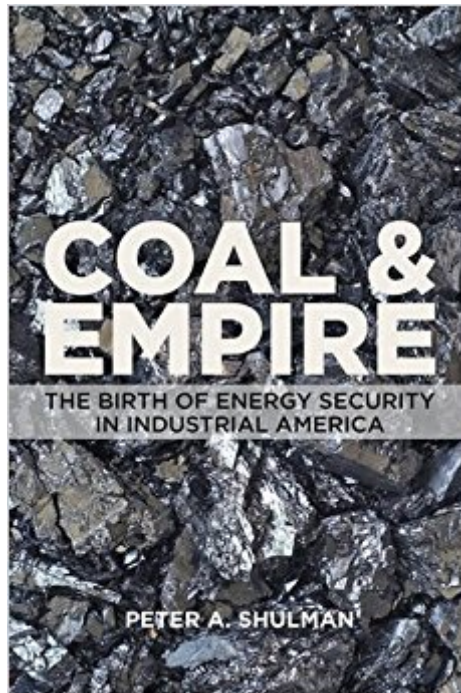




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# Coal And Empire: The Birth Of Energy Security In Industrial America



## Synopsis

Since the early twentieth century, Americans have associated oil with national security. From World War I to American involvement in the Middle East, this connection has seemed a self-evident truth. But as Peter A. Shulman argues, Americans had to learn to think about the geopolitics of energy in terms of security, and they did so beginning in the nineteenth century: the age of coal. *Coal and Empire* insightfully weaves together pivotal moments in the history of science and technology by linking coal and steam to the realms of foreign relations, navy logistics, and American politics. Long before oil, coal allowed Americans to rethink the place of the United States in the world. Shulman explores how the development of coal-fired, ocean-going steam power in the 1840s created new questions, opportunities, and problems for U.S. foreign relations and naval strategy. The search for coal, for example, helped take Commodore Matthew Perry to Japan in the 1850s. It facilitated Abraham Lincoln's pursuit of black colonization in 1860s Panama. After the Civil War, it led Americans to debate whether a need for coaling stations required the construction of a global island empire. Until 1898, however, Americans preferred to answer the questions posed by coal with new technologies rather than new territories. Afterward, the establishment of America's island empire created an entirely different demand for coal to secure the country's new colonial borders, a process that paved the way for how Americans incorporated oil into their strategic thought. By exploring how the security dimensions of energy were not intrinsically linked to a particular source of power but rather to political choices about America's role in the world, Shulman ultimately suggests that contemporary global struggles over energy will never disappear, even if oil is someday displaced by alternative sources of power.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: Johns Hopkins University Press; 1 edition (June 30, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1421417065

ISBN-13: 978-1421417066

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #914,804 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #13 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Energy Production & Extraction > Fossil Fuels > Coal #392

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## Customer Reviews

"Fast-paced, engaging, and accessible, *Coal and Empire* reveals how the extraction and use of coal was intertwined with domestic and international politics, economics and world trade, and innovations in science, mathematics, and technology. Historians of technology and energy will naturally appreciate the book, but the easy-to-digest writing style and broad analysis will also interest readers beyond academia. Shulman's book has wonderful potential to become a valued and well-read treatise." (Richard F. Hirsh, Virginia Tech, author of *Power Loss: The Origins of Deregulation and Restructuring in the American Electric Utility System*) "Exciting to read. It is the product of someone who is such a gifted writer." (New Books in Science, Technology, and Society) "Peter Shulman's excellent new book mines the pre-history of the relationship between ideas about energy extraction and the building of the United States as an imperial nation." (Explorations in Federal History) " ... *Coal and Empire* is a major contribution to foreign policy history and an essential read for any scholar interested in the development of policy and technology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." (H-Net Reviews) "Enlightening reading for anyone interested in the politics and economics of energy." (Choice) "In his exhaustively researched book, Shulman convincingly argues for the centrality of coal to nineteenth-century American domestic and foreign policy, pointing out that 'when seen from the perspective of coal, the great process of industrialization and the emergence of the United States as a global power unfolded at the same time as intertwined processes'... His fast paced and wide-ranging work recounts a number of fascinating episodes central to nineteenth-century American history through the lens of energy needs." (Diplomatic History) "...[Shulman's] rich text provides a vital contribution to our understanding of how resource exploitation--and hence science and technological change--was woven into the history of economics, international affairs, and domestic politics." (Journal of American History) "Peter A. Shulman's *Coal and Empire: The Birth of Energy Security in Industrial America* offers an intellectual feast for both historians and modern energy scholars. Meticulously researched and expertly written, it attempts to show how an energy fuel, in this instance coal, became an integral part of United States national security in the nineteenth century." (Technology and Culture) "A forceful book--well-written, eye-opening, and analytically sharp... *Coal and Empire* is essential reading for anyone interested in the deep roots of the modern fossil economy." (American Historical Review) "Regardless of where you stand on the nineteenth-century US imperial question, the

resources, technology, and politics behind expanding US interests have long needed the careful treatment Coal and Empire provides." (Historical Geography)"... the book is an important one, and the histories of more quotidian commodities need more attention more generally. By using coal as a lens Shulman shows its integral place across US history and the development of its global role into the twentieth century." (Mariner'sÂ Mirror)"provide[s] innovative and important analyses of the specific role of engineers and technology in provoking changes in energy policies, and thus international relations... by delivering a detailed and accurate historical reconstruction of energy in nineteenth-century America, the book provides an interesting comparative case to present narratives about oil and energy security in the contemporary United States. While the first two books" (AMBIX)

Peter A. Shulman is an assistant professor of history at Case Western Reserve University.

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