

Solution Framing in Energy Policy: The Discursive Construction of LNG-to-Power Under Myanmar's NLD Government

Hsu Myat Yadanar Thein and Yay Chann

Abstract

During Myanmar's National League for Democracy (NLD) administration (2016–2021), LNG-to-power emerged as a primary solution to chronic electricity shortages and to national electrification targets. Unlike coal-fired projects, which had previously triggered intense public opposition, LNG initiatives faced comparatively limited contestation. This paper argues that this divergence was not driven solely by technology but was actively shaped by the discursive construction of the policy solution—that is, through policy framing. Drawing on a qualitative-interpretive analysis of ministerial speeches, parliamentary records, policy documents, and state media, the study examines how authorities positioned LNG within a “clean energy” discourse. This framing rested on three pillars: climate responsibility, national development goals, and natural gas as a lower-impact alternative to coal. The analysis also highlights deliberate reframing, specifically the shift from politically fatigued terms such as “Memorandum of Understanding” (MOU) toward implementation-oriented instruments such as “Notice to Proceed.” These frames, combined with multi-ministerial coordination, allowed the NLD government to normalize large-scale infrastructure projects. Ultimately, the paper shows how energy-transition governance relied on discursive strategies to manage resistance and maintain legitimacy during a period of democratic transition.