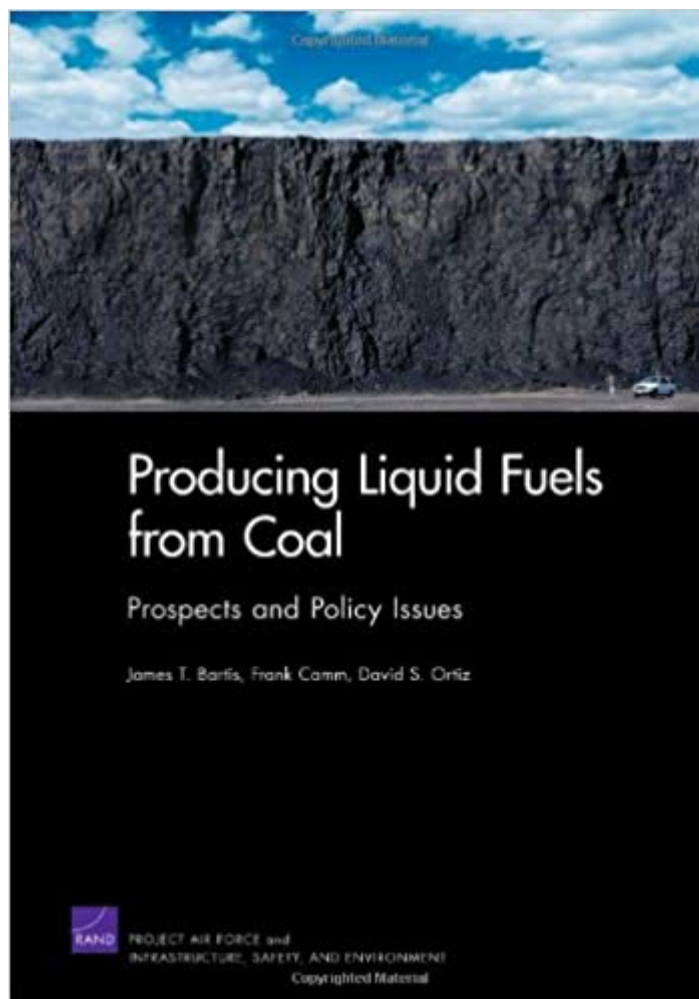


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Producing Liquid Fuels From Coal: Prospects And Policy Issues



Synopsis

Large U.S. coal reserves and viable technology make promising a domestic industry producing liquid fuels from coal. Weighing benefits, costs, and environmental issues, a productive and robust U.S. strategy is to promote a limited amount of early commercial experience in coal-to-liquids production and to prepare the foundation for managing associated greenhouse-gas emissions, both in a way that reduces uncertainties and builds future capabilities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Government actions to gain early experience in producing liquid fuels from coal offer major energy security benefits but also raise important economic, governance, and environmental issues, as addressed in this book.

James T. Bartis (Ph.D., Massachusetts Institute of Technology) is a senior policy analyst at RAND. Camm leads research at RAND on high-level Army resource management issues associated with force structure design, logistics policy, and acquisition of combat service support services.

Sometime during 2008 this book was written, in response to the recent rapid runup in oil prices. The perspective is that of the US government, more specifically the US Air Force. It reflects the reality that the US armed forces need a huge amount of fuel every day to conduct their missions. And within the armed forces, the greatest need is by the air force, unsurprisingly. The book focuses on

coal to liquid technology. Based in no small part on the large amounts of coal throughout the world; estimated at 3 times the equivalent of global oil. Plus, and this is crucial, the US possesses considerable reserves of coal, unlike oil. The armed forces need a secure supply. The history of CTL is summarised. A lot of work was done by the South African oil company Sasol, during apartheid, when South Africa faced an oil boycott. Other CTL efforts are described. Notably the shale oil venture in Colorado during the 80s. We see that all current CTL methods are expensive. It is estimated that for a CTL project to be viable inside the US, oil prices need to be at least \$50-60 per barrel. Presciently, the book remarks that price volatility also hampers the projects. Today, January 2009, oil is around \$40, and has swung wildly from a high of \$147 in 2008. None of this is encouraging for CTL. Another aspect about CTL is that a lot of CO₂ is produced, per barrel equivalent of output. A serious problem that contributes to global warming, unless the CO₂ is sequestered or neutralised. The book does not require a degree in petroleum engineering. It is aimed at a general audience, and is unclassified.

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