



Discussion of Paper ‘Methanol Mirage: China’s Energy Security and Policy Inconsistency’

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Summary

- Paper's main point seems to be: Methanol is not suitable to increase energy security in China
- Important issue with high relevance to both energy security and climate change policy

Methodology

- main argument based on stats and secondary sources, stats look sound and convincing
- But: some claims on politics around Methanol in China without any evidence how those were generated; e.g. “*Chinese Communist Party (CCP) knows well that energy security is not an endpoint; rather, it is a means to maintain its governance and legitimacy.*”

Results

- What I learned:

- 1) Chinese Methanol is 100% coal based i.e. highly carbon intensive
- 2) Methanol can only reasonably substitute gasoline, which has a decreasing share of total oil products & is almost to 100% produced in China anyway
- 3) In sum: Methanol cannot enhance China's energy security to a large extent and if so at a high carbon cost

Strengths

- Relevant to current policy debates in China
- Heavily based in stats showing the technical limits of Methanol to substitute other oil products
- Takes a critical approach to viewing technology as the silver bullet

How can the paper be improved?

- 1) Lay out main argument right at the start
- 2) Present structure directly after main argument is introduced
- 3) Need for more references
- 4) Define energy security and show different definitions
- 5) If claims about politics around Methanol remain in paper more detail and evidence is required
- 6) Maybe look at path dependency / lock-in literature?