

Strategic LNG Infrastructure Development in South Asia: A Policy-Driven Technological Roadmap

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Abstract:

The LNG facility is also crucial for addressing South Asia's increasing energy needs and the demand for more environmentally friendly transportation fuel. This study suggests a policy-based technology road map for LNG infrastructure for strategic growth of LNG infrastructure in South Asian region (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). To this end, the research adopts a mixed-methods approach: an extensive literature review, covering the global and regional energy policies and best practices; in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews with 25–35 key stakeholders to examine their insights on policy, technological and geopolitical challenges; quantitative market analysis for LNG import volumes, infrastructure investment costs and demand projections; and comprehensive case study investigations of current Indian and Pakistani LNG terminals to offer pragmatic lessons. The project is designed to result in a robust model coupling policy coherence, technological innovation and regional cooperation to defuse geopolitical and economic obstacles. The research results are designed to inform policy makers, industry leaders and planners in sustainable development of LNG infrastructure, leading to the improvements in the areas of energy security, economic growth, and environmental sustainability in South Asia. Ethical issues Guarantee of confidentiality and reduction of bias are taken into account in every part of the research.

Key words: LNG infrastructure, energy policy, South Asia, technological innovation, sustainable development

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I. Introduction

South Asia, with its 1.9 billion plus population, has seen urban development, industrial growth and population growth lead to swift rise in demand for energy (International Energy Agency, 2016). Regionally, dependence upon coal and oil has caused substantial environmental problems such as emissions high in carbon and bad air. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is becoming an important energy source in South Asia as a cleaner source to facilitate the region's international obligations, such as climate agreements as prescribed in the Paris Agreement (Bridge & Bradshaw, 2017). However, the establishment of LNG infrastructure – import terminals, regasification unit, pipelines and storage – is disproportionately lagging behind in South Asia, largely due to convoluted policy, technological, and geopolitical conditions (Barry, 2013).

India and Pakistan, have succeeded to some extent with their LNG terminal constructions (Kochi and Port Qasim, respectively), whereas Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are more successful after regulatory bottlenecks and little investment (Six & Corbeau, 2017). In addition, geopolitical rivalry, particularly between India and Pakistan, has stymied regional cooperation and the development of cross-border energy projects (Bridge et al., 2018). Further, the economic disparities in South Asia impede equal investment in infrastructure and market integration.

In view of the growth in global LNG market by 2030 due to demand surge and technological advancement, it is important for South Asia to respond to this trend, as energy security and sustainable economic development, were pegged on this prospect (International Energy Agency, 2016). Climate change threats such as sea level rise also creates further incentive for sustainable energy solutions in the area. Hence, the present study aims to create a policy-led technology roadmap for strategic enhancement of LNG infrastructure for the South Asia region. It aims to integrate energy policy frameworks with innovation systems of technologies to unlock and remove the existing barriers, thereby driving scalable, sustainable LNG development across the four countries in South Asia - India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Frantál et al., 2014).

II. Literature Review

The development of LNG infrastructure in South Asia has received theoretical and policy attention, highlighting the nexus of energy policy, technology development and geopolitical relations.

Energy Policy Frameworks:

Sovacool and Cooper (2013) emphasize the significant impact that governance arrangements can have on the configuration of energy infrastructure projects, in capital-intensive sectors such as LNG. Successful policies generally comprise fiscal based incentives, such as subsidies, tax expenditures and public-private partnerships to reduce the risk and attract investment (Jarvis, 2011). But the region's energy policies are fragmented. While in the Indian case, policies are being actively shaped to attract private participation in LNG imports, it is the regulatory delays that prevents infrastructure development in Bangladesh (Bridge & Bradshaw, 2017). This dispersion prevents regional market and cross-border cooperation.

No direct equivalent from the literature but similar to:

TIS theory provides a way of interpreting how LNG technologies develop through the co-evolution of firms, government and knowledge networks (Birch & Calvert, 2015). To this end, the use of floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs), cryogenic storage and pipeline infrastructure is crucial to achieve the required levels of scalability and flexibility across different South Asian countries (Six & Corbeau, 2017). Tech Innovation ecosystems—whether or not it be industry clusters in India or research collaborations in Pakistan—play a critical function in facilitating the adoption of technologies in the face of barriers such as high price and the deficiency of appropriate infrastructure.

Difficulties in Geopolitics and Economics:- We are now all too familiar with the ramifications of the current geopolitical and economic situations.

Political friction, in particular between India and Pakistan, is frustrating cross-border LNG projects that would be able to make best use of regional resource allocation and market efficiency (Bridge et al., 2018). Economic inequalities in the region also hinder strategic infrastructure development, and the larger markets are outpacing smaller markets such as Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. In addition, climate change presents risks for the environment also requiring sustainable infrastructural design (Frantál et al., 2014).

Use Cases and Market Trends:

India's (Kochi) and Pakistan's (Port Qasim) present LNG terminals provide useful examples in terms of policy planning and technology adoption. Both positive and negative examples come out of these projects, including how to navigate regulatory landscapes and manage operational complexities (Barron, 2016). Market assessments forecast rising demand for global LNG by 2030 among energy transitions to cleaner fuels and urgency for the South Asian region having scalable LNG infrastructure (2016 International Energy Agency).

In conclusion, the literature emphasises a coherent policy and technology framework that can effectively manage governance fragmentation, promote innovation, reduce geopolitical risk and encourage sustainable growth of LNG infrastructure in South Asia. This article seeks to elaborate on these reflections by proposing an integrated roadmap adapted to the region's specific challenges and opportunities.

2.1 Literature Gap

Although the available literature has offered useful perspectives on the construction of LNG infrastructure, energy policies, and technological innovations in the region, several important questions have yet to be answered:

Fragmented Regional Focus:

Most studies are country specific (e.g., India, Pakistan), with few providing a holistic view of LNG infrastructure development for the region as a whole. This creates a space to question how cooperation in the region and harmonization of policies could facilitate the integration of cross-border LNG markets.

Policy and Technology Integration:

While energy policy frameworks and technological innovation systems, in isolation have been investigated, the conceived of integrated approaches that examine policy incentives and technological advancement and their combined impact on driving up scalable, LNG infrastructures being in South Asia.

Geopolitical and Economic Forces:

Such multifaceted geopolitical tensions, specifically those between India and Pakistan, and the economic inequalities in the region are frequently cited, but are only rarely analyzed in relation to their influence on LNG infrastructure planning and development.

Limited Empirical Data:

There are very few studies that integrate these qualitative stakeholder perspectives with quantitative market data and case study analysis to present a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities of LNG infrastructure in South Asia.

Sustainability and Climate Adaptation:

The potential environmental risks and sustainability impacts of development of LNG infrastructure in a climate-sensitive region such as South Asia have been largely ignored in the literature.

The aim of this work is to bridge this gap by creating a policy-led technology roadmap that is taking into consideration regional policy coherence and innovations, geopolitical facts and sustainability that can aid the South Asian region in developing a strategic infrastructure for LNG.

III. Methodology

The research is mixed methods by nature, which provides a holistic view of establishing LNG infrastructure in South Asia using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Research Approach

The mixed methods considers qualitative perspectives and quantitative understanding and its interaction to evaluate the complex relations between policy, technology, and geography shaping the expansion of LNG infrastructure (Bouzarovski et al., 2015). This facilitates triangulating the data sources and increasing the robustness and depth of the findings.

Research Design

Phase 1: Literature Review

In this regard, a systematic literature review of global and regional LNG infrastructure, energy policies, technological innovation systems and geopolitics will be performed. Primary sources will emphasize peer-reviewed journals, policy briefs, industry publications, and databases including Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR. This allows the informing and the empiric foundation of the pilgrimage cycle to be laid by the present work.

Phase 2: Qualitative Research

Semi-structured interviews with 25–35 key respondents in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. “Attendees will be made up of policy-makers, energy regulators, industry chiefs as well as community advocates,” he added. Throughout the courses, interviews will delve into the policy frameworks, technological hurdles, and geopolitical factors shaping LNG infrastructure. Through purposive sampling and its subsequent snowball, a variety of responses can be assured. Interviews will be audio-recorded (with permission) before being transcribed, and main themes and findings captured using NVivo to identify patterns and interpret data.

Step 3: Quantitative study

The quantitative analysis is expected to concentrate on the data of LNG market, for instance, import amount and facility investment price and energy demands forecast from 2025 to 2040. Data will be obtained from government databases, international agencies such as the International Energy Agency (IEA) and industry reports. Statistical methods such as time series analysis and cost-benefit analysis will be used by using the SPSS package to evaluate the economic feasibility, market trends and the influence of the policy incentives over the level of investment. Sensitivity analysis on the influences of geopolitics and global LNG price volatility will be conducted.

Phase 4: Case Studies

Comprehensive case studies of the Kochi LNG terminal, India and the Port Qasim regasification project, Pakistan will be conducted. These case studies will include the examination of documents such as project reports, environmental assessments, and consultation with stakeholders. The case-studies would present real life understanding of policy, adoption of technology, operational difficulties and lessons which are relevant for Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis: We will conduct thematic analysis of the transcripts of interviews, with iterative coding of data for patterns relating to policy obstacles, technology challenges and geopolitical factors. Converging with literature and case study data will increase reliability.

Quantitative information: Descriptive and inferential statistical methods will be employed to summarize market trends and to test hypotheses about policy effects. Relationships between policy intervention and investment outcomes will be measured using regression models.

Ethical Considerations

Research will comply with ethically sound methodologies by obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality and securely storing data. Bias will be reduced through clear methodology and triangulation procedures of sources (Sovacool & Cooper, 2013).

IV. Results and Discussion

Policy context and regulatory frameworks

The qualitative findings of the study suggest the influence of national/regional energy policies and the strength of the regulatory support on South Asia's LNG infrastructure development. Proactive policies and incentives by

India have led to increased LNG terminal projects and private sector investment. By contrast in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, regulatory delays and bureaucratic obstacles are obstructing infrastructure expansion. With fragmenting policy across countries constraining regional cooperation, the benefits from integrated LNG markets could be difficult to realise. These findings are consistent with the theory that highlights the importance of coordination regulations in promoting regional market integration (Bridge & Bradshaw, 2017; Sovacool & Cooper, 2013).

Adoption of technology and challenges of innovation

Interviews and cases reveal the importance to the flexibility and scalability of LNG infrastructure in a range of South Asian countries of technological developments like Floating Storage Regasification Units (FSRUs). But high costs of capital, insufficient local technical capacity and missing infrastructure hold the adoption of technology back. The Emergence of technology clusters in India and research collaborations in Pakistan illustrates that knowledge sharing and innovation ecosystem can address some of these barriers which validate the existence from the TIS theory (Birch & Calvert, 15; Six & Corbeau, 17).

Geopolitical and Economic Limitations

Geopolitical conflicts, especially between India and Pakistan, prove to be the key obstacle in cross-border LNG schemes and regional co-operation. According to stakeholders, the political lack of trust prevents trade and cooperation in energy, both in the form of buy-sell agreements and joint infrastructure investment, which comes at great expense and reduced efficiency. There are also economic inequities, with richer countries benefiting at a faster pace, while smaller markets find it difficult to capture investment. These results highlight the intricate nexus between politics and economy in energy infrastructure planning (Bridge et al., 2018).

Market trends and monetary viability

Quantitative analysis of LNG imports and investment suggests sustained growth in demand, underpinning projections of substantial infrastructure requirements by 2040. Cost-benefits results highlight the role of policy instruments (tax incentives and grants) as determinant of investment level. Sensitivity analyses indicate that global LNG price and geopolitical risks do exert influence on the market stability, which, however, can be moderated by a stronger institutional framework and regionalism. As such, these findings underscore the need for both policy coherence and market mechanisms to encourage sustainable investment in LNG infrastructure (International Energy Agency, 2016; Bridge & Bradshaw, 2017).

Policy-Driven Tread a Policy-Focused Path of Technology Transformations

Balancing qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study builds a roadmap that combines policy coherence, technological innovation and geopolitical strategy. This roadmap focuses on scalable technologies such as floating storage and regasification units (FSRUs), calls for regulatory harmonization to help facilitate cross-border LNG trading and examines how to reduce the impact of geopolitical risk. It focuses on building capacity and regional collaborations to promote innovation ecosystems and sustainable infrastructure development. The roadmap is designed to help governments and industry in South Asia develop more sustainable and energy secure policies to promote economic development and ecological stability.

V. Conclusion

This study underscores the critical role of a policy-driven and technologically informed approach to developing LNG infrastructure in South Asia. The region's growing energy demand, coupled with environmental imperatives, necessitates a coordinated framework that integrates energy policies, technological innovation, and geopolitical realities. Findings reveal that while countries like India and Pakistan have made significant progress, regulatory fragmentation, geopolitical tensions, and economic disparities continue to hinder regional LNG infrastructure growth. By combining qualitative insights, quantitative market analysis, and case studies, this research offers a scalable roadmap to overcome these challenges. The proposed framework emphasizes regulatory harmonization, adoption of flexible technologies like Floating Storage and Regasification Units, and regional cooperation to enhance energy security and sustainable development. Ultimately, this study contributes to bridging gaps in South Asia's energy transition and provides actionable guidance for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and development planners.

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