

Acknowledgments

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to determine why two countries coping with a position of gas import dependence, Czech Republic and Hungary, have different gas security strategies. This thesis utilises Mill's method of difference, together with the securitisation theory and rational choice theory, to explore this conundrum. A qualitative research method is adopted, where face-to-face elite interviews were carried out in Prague and Budapest with Czech and Hungarian energy experts. The thesis aims to fill a gap in the literature by looking at transit and supply diversification, companies operating in the countries, and the gas storages capacities in Czech Republic and Hungary, through an identity-based perception of Russia. Moreover, the importance of gas price regulations as well as the impact domestic factors have on gas contracts will be analysed. The research showed that Czech Republic and Hungary have both securitised several factors in gas security, primarily because of the identity-perception of Russia as either a threat or pragmatic business partner. It also showed the extensive influence both Russia and the EU have over the two countries regarding their gas security. The two countries have adopted different approaches to the role of the state. The Hungarian government takes a large role in the gas sector, gaining ownership of several gas companies, in contrasts to the Czech government who adopts the EU regulations, allowing the market to decide. The thesis thus brings together insights from securitisation and rational choice theory to understand how similar gas import dependent countries deal with their gas security.

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