Coal-Fired Power

HIGHLIGHTS

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PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY STATUS - Some 42% of the world's electricity production is based on coal combustion. The world's coal-fired capacity is 1440 GWe out of a global capacity of 4509 GWe (2007). In China, around 71% of the total installed capacity (502 GWe out of 706 GWe, 2007) is based on coal-fired power plants. Currently, supercritical pulverised coal (SCPC) power - a mature technology - is the dominant option for new coal-fired power plants. In a SCPC power plant, pulverised coal combustion generates heat that is transferred to the boiler to generate supercritical steam. The steam is then used to drive a steam turbine and an electricity generator. Pulverised coal-fired power plants produce a considerable amount of airborne emissions. A 1,000 MWe supercritical plant emits about 5.2 million tonnes (Mt) of CO₂ per year, in addition to smaller but significant amounts of SO₂, NO_x, particulate matter (PM), and minor amounts of mercury. An alternative to the SCPC technology is the integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC). In the IGCC plants, a thermo-chemical reaction with oxygen and steam is used to convert liquid or solid fossil fuels (e.g. hard coal) into a gas mixture of carbon monoxide (CO), hydrogen (H₂), and carbon dioxide (CO₂), along with small amounts of hydrogen sulphide (H₂S). After cleaning, the gas is fired in a gas turbine to generate electricity. The exhaust gas is used to produce superheated steam (in the heat recovery steam generator, HRSG) that drives a steam turbine and generates further electricity. The IGCC technology is less mature than SCPC technology. Several IGCC plants have been built in the US and in Europe. They have efficiency similar to that of SCPC plants, but lower non-greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

PERFORMANCE AND COSTS – Technological development aims to increase the efficiency and decrease the investment cost and the emissions of coal-fired power. The generating efficiency of SCPC plants is expected to increase from the current (2010) maximum value of 46% (lower heating value, LHV) to some 50% for 'ultra-supercritical' technology in 2020. Efficiency and reliability improvements are also expected for the IGCC technology. Its efficiency is estimated to grow from 46% in 2010 to 52% in 2020. In the IGCC plants, the production of CO₂ during the gasification process offers the opportunity for relatively low-cost CO₂ capture and storage (CCS), which may give the future IGCC plants some competitive and environmental advantages over SCPC. As far as costs are concerned, due to the increasing prices of materials, steel and equipment, the investment cost of a pulverised coal-fired power plant increased from \$1500/kWe in 2000 to approximately \$2200/kWe in 2008 (costs are quoted in US\$ 2008). Since the 2008 peak, investment costs have been slightly declining because of the reduction of the material cost induced by the economic crisis and the lower demand for new capacity. The IGCC investment cost is relatively high. It may be up to almost twice the cost of SCPC plants. The operation and maintenance cost (O&M cost, expressed in \$/kWe per year) is estimated at 4% of the investment cost per year for both SCPC and IGCC, but the IGCC plants may face higher O&M costs because of a lower technology maturity. Average costs of electricity today from SCPC are \$60-70/MWh (typically \$65/MWh), of which \$15-25/MWh is for the fuel. For IGCC plants, corresponding figures are \$90-100 (typically \$95/MWh), with \$15-25/MWh for the fuel. In terms of cost projections, technology learning is not expected to dramatically reduce the SCPC investment costs as the technology is mature. Therefore, the costs of supercritical and ultra-supercritical pulverised coal power plants are expected to decline from \$2200/kWe in 2010, to \$2000/kWe in 2020, and to \$1800/kWe in 2030. On the other hand, technology learning may significantly reduce the IGCC investment cost from \$3700/kWe in 2010 (70% more than PC) to $2800/kW_e$ in 2020, and to $2200/kW_e$ in 2030 (20-25% more than PC).

POTENTIAL & BARRIERS - Numerous coal-fired power plants are under construction or being planned in many countries. In the US, some 16 GWe were under construction in January 2009 and a further 10 GWe were approved for construction, some of which are to replace retired capacity. Coal-fired power offers advantages over gas-fired power if the natural gas price is high and/or volatile, or in light of supply security issues. New coal-fired power plants have higher efficiency and lower emission of CO₂ per kWh than existing plants. Emissions of airborne pollutants may be lower as well. A disadvantage is the high investment cost (compared to gas-fired power) that is compensated for by the lower fuel cost. The price of CO₂ may also be a barrier for new coal-fired capacity. The current price in the European emission trading system (some €13-14/tCO₂,) is not high enough to discourage the construction of new coal-fired capacity. However, uncertainties about future CO₂ prices can make it difficult to adopt new investment strategies. In the near future, the utilities that have to comply with emissions trading systems may consider implementing CO₂ capture and storage technologies (CCS). This may significantly increase the investment cost and reduce the efficiency of coal-fired power. Therefore, long-term emission reduction policies and high CO₂ prices are needed for CCS to become commercially available. Coal-fired power not only competes with gas-fired power, but also with nuclear and renewable power. While some renewable technologies are growing fast and will have an increasing impact on the electricity market, the competition with nuclear power will largely depend on licensing and regulatory aspects, environmental issues, social acceptance, and long-term CO₂ policies.

PROCESS AND TECHNOLOGY STATUS – The key features of major types of coal used for power generation are listed in Table 1. **Pulverised coal (PC)** is the fuel used in about 97% of the world's coal-fired capacity (IEA, 2008). In a pulverised coal-fired power plant, coal is milled and burned with air in tall boilers that provide for complete burnout and efficient heat transfer. Radiant and convective heat is transferred to the boiler walls' pipes that carry pressurised water. In a few heating stages (single or double reheating), water is converted into superheated steam. Natural gas or fuel oil may also be used for the start-up phase of a pulverised coal-fired power plant, followed by gradual phase-in of coal.

Technology Jetwork

Table 1 - Main features of four types of coal (Sources: EWG, 2007; Internet source 1)				
Cool Trme	C content,	Ash content,	LHV ^a	
Coal Type	[%wt]	[%wt]	[MJ/kg]	
Anthracite	85 – 95	7 – 11	30	
Bitum. coal: Illinois #6	60 – 61	11 – 14	18.8 – 19.3	
Sub-bitum. coal:	40 40	50.00	0.0.05	
River Basin	48 – 49	5.3 – 6.3	8.3 – 25	
Lignite: N. Dakota	35 – 45	6.6 – 16	5.5 -14.3	

a) Low heating values (LHV) refer to coal types in EWG, 2007

Super-critical pulverised coal (SCPC) power plants use supercritical¹ steam as the process fluid to reach high temperatures and pressures, and efficiencies up to 46% (lower heating value, LHV). New ultrasupercritical (U-SCPC) power plants may reach even higher temperatures and pressure, with efficiency up to 50% (Fig. 1). For example, the AD700 project aims to reach an efficiency of approximately 50%, in 2015-2020. Materials for state-of-the-art steam turbines and boilers can withstand maximum operating temperatures of 600-610°C for primary steam, and 610-620°C for reheated steam, and a maximum pressure of 30 MPa (Fig. 2, Susta, 2008). More than 570 SCPC or U-SCPC units are in operation, under construction, or planned worldwide (Fig. 3) in some 430 power plants (2008), with sizes ranging from 200 MWe to 1300 MWe and a total capacity in excess of 330 GWe. The majority of these units operate at a steam pressure and temperature (i.e. below 24MPa/595°C) that are compatible with the use of allferritic steel for thick-wall boiler components. Further temperature increases require the use of Ni-based super-alloys and new designs. It is anticipated that above 650°C superalloys will replace traditional ferritic steels for steam turbine rotors. Because of the increased thermal expansion coefficients of these materials compared to ferritic steels, thermal stresses in forgings and castings become an important issue during start-up and load cycling, and rotor axial expansions require new design approaches (PC, 2004). Based on ongoing developments, steam turbines with ultra-supercritical

conditions of 35MPa and 720-760°C – with net LHV efficiency above 52% (Fig. 2) – might be designed and tested in the next decade.

■ Integrated gasification combined cycles (IGCC)

are an alternative coal-fired power technology in which a thermo-chemical reaction with oxygen and steam is used to convert coal (or liquid fossil fuels) into a high-pressure gas consisting of carbon monoxide (CO), hydrogen (H₂), and carbon dioxide (CO₂), with small amounts of hydrogen sulphide (H₂S). After cleaning, the gas is fired





Fig. 2 - PC plants efficiency (%) vs. steam parameters and materials (Susta, 2008)



Fig. 3 – Super/ultra critical capacity (Susta, 2008)

¹ Fluids become supercritical at temperature (T) and pressure (P) above the critical point. Close to the critical point, small changes in T and P result in large changes in density. SC fluids are used in industry and in power generation.

in a gas turbine and exhaust is used to generate superheated steam in the heat recovery steam generator (HRSG) and to drive a steam turbine (Fig. 4). Eight IGCC plants in the US and Europe use coal or pet-cokes (Table 2). Another seven IGCC plants – four of which are in Italy – use residual oil (Higman, 2008). Table 3 provides technical and environmental data for four coal-based IGCC plants. Designed as demonstration plants, they have a relatively small capacity (250–300 MW_e). Their efficiency varies from 39% to 45% (LHV), which is comparable to state-of-the-art pulverised coal-fired power. Table 3 also shows that the IGCC specific SO₂ emission is very low, i.e. \leq 0.6 g/kWh (98–99+% desulphurisation), and the same applies to NO_x (0.24–0.40 g/kWh) and particulate matter (0.005–0.02 g/kWh).

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Table 5 shows technical and environmental parameters of a new SCPC plant in the Netherlands and a new IGCC plant in the US. The IGCC plant can more easily attain very low levels of SO2 and NOx emissions than an ultra-SCPC plant. In both cases, low-NOx burners and, if requested by environmental regulations, selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems are applied to reduce the NO_x emissions to the required level. Other environmental impacts relate to the ashes produced in the case of coal combustion or gasification. Waste can be minimised both prior to, and during, coal combustion. Coal cleaning prior to combustion is a very cost-effective method of providing high guality coal. It reduces power station waste, SO_x emissions, and increases thermal efficiencies. The residual waste can then be reprocessed into construction materials (WCI, 2004). In accordance with the target efficiency of the AD700 project, it is assumed that technological learning will entail slow efficiency gains for U-SCPC, namely 46% (LHV) in 2010, and 50% (LHV) in 2020. With regard to coal-based IGCC, it is assumed that these plants may have a net generating efficiency of 46% in 2010 (equal to SCPC plants). However, more learning potential for IGCC may result in a higher efficiency in 2020 (52%, LHV).

The electrical capacity in the European Union is approximately 800 GWe, (2007) of which 18% is based on hard coal and 10% on lignite. In China, the electrical capacity in 2007 was 706 GWe, (with an annual growth rate of 14.1%) of which 502 GWe was based on coal. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2008), the average coal consumption in the Chinese plants is more than 50 gce/kWh higher than the consumption in best available U-SCPC plants. This is equivalent to an additional coal consumption in China of 100 Mtce per year (2930 PJ per year). In the US, the total electrical capacity is approximately 1039 GWe, with 335 GWe based on coal, generating almost 50% of the electricity. At present, the global coal-fired capacity is some 1440 GW_e out of a global capacity of 4509 GWe. China is now installing SCPC power plants as the standard technology and the Indian government is also intensively promoting both SCPC and U-SCPC technologies. In the US, about 16.3 GWe new coal-fired capacity - mostly SCPC and U-SCPC plants - are under construction and an additional 10 GWe are going to be built or have building permission (Shuster, 2009).



Fig. 4 - IGCC power plants (Purdue University, 2007)

Table 2 - Characteristics of IGCC plants (Sources: Ely Field, 2008; Stiegel, 2008).					
Plant	Location	Operation	Size (MW _e)	Fuel	
SCE Cool Water	Barstow (California)	1984–1988	120	Bit. coal	
LGTI (Destec/Dow)	Plaquemine (Louisiana)	1987–1995	160	S.bit.coal & n. gas	
NUON (Demkolec)	Buggenum (Netherlands)	1994-now	253	Bit. coal	
Global Energy Wabash River	Terre Haute (Indiana)	1996-now	261	Bit. coal & pet-coke	
TECO Polk Power Station	Polk (Florida)	1996-now	252	Bit. coal pet-coke	
Frontier Oil & Refining Co.	El Dorado (Kansas)	1996-now	40ª	Pet-coke	
Elcogas S.A.	Puertollano (Spain)	1997-now	298	Coal & Pet-coke	
Motiva Enterpr. Refinery	Delaware City (Delaware)	2002-now	160 ^a	Pet-coke	

a) Co-generation

Table 3 - IGCC technical and environmental characteristics (Sources: EPA, 2006; Fowler, 2008; Swift, 2008; Stiegel, 2008)					
Technical Performance	NUON (NL)	Elcogas (Spain)	TECO (Florida)	Global Energy (Indiana)	
Service	1994	1997	1996	1996	
Fuel	Bit coal	Bit. coal/ Pet-cokes	Bit. coal/ Pet-cokes	Bit. coal/ Pet-cokes	
Availability, %	≥80		≥85	≥70	
Gas turbine power, MW _e	156	182	192	192	
Steam turb. power, MW _e	128	135	120	105	
Internal load, MW _e	31	35	60	36	
Net capacity, MW _e	253	298	252	261	
Net effic.,%	43.2	45.0	39.1	41.9	
Coal use, t/day	2,000	2,175	2,270	2,300	
SO ₂ ,g/kWh	0.20	0.07	< 0.61	0.49	
DeSOx, %	> 99	99,9	> 98	> 98	
NO _x @15%O ₂ ,	0.32	0.40	0.24	0.49	
g/kWh (ppmv)	(<10)	(<10)	(15)	(25)	
PM emissions, g/kWh	0.005	0.02	< 0.02	< 0.05	

COSTS - In the last few years, the investment cost of the SCPC plants increased rapidly due to high prices of steel, other materials, and equipment. Around the year 2000, the specific investment cost was approximately \$1500/kWe (2008 US\$). In 2008, the investment cost of state-of-the-art SCPC power plants was approximately \$2200/kWe (Internet source 2). As the SCPC is a mature technology, its investment cost may decrease moderately based on technology learning. The following costs are predicted over the next two decades: \$2200/kWe in 2010 (based on current experience), $2000/kW_e$ in 2020, and $1800/kW_e$ in 2030 (based on learning effects). It should be said that the current global economic crisis is resulting in significantly lower material prices and lower demand for new capacity. This may result, in turn, in lower investment costs and prices of power technologies.

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If compared to pulverised coal, the investment cost of coal-based IGCC plants is high, i.e. \$3700/kW_e (Sears, 2007 and 2008; Power Engineering, 2009). The figure refers to the 632 MWe IGCC plant in Edwardsport, Indiana. Technological learning is expected to have a more important impact on future IGCC investment costs. Projections suggest a decline from some \$3700/kWe in 2010 (70% more than PC power) to \$2800/kWe in 2020 (40% more than PC power) and to $2200/kW_e$ in 2030 (20-25% more than PC power). Technology learning effects rely on the future availability of high-capacity gasifiers, more efficient gas cleaning systems, and highefficiency gas turbines. The operation and maintenance (O&M) cost (expressed in \$/kWe per year) is estimated at 4% of the investment cost per year for both SCPC and IGCC plants. For (U-)SCPC plants, the O&M cost is estimated at \$88/kWe per year in 2010, \$80/kWe in 2020, and \$72/kWe in 2030, while for IGCC plants, the O&M cost is estimated at \$148/kWe per year in 2010, \$112/kWe in 2020, and \$88/kWe in 2030. Projected figures (2015) of the incremental levelised cost of electricity for pulverised coal power plants as a function of the CO₂ cost, are given in Table 5.

WATER CONSUMPTION & WITHDRAWAL - water consumption of coal-fired power plants varies depending upon the type of technology and the water cooling system being used. For example, a SCPC plant consumes a range of 4-64 gallons per MWh of electricity generated if a Pond cooling system is used, and an IGCC plant consumes 318-439 gallons per MWh if a recirculating Tower cooling system is used. The water withdrawal factors of both SCPC and IGCC are substantially higher, and also vary depending upon the cooling system used. For SCPC plants using a oncethrough cooling system, withdrawal is 22,551-22,611 gallons/MWh, and for an IGCC plan it is 358-605 gallons/MWh using a Tower cooling system. Table 4 shows the range of water consumption and withdrawal factors for different types of coal-fired power plant technologies, including SCPC and IGCC, and different cooling systems.

Table 4 – Water consumption and withdrawal factors for coal-fired power plants (Sources: Meldrum et al., 2012; Macknick et al., 2011; Zhai et al., 2011; NETL, 2009; Tzimas, 2011; EPRI, 2011)				
Plant type	Cooling	Water	Water	
	system	consumption	Withdrawal	
		(gallons/MWh)	(gallons/MWh)	
Supercritical (incl. SCPC)	Tower	458 – 594	582 – 669	
	Once-	64 – 124	22,551 –	
	through		22,611	
	Pond	4 - 64	14,996 -	
			15,057	
Subcritical	Tower	394 - 664	463 – 678	
	Once-	71 – 138	27,046 -	
	through		27,113	
	Pond	737 - 804	17,859 –	
			17,927	
IGCC	Tower	318 - 439	358 - 605	

POTENTIAL & BARRIERS - There are a number of competing technologies and potential barriers for coalfired power. They relate to either coal-fired power or more specifically - SCPC and IGCC power plants. In general, coal-fired power plants have to compete with other base-load power technologies, notably nuclear and gas-fired power. Renewable technologies also grow fast and their impact on electricity generation has to be taken into account. Competition with nuclear power largely depends on nuclear licensing and social acceptance issues. If these issues are solved, then nuclear power may be an economic competitor for coal-fired power as nuclear has in general lower variable costs (e.g. fuel). If compared to gas-fired power, coal plants generally have lower fuel costs per kWh and therefore dispatching priority over gas-fired power. New coal-fired power plants may also be favoured over gas-fired power in terms of supply security as natural gas prices are higher and more volatile than coal prices. In addition, in some regions, gas supply relies significantly on pipelines. In terms of dispatching priority, existing low-efficiency coal-

2007-2008; EPRI, 2007; Power Eng. 2009)					
Plant Parameters	EOn Maasvlakte	Edwardsport,			
	Netherlands	Indiana - USA			
Type of plant	SCPC	IGCC			
In service	2012	2012			
Fuel	Bitum.coal	Bitum. coal			
Availability, %	91	85			
Turbine power, MW _e	1,100	795			
Internal load, MW _e	45	163			
Net capacity, MW _e	1,055	632			
Net efficiency, %	46.0	44.0			
Coal use, t/day	7,350				
SO ₂ emissions,	40	NA			
mg/Nm ³ (g/kWh)	(0.11)	(0.05)			
DeSOx, %	98	99+			
NO _x SCR @15%O ₂ ,	65	NA			
mg/Nm ³ (g/kWh)	(0.18)	(0.07)			
PM emissions	3	NA			

Table 5 - Technical parameters for SCPC and IGCC plants

mg/Nm ³ , (g/kW	h) (0.008)	(0.026)

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fired plants are ranked lower than new, highly-efficient plants, that are obviously less flexible with respect to load variations. As a consequence, operation of existing low-efficiency plants may be stopped when the electricity demand is low (e.g. the weekend). In the industrialised countries, the increasing share of renewables driven by incentives and promotion policies may cause delay or cancellation of coal-fired plants. Some renewable technologies may be affected by intermittency issues (e.g. wind, photovoltaics), but geothermal power, biomass-fired power, and concentrating solar power (CSP) with thermal storage may also have attractive characteristics for base-load service. Utilities analyse and exploit the synergies between renewable and fossilbased power generation (including combined heat and power) as they may result in reliability and supply security advantages as well as in cost and environmental benefits.

In many countries, **biomass co-firing** in coal-fired power plants is already common practice. In existing coal-fired power plants, biomass may be co-fired with coal up to 10–20% (in energy content), with no significant impact on plant operation. In general, the efficiency of biomass combustion can be 10 percentage points lower than efficiency of coal combustion at the same installation, but the efficiency of biomass co-firing in large-scale coal plants is higher (35%–45%) than the efficiency of biomass-dedicated plants (IEA, 2007). Higher percentages of biomass co-firing are technically achievable by investment in supply systems and burners. Co-firing investment costs for new coal-fired power plants may be relatively modest. Biomass may also be used in coal-based IGCC power plants. Biomass

co-firing may also reduce SO_2 emissions of coal-fired power while NO_x emissions do not change significantly.

In the near future, the price of CO₂ may be a barrier to coal-fired power. Today's prices are low and do not preclude new coal-based capacity. However, uncertainty about future prices of fuels (coal and natural gas) and CO2 make it difficult to identify clear investment strategies. To comply with the Emissions Trading System (ETS) and more demanding emission regulations, in the industrialised regions electric utilities will be considering the implementation of CO₂ capture and storage (CCS) systems as soon as this technology becomes mature enough to enter the market. Because CCS is expected to increase the investment cost and to reduce the plant efficiency considerably, it will become commercially affordable only under clear and stable emissions mitigation policies and high CO₂ prices. As for non-greenhouse gas emissions, modern coal-fired power plants have very low emission levels. Nevertheless, hazardous air emissions such as mercury must be carefully monitored and controlled (Internet Source 3). The use of NOx selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems depends on national or regional environmental regulations and may be mandatory in some countries. With regard to IGCC plants, their performance (efficiency and SO₂ and NO_x emissions) compare favourably with SCPC power plants, but the investment costs remain high. If Governments do not provide financial incentives, only large utilities and power companies may bear the cost of demonstrating IGCC with a view to its future benefits including potential for more efficient and less expensive CO₂ capture and storage (CCS).

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Technology Network

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Table 6 – Summary Table - Key Data and Figures for Coal-based Power Technology

Technolog etwork

Technical Performance	Typical current international figures				
Energy input	Hard coal or lignite; possible biomass co-firing up to 10–20% of energy				
Output	Electricity				
Technologies	(Ultra)supercritical plants (U)SCPC IGCC				
Efficiency, %	46%	46%			
Construction time, months	Minimum 42; Typical	48; Maximum 54			
Technical lifetime, yr	40				
Load (capacity) factor, %	Typical 75–85; M	laximum 90			
Max. (plant) availability, %	92				
Typical (capacity) size, MW _e	600–1100	250–1200			
Installed (existing) capacity, GW _e	1,260	1			
Environmental Impact					
CO ₂ and other GHG emissions, kg/MWh	730–850	700–750 (new IGCC plant)			
SO ₂ , g/MWh	110–250	50			
NO _x , g/MWh	180–800	70			
Particulates, g/MWh	8–25	5–25			
Solid waste (fly ash), kg/MWh	60–70	60–70			
By-products	Gypsum	Sulphur			
Costs					
Investment cost, including interest during	2000 – 2500; Typical 2200 (2010)	3500 – 4000; Typical 3700 (2010)			
construction, \$/kW (PC / IGCC)					
O&M cost (fixed and variable), \$/kW/a	88	148			
Fuel cost, \$/MWh	15–25	15–25			
Economic lifetime, yr	25				
Interest rate, %	10				
Total production cost, \$/MWh (PC /	60 – 70 / Typical 65	90 – 100; Typical 95			
IGCC)					
Market share	40% of global electricity output	Currently negligible			





Net Efficiency (LHV)	46%	(46)	50%	52%	50%	52%	
Investment cost, including interest during	2200	3700	2000	2800	1800	2200	
construction, \$/kW (PC / IGCC)							
Total production cost, \$/MWh	65	95	62.5	75	60	65	
Market share, % global electricity output	35		30 – 35		25 – 35		