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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# Transition Fuel or Trojan Horse? On LNG's Hidden Emissions

 **DOWN TO EARTH**18 June 2026 · **ENVIRONMENT** · **GS3**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# Transition Fuel or Trojan Horse? On LNG's Hidden Emissions

 **Down to Earth**    18 June 2026    **GS3**

Source: [ujjyari.com](http://ujjyari.com) — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped



## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"Natural gas is sold as a cleaner bridge fuel. If a fifth of its emissions are released before it ever reaches a power plant, is that label still honest?"*

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [Down to Earth](#)

 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujjyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

## WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Liquefied natural gas is routinely promoted as a cleaner bridge between coal and renewables. A new analysis of Japan's resale of US-sourced LNG into Asia, including to India, challenges that framing by exposing the large emissions hidden across the fuel's life cycle. As India's LNG imports rise, the question of whether gas is a genuine transition fuel or a high-emission lock-in dressed up as one moves from academic to urgent.

## THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Between 2020 and 2025 Japan resold about 31% of its US LNG into Asia, including India, China and South Korea. That gas was linked to roughly 63.5 billion kg of carbon dioxide, about 17 coal plants' annual emissions, with over 20% released before the gas reached power plants. LNG's lifecycle and methane emissions undercut its clean transition-fuel image.

## THE ISSUE, DECODED

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ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
LNG resale	Japan reselling US-sourced LNG into other Asian markets	Spreads US gas, and its emissions, across India, China and South Korea
Lifecycle emissions	Emissions across extraction, liquefaction, shipping, regasification and burning	More than 20% released before combustion, hidden by combustion-only metrics
Methane leakage	Potent greenhouse gas escaping upstream in the gas chain	Far stronger than carbon dioxide over the near term, worsening the true footprint
Bridge-fuel framing	Gas marketed as a cleaner step between coal and renewables	Risks lock-in of long-lived infrastructure and decades of imports

## THE ANALYSIS: THE EMISSIONS BEFORE THE FLAME

- ❶ **The clean comparison is incomplete.** Gas looks better than coal only at the point of combustion. Counting the full chain changes the verdict.
- ❷ **A fifth of the harm comes early.** More than 20% of the resold LNG's emissions occurred before the fuel reached a power plant, in production, liquefaction, shipping and regasification.
- ❸ **Methane is the silent multiplier.** Much upstream loss is methane, whose near-term warming power dwarfs carbon dioxide, inflating LNG's real impact.
- ❹ **Resale spreads the footprint.** Japan's resale model diffuses US gas, and its lifecycle emissions, across multiple Asian importers including India.

## DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

*Japan resold about 31% of its US LNG into Asia between 2020 and 2025; the resold gas was linked to roughly 63.5 billion kg of carbon dioxide, comparable to about 17 coal plants annually; over 20% of emissions occurred before combustion.*

*a greenhouse gas tens of times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year horizon; addressed by the Global Methane Pledge.*

*the full well-to-burner footprint, as opposed to combustion-only accounting.*

*the aim to raise natural gas to a larger share of the energy mix, increasing LNG imports.*

## THE DEBATE

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**The argument for gas as a bridge:** At the point of combustion, gas emits less than coal and offers flexible, dispatchable power while renewables and storage scale. For a coal-heavy grid like India's, it can ease the transition.

**The argument against:** Once upstream and methane emissions are counted, much of the climate advantage erodes. Worse, long-lived LNG infrastructure risks locking in imports and emissions for decades, crowding out cheaper clean options.

**The balanced verdict:** Gas may have a narrow, time-limited role, but only under honest lifecycle accounting and without over-building infrastructure. The danger is mistaking a partial metric for a clean bill of health and letting a bridge become a destination.

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

*Beware metrics chosen to flatter. "Cleaner than coal at the smokestack" is true and misleading at once. The transferable skill is asking what a favourable statistic leaves out, and insisting on the boundary of measurement that captures the whole system, not the convenient part of it.*

## DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Extraction + methane leak -> liquefaction -> shipping -> regasification -> combustion

The hidden share: over 20% of emissions occur in the first four steps, before combustion, so combustion-only accounting understates the true footprint.

## THE WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Adopt full lifecycle accounting** for gas in energy and climate planning, including upstream methane.
- 2 **Avoid LNG lock-in** by limiting long-term import contracts and over-sized infrastructure that outlive their transitional purpose.
- 3 **Clamp down on methane leakage** across imports and domestic operations, aligning with global methane commitments.
- 4 **Accelerate the genuine clean stack** of renewables, storage and green hydrogen so the bridge stays short.
- 5 **Demand transparency from suppliers** on the lifecycle emissions of imported LNG.

## THE TAKEAWAY BOX

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*Use in GS3 environment and energy answers on transition fuels, lifecycle emissions and methane.*

*“The label ‘transition fuel’ must be earned by the whole chain, not just the final flame.”*

*Methane potency and the Global Methane Pledge, lifecycle versus combustion emissions, the 63.5 billion kg figure and the over-20%-before-combustion share.*

*Honesty in environmental claims and the responsibility to disclose hidden costs of “clean” choices.*

*Connects to past GS3 questions on **energy security** (<https://ujyari.com/terms/energy-security/>), **climate change** and the **energy transition**.*

*India’s natural-gas expansion, green hydrogen mission, renewable targets and methane mitigation (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/mitigation/>).*

**Sources:** *Down to Earth* (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/>), *Mint* (<https://www.livemint.com/opinion>)

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**KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE**

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## LNG's reputation as a clean transition fuel ignores large lifecycle emissions released long before the gas is ever burned for power.


**SUPPORTING**

- Between 2020 and 2025 Japan resold about 31% of its US-sourced LNG into Asian markets including India, China and South Korea.
- This resold gas was linked to roughly 63.5 billion kg of carbon dioxide, comparable to the annual emissions of about 17 coal plants.
- More than 20% of those emissions were released before the gas reached power plants, in extraction, liquefaction, shipping and regasification.


**COUNTER**

Some argue gas still emits less than coal at the point of combustion and is a pragmatic bridge while renewables and storage scale up.


**WAY FORWARD**

India should account for full lifecycle and methane emissions in energy planning, avoid long-term LNG lock-in, and accelerate renewables, storage and green hydrogen.


**MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK**

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**QUESTION**

*"Liquefied natural gas is promoted as a transition fuel, but its lifecycle emissions challenge that framing." Examine the implications for India's energy strategy. (250 words)*

**INTRODUCTION**

Natural gas has long been marketed as the clean bridge between coal and renewables. A new analysis of Japan's resale of US liquefied natural gas into Asia punctures that comfortable story, revealing how much of the climate cost of LNG is incurred and ignored before the fuel is ever burned.

**BODY**

Between 2020 and 2025, Japan resold roughly 31% of the LNG it imported from the United States into other Asian markets, including India, China and South Korea. That resold gas was associated with about 63.5 billion kilograms of carbon dioxide, an amount comparable to the annual emissions of around 17 coal plants.

Crucially, more than 20% of those emissions were released before the gas reached any power plant, during extraction, liquefaction, long-distance shipping and regasification. Much of the upstream loss is methane, a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide over the near term.

The combustion-only comparison that makes gas look clean against coal therefore omits a large slice of its true climate footprint. For India, a rising LNG importer, the lesson is that the bridge-fuel framing can become a trap.

Building extensive long-lived LNG infrastructure risks locking in decades of imports and lifecycle emissions just as renewables, storage and green hydrogen become cheaper. Honest lifecycle and methane accounting should therefore guide energy planning, rather than the partial combustion-only metric that flatters gas.

**CONCLUSION**

LNG may have a limited transitional role, but only if its full lifecycle cost is counted and its infrastructure does not crowd out the cleaner future. The label "transition fuel" must be earned by the whole chain, not just the final flame.


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