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Exploring the nexus between Pakistan's energy (in)security and foreign policymaking

Zahid Shahab Ahmed ^a and Muhammad Jahanzaib ^b

^aNational Defence College, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; ^bDepartment of Politics and International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Pakistan's depleting natural gas reserves and rising energy demand have necessitated increased reliance on energy imports. Heavy reliance on energy imports has made energy security a central concern in its foreign policy. However, existing literature has largely overlooked this dimension. This study addresses this gap through multiple case studies of Pakistan's engagement with energy-rich states in the Arabian Gulf and Central Asian, as well as Iran and Russia. The paper makes two main arguments. First, energy security has become a national security concern in Pakistan because energy shortages and rising costs threaten economic development, industrial productivity, and social stability. Second, energy security has shaped Pakistan's foreign policy because of heavy reliance on imports, encouraging greater engagement with energy-producing states, particularly in the Gulf.

KEYWORDS

Pakistan; foreign policy; energy security

Introduction

Since its creation in 1947, Pakistan's economic and security interests have been influencing its foreign policy decision-making. While traditional security interests continue to play a significant role in determining Pakistan's foreign policy, non-traditional security threats like terrorism and energy insecurity play a significant role in foreign affairs (Jillani, Rehman, and Islam 2021). Despite recognizing the need to reduce reliance on energy imports, as suggested by organizations like the World Bank, Pakistan continues to depend heavily on oil, gas, and coal imports to meet its growing energy demands (Haq 2023; WB 2023). Pakistan is pursuing two strategies for energy security by diversifying domestic renewable energy sources and strengthening relations with energy-rich states to ensure reliable and affordable energy supplies. Given that energy security is central to Pakistan's foreign policy, it is crucial to examine how domestic energy needs shape foreign policy decision-making. This study aims to explore the impact of Pakistan's energy (in)security on its foreign policy decision-making and its relations with energy-rich states. The central hypothesis of this research is that Pakistan's energy (in)security significantly influences its foreign policy and relations with energy-rich states, including Iran, Russia, Central Asian Republics (CARs), and Gulf states.

The broader literature on international relations extensively examines the connection between domestic and foreign policy, with much of the focus on the correlation between domestic politics and foreign policy (Cadier 2024; Tasleem 2022). States use foreign policy to achieve national interests, and according to Ayoob (2011, 175), 'National interest is often a term used to legitimize the interests of particular groups, and hence a particular foreign policy, by elevating it above the level of partisan politics.' Energy is a key element of national interest for both energy-importing and energy-exporting states. Energy-rich countries use their resources as instruments of power in foreign affairs. Youngs (2011) argues that states leverage their energy resources for economic gain, political influence, and national security. In the context of international relations, energy is seen through the lens of power, as energy suppliers use their resources to gain influence. Low- and middle-income countries have sought various strategies to ensure energy security; for instance, the US has built alliances, strengthened collective energy security, asserted its interests with energy suppliers (Özdamar 2010).

Domestic needs increasingly shape foreign policy decision-making as governments seek to address non-traditional security challenges that directly affect social stability, economic development, and regime legitimacy. Among these challenges, energy, food, and water security have emerged as critical drivers of external engagement. As scholars note, security is no longer just about military threats but increasingly encompasses issues affecting citizens' well-being and development (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). Non-traditional security is crucial for domestic stability and economic growth. Global food price increases can weaken economic welfare, deepen poverty, and trigger political instability and social unrest, particularly in developing and least-developed countries (Compton, Wiggins, and Keats 2010). Similarly, water insecurity has been a key challenge facing many countries whereby climate change is acting as a 'threat multiplier' (von Uexkull and Buhaug 2021). There are two key aspects of energy security, including availability and affordability (Deese 1979). According to the International Energy Agency, '[e]nergy security is not just about having uninterrupted access to energy, but also about securing energy supplies at an affordable price' (IEA 2022, 184). Energy security is a key national interest for many states; therefore, it has become a key driver of foreign policy decision-making as states compete to meet their energy needs. For instance, energy security has become an increasingly important element of Chinese foreign policy, despite claims that energy is not the most crucial factor in China's international affairs (Tang 2006). Similarly, India's engagement in the Gulf reflects efforts to secure stable energy supplies necessary for sustaining economic growth and meeting developmental goals (Prabhakar 2004). Accordingly, foreign policy is increasingly employed as tool accompanied through diplomatic and economic instruments to secure essential resources, including energy, to meet domestic needs for the sake of maintaining economic and social stability.

The existing literature on energy and foreign policymaking in Pakistan is largely focused on policy research rather than rigorous academic analysis. A study by Chia and Haiqi (2021) examined how the changing global energy landscape has impacted Pakistan's relations with Russia, particularly in terms of diversifying its energy sources. A couple of studies have addressed Pakistan's energy insecurity and proposed solutions to mitigate it (Chia and Haiqi 2021; Kugelman 2015). Makarevich (2022) highlights energy security as a crucial aspect of Pakistan's foreign policy due to its heavy reliance

on energy imports. However, this study does not explore how energy security directly shapes Pakistan's foreign policy decision-making and its relations with energy-providing states. To date, there has been no comprehensive examination of how Pakistan's energy (in)security influences its foreign policy.

Our research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of the nexus between domestic and foreign policy. We do not claim that energy is the sole driver of bilateral relations under investigation, acknowledging that other factors, such as identity, also play a significant role, particularly in Pakistan's relations with Muslim-majority states like Saudi Arabia (Ahmed and Karim 2024). While the geopolitical dynamics of energy security have been explored in the context of emerging economies like India and China (Ahmed, Ahmed, and Bhatnagar 2018), we argue that the case of developing countries like Pakistan is equally relevant for foreign policy analysis. Given Pakistan's complex crises, including its ongoing economic challenges and dependence on International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailouts (IMF 2024), makes Pakistan an ideal case to study the influence of domestic energy insecurity on foreign policy.

This study employs a mixed method approach, combining primary and secondary data sources to explore how energy (in)security influences Pakistan's foreign policy. Primary data includes government reports, speeches, parliamentary proceedings, and media briefings from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, offering direct insights into official policy and decision-making. Secondary data is drawn from think tanks and media reports, as well as the websites of political parties in Pakistan, providing contextual understanding. These sources are crucial for examining the correlation between energy-related decision-making and Pakistan's foreign affairs, as leading local think tanks regularly produce policy-relevant research and analysis, often featuring contributions from policymakers through op-eds. This study employs a multiple case study approach, focusing on Pakistan's relations with energy-rich countries in the Gulf region, CARs, Iran, and Russia. By analyzing these cases, the study assesses the extent to which Pakistan's energy (in)security drives its foreign relations with these selected states. Each case provides insights into how Pakistan navigates energy diplomacy, secures energy resources, and manages geopolitical challenges related to its energy needs. In terms of the timeline, this study focuses on nearly two decades between 2006 and June 2026. The rationale for this timeline is based on a study by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics claiming that Pakistan's current energy crisis in the shape of electricity shortfall started in 2006–07 (Malik 2012).

In terms of structure, this paper begins with an overview of Pakistan's energy crisis and its implications. It then examines the key drivers shaping energy security as a dimension of Pakistan's foreign policy. Finally, through multiple case studies, the paper analyses how Pakistan has employed diplomatic and economic instruments of power to enhance its energy security.

Energy crises in Pakistan: an overview

Pakistan's electricity generation is predominantly reliant on thermal sources, especially fossil fuels, and the country faces ongoing electricity shortfalls. This problem is further aggravated by gas shortages. Contributing factors to this gas shortage include rising demand, limited exploration, and depleting reserves in Baluchistan, home to the

largest natural gas reserve in Sui. According to the government's own estimation, the natural gas supply-demand gap was expected to widen from 1.1 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) in 2020 to 3 bcfd by 2025 (GOP 2020). While the government has been focusing on LNG imports to reduce the gap, an increasing number of citizens have shifted towards solar energy. Pakistan entered 2025 with excess LNG supplies as demand declined for three consecutive years, falling from 8.2 million tonnes in 2021 to 6.1 million tonnes by late 2025 due to the rapid adoption of low-cost solar energy and reduced industrial consumption (Hussain 2026). A 4000-megawatt (MW) gap during peak summer demand further exacerbates the electricity supply issue (GOP 2020). The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (2021) cited ageing infrastructure, ineffective distribution networks, and overreliance on fossil fuels as key factors worsening the crisis.

Between FY2023 and FY2025, Pakistan's installed electricity generation capacity increased substantially from 41,981 MW to 45,380 MW, representing an overall growth of 8.1% (See Table 1). The largest increase came from thermal power, which rose from 25,046 MW to 27,507 MW, although its dominance slightly declined as a share of total capacity (from approximately 59.7% to 60.6%). Hydel capacity also expanded from 10,681 MW to 11,561 MW (25.4% to 25.5%). In contrast, nuclear capacity remained largely unchanged (3545 MW in FY2023 compared with 3530 MW in FY2025), while renewable energy capacity grew modestly from 2709 MW to 2782 MW (GOP 2024, 232; GOP 2026, 244).

Pakistan's dependence on imported oil and LNG also makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in global energy markets. In 2026, the closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted Pakistan's energy imports by restricting LNG and oil shipments from the Gulf, forcing the country to secure expensive spot LNG cargoes and contributing to fuel shortages and higher energy prices (Stapczynski 2026). Pakistan was particularly vulnerable due to its heavy reliance on Qatari LNG supplies transported through the Strait. In the past also energy crisis triggered economic crises, forcing Pakistan to seek assistance from energy-rich Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. These countries provided financial support through loans and deferred payments crises (Ahmed and Abbas 2023).

In recent years, Pakistan has faced fluctuations in terms of its electricity generation capacity. As of FY2025, Pakistan's total electricity generation stood at 126,705 GWh, compared to 128,963 GWh in FY2023 (See Table 2) The composition of electricity generation indicates a gradual shift away from thermal power. Thermal generation declined from 48.6% of total electricity generation in FY2023 to 46.2% in FY2025, while hydropower increased from 28.1% to 31.5%, becoming the largest contributor among non-thermal sources. Nuclear power's share decreased slightly from 18.7% to 17.7%. Renewable

Table 1. Comparison of Installed Electricity Generation Capacity in Pakistan, FY2023 and FY2025.

Source	FY 2023		FY 2025	
	MW	Share (%)	MW	Share (%)
Hydel	10,681	25.44	11,561	25.5
Thermal	25,046	59.66	27,507	60.6
Nuclear	3545	8.44	3530	7.8
Renewable	2709	6.45	2782	6.1
Total	41,981	100	45,380	100

Data sources: (GOP 2024, 232; GOP 2026, 244)

Table 2. Comparison of Electricity Generation in Pakistan, FY2023 and FY2025.

Source	FY2023		FY2025	
	GWh	Share (%)	GWh	Share (%)
Hydel	36,254.80	28.11	39,973	31.5
Thermal	62,639.00	48.57	58,580	46.2
Nuclear	24,054.60	18.65	22,452	17.7
Renewable	6014.30	4.66	5700	4.5
Total	128,962.70	100	126,705	100

Data sources: (GOP 2024, 232; GOP 2026, 244).

energy remained relatively stable at around 4.5%. Collectively, hydel, nuclear, and renewable sources accounted for 53.8% of total electricity generation in FY2025, up from 51.4% in FY2023. This trend reflects modest but notable progress in Pakistan's transition towards a more diversified and relatively cleaner electricity generation mix.

Pakistan's energy crisis is exacerbated by its high population growth rate. The World Bank reports that Pakistan's population has grown at an average annual rate of 2.4% since the early 2000s (WB 2022). It is expected to reach 403 million by 2050 (Hamza 2023). The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (2021) projects primary energy demand to reach 76.27 Mtoe by 2030, driven by population growth, urbanization, and crude oil projections. Overall energy demand is anticipated to reach 99.2 Mtoe by 2030, including fossil fuel requirements for power generation (Ibid). The energy mix will consist of natural gas (34%), oil (28%), coal (23%), electricity (13%), and LPG (2%), with natural gas, oil, and coal remaining dominant sources by 2030 (Ibid). The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA 2019) forecasts that energy demand is likely to grow from 49,000 MW in 2025 to 88,000 MW in 2030. While industrial electricity consumption is declining due to rising tariffs, household consumption is a major driver of this growth. Owing to regular tariff increases in recent years, mainly due to currency devaluation, consumers are increasingly switching to solar (Hussain 2026). Still, this might not impact electricity tariffs for the majority. In 2025, Pakistan's Power Division projected that electricity tariffs would increase by a further 25 percent by 2034. This forecast comes on top of an estimated 50 percent rise in electricity tariffs recorded between 2022 and 2025.

The sectoral distribution of electricity consumption in Pakistan changed noticeably between FY2023 and FY2025. Household consumption increased from 53,523 GWh (47.4%) to 57,455 GWh (50.8%) (See Table 3). This reflects continued population growth, urbanization, and rising residential demand for electricity. Commercial consumption also recorded a modest increase, rising from 7.9% to 8.6% of total consumption. In

Table 3. Sectoral Distribution of Electricity Consumption in Pakistan, FY2023 and FY2025.

Sector	FY 2023		FY 2025	
	GWh	Share (%)	GWh	Share (%)
Household	53,522.91	47.41	57,455	50.8
Commercial	8891.62	7.88	9721	8.6
Industry	31,088.00	27.54	29,181	25.8
Agriculture	9639.68	8.54	5882	5.2
Others	9748.99	8.64	10,901	9.6
Total	112,891.20	100	113,140	100

Data sources: (GOP 2024, 232; GOP 2026, 245).

contrast, the shares of industry and agriculture declined significantly because of significant hikes in electricity prices (Dilawar 2026). Industrial consumption fell from 31,088 GWh (27.5%) in FY2023 to 29,181 GWh (25.8%) in FY2025, while agricultural consumption dropped sharply from 9640 GWh (8.5%) to 5882 GWh (5.2%). These declines suggest that high electricity tariffs, affordability challenges, and persistent power shortages have disproportionately affected productive sectors of the economy.

The impact of population growth on Pakistan's energy crisis has also been highlighted in some studies and reports. According to Tao et al. (2022), Pakistan's population growth rate is a key factor exacerbating the energy crisis, as the country's domestic energy production is insufficient to meet the increasing demand. This has resulted in a heavy reliance on energy imports (see Table 4), which has contributed to the country's trade deficit and balance of payments crisis. During the first eleven months of FY2026, Pakistan's trade deficit increased by 17.48 percent, reaching US\$34.76 billion compared to US\$29.58 billion recorded during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year (The Express Tribune 2026). The data in Table 4 highlights Pakistan's continued dependence on imported petroleum products to meet its energy requirements. Crude oil and motor spirit remain the two largest components of Pakistan's petroleum imports. Between FY2023 and FY2025, crude oil imports increased from 7.6 million metric tonnes to 9.3 million metric tonnes, while motor spirit imports rose from 5.2 million metric tonnes to 5.4 million metric tonnes. Together, these two products accounted for more than 85 percent of total petroleum import volumes in FY2025. This demonstrates the country's vulnerability to external energy supply conditions and international oil price fluctuations. Although the overall value of petroleum imports declined from US\$12.8 billion in FY2023 to US\$11.2 billion in FY2025 due to lower global oil prices, Pakistan's dependence on imported energy increased from 15.8 million metric tonnes to 17.0 million metric tonnes between FY2023 and FY2025.

Successive Pakistani governments have employed both domestic policies and international cooperation to address the energy crisis. The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has played a crucial role, attracting US\$62 billion in foreign investment to meet energy demands and enhance connectivity with Central Asia (Garlick 2020). Key CPEC projects, such as the Thar coal power station in Sindh, aim to generate 17,000 MW of electricity by 2030 through coal, hydro, wind, and solar power (GOP 2020). The Thar coal project's capacity has been expanded to 7.6 million tons annually (APP 2023), and two coal-fired power stations in Tharparker began generating 1650 MW in March 2023

Table 4. Composition of Pakistan's Petroleum Imports (FY2023 and FY2025).

Product	FY 2023		FY 2025	
	Quantity MT (000)	Value (Cost and Freight, US\$ million)	Quantity MT (000)	Value (Cost and Freight, US\$ million)
Motor Spirit	5181.04	4829.87	5353.02	3989.8
Crude Oil	7595.47	5334.17	9261.23	5461.4
HOBC	31.57	30.57	182.44	134.4
HSD	2367.03	2219.08	1996.38	1352.3
FO	530.59	307.66	0.24	0.5
JP-1	113.94	100.68	250.49	256.2
Total	15,819.63	12,822.03	17,043.79	11,194.6

Data sources: (GOP 2024, 238; GOP 2026, 251).

(Dharani 2023). By mid-2024, US\$4 billion invested in 16 power projects had generated 8000 MW (The Express Tribune 2024). Domestically, Pakistan has focused on measures like boosting gas exploration, promoting renewables, improving distribution, building hydropower dams, and addressing energy theft (GOP 2020). Energy insecurity is closely linked to Pakistan's economic crisis, with frequent IMF bailouts since the 1950s. In 2023, circular debt in the electricity and gas sectors reached US\$8.3 billion and US\$6.3 billion, respectively (WB 2023). Energy subsidies, covering 62% of residential and all agricultural consumers, exacerbate the issue, as 86% of the country's energy is sourced from fossil fuels (WB 2023). Despite investments in renewable energy, such as the 1000 MW Quaid-i-Azam Solar Park (Ebrahim 2015), financial constraints have delayed hydropower projects, with the Mohmand dam project remaining delayed despite a US\$240 million loan from Saudi Arabia (Shahzad 2023). Energy insecurity has become a central element of Pakistan's foreign policy, with increased diplomatic efforts focused on energy security, leading to stronger cooperation with Iran, Russia, and Turkmenistan, which has influenced both domestic energy projects and foreign relations (Makarevich 2022).

Pakistan's energy security and foreign policy

Pakistan's persistent energy crises have generated significant domestic pressure that has influenced both energy and foreign policy. Chronic challenges, including inadequate domestic production, outdated infrastructure, inefficient distribution systems, and mounting circular debt, have resulted in recurring power shortages and rising electricity tariffs. These conditions have triggered widespread public protests, particularly in major cities such as Karachi (Hassan and Ahmad 2017). Simultaneously increasing pressure from the industrial sector for affordable and reliable energy supplies. Business associations have argued that energy insecurity and high electricity costs undermine industrial competitiveness and economic growth, prompting calls for the diversification of Pakistan's energy partnerships. For example, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) urged the government to explore new energy markets, including the Central Asian Republics and Russia, to diversify imports, enhance energy security, and reduce domestic energy prices (Business Recorder 2022). Likewise, the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), one of the country's largest industrial associations, sought closer energy cooperation with Russia in 2018 to reduce production costs (Apparel Resources News 2018). APTMA has repeatedly warned that escalating electricity and gas tariffs are eroding Pakistan's export competitiveness. It noted that industrial electricity prices had reached approximately 16.7 cents per kWh in 2024 and cautioned that unsustainable energy costs could force many textile firms to scale back operations or close. The association has also called for reforms to Independent Power Producer (IPP) agreements and reductions in capacity payments to make electricity more affordable (ProPK Staff 2024a, 2024b).

As the energy crisis worsens and public pressure increases, energy security has become a central issue in the political manifestos of Pakistan's major political parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Given the strong connection between domestic politics and foreign policy (Wehner and Thies 2021), understanding how political actors approach

the energy crisis is key to assessing its broader impact on Pakistan's foreign policy strategies. Energy security has been a recurring priority in the election manifestos of Pakistan's three major political parties. This reflects the country's persistent challenges of energy shortages, import dependence, and rising electricity costs. However, the parties differ in their preferred pathways to achieving energy security (See Table 5). The PPP has consistently emphasized the utilization of Pakistan's abundant indigenous energy resources, including coal, hydropower, natural gas, wind, solar, and biomass, to provide affordable, reliable, and cleaner energy. While its 2018 manifesto focused on exploiting domestic energy potential, its 2024 manifesto placed greater emphasis on addressing energy supply constraints, reducing circular debt, and ensuring sustainable and cost-effective energy provision. PML-N has adopted a more pragmatic approach centred on expanding generation capacity, reducing load shedding, and lowering generation costs through a diversified energy mix. Its 2018 manifesto highlighted investments in LNG, coal, hydropower, and renewable energy, while the 2024 manifesto emphasized its record of adding generation capacity and providing energy subsidies, particularly for the agricultural sector. PTI, in contrast, has framed energy security primarily in terms of self-sufficiency and reduced reliance on imported fuels. While its 2018 manifesto stressed rural electrification, circular debt reduction, and a greener energy mix, its 2024 manifesto

Table 5. Energy Security in the Election Manifestos of Pakistan's Major Political Parties.

Party	Year	Emphasis on Energy Security
PPP	2018	'Pakistan is bestowed with huge natural energy potential. It has abundant coal reserves in Thar Desert, adequate natural gas and oil reserves, availability of water for hydel-electricity, a rich wind corridor, at least 12 hours a day availability of solar energy and an abundant reservoir of bio-mass to produce energy. We will fully utilise these indigenous resources to provide efficient, affordable, reliable and clean energy to the people' (PPP 2018, 29).
	2024	'The energy sector holds a pivotal role in the economic development of a country. However, our nation faces persistent challenges due to energy supply constraints, and the circular debt has reached an all-time high, posing a chronic hurdle to our economy. In order to address the energy needs of our growing population and economy in a sustainable manner, a forward-thinking approach is imperative. The Pakistan Peoples Party is committed to implementing a comprehensive strategy to meet energy demands, ensuring the provision of sufficient, cost-effective, and increasingly eco-friendly energy for all' (PPP 2024, 47).
PML-N	2018	'By the end of its term (2013–18), PML(N) eradicated the menace of load shedding by adding over 11,000 MW of electricity, and reduced the average cost of power generation by investing in cheaper fuel sources such as LNG, coal and hydro, and shutting down inefficient furnace oil plants. Simultaneously, the transmission and distribution choke points were improved by investing in the infrastructure, and attempts were made to improve system-wide efficiency by linking load-shedding with feeder-level losses and theft. PML(N) embarked on the journey to reduce the carbon footprint by increasing the share of green energy (wind, solar, biogas) from 0.5% to 5%' (PML-N 2018, 16).
	2024	'Added 17,000 megawatts of new electricity generation capacity to the national grid in the last decade, including 11,000 MW during the 2013–18 PMLN government ... Lowered agricultural/tubewell tariff from Rs. 8.35/unit to Rs. 5.35/unit and provided a subsidy of over Rs. 12 billion for tube-wells during 2013–18' (PML-N 2024, 17).
PTI	2018	'PTI will complete electrification of rural areas, solve circular debt issue through reducing transmission and distribution losses, and implement our plan to harness our natural resources towards a greener energy mix' (PTI 2018, 31).
	2024	'Energy self-sufficiency is our goal, concentrating on hydroelectric and renewable sources while expanding oil and gas exploration. Revising concessions and moving away from rental power plants will lessen our oil import bills. Investments will flow into solar and wind projects, and the utilization of canals and streams for small dams. We plan to reform energy dispatch structures and tariffs, fostering import substitution of fuel, ensuring power plants are competitively bid based on local fuel usage, and situating plants strategically for cost-effective electricity delivery' (PTI 2024, p. 4).

advocated greater investment in hydropower, solar and wind energy, alongside domestic oil and gas exploration.

Parliamentary debates on Pakistan's energy sector between 2018 and 2025 reveal a significant evolution from concerns about electricity availability to growing anxieties over affordability. During the late 2010s, lawmakers largely focused on ending load shedding and expanding generation capacity. However, as installed capacity increased, parliamentary discussions increasingly questioned why consumers continued to face high electricity costs despite apparent surplus generation. In a 2023 meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat, Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan argued that the country's energy crisis could not be resolved without revisiting agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), while NEPRA officials informed the committee that consumers were paying approximately 'Rs. 45.06 per unit' for electricity despite the country having around 44,000 MW of installed capacity (Ahmed 2023). Senator Saadia Abbasi subsequently sought details of fuel adjustment charges and capacity payments, reflecting growing parliamentary concern over the drivers of rising tariffs (Ahmed 2023). Similarly, in 2023, Senator Saifullah Abro criticized the burden of capacity payments, as the Senate committee was informed that consumers could pay nearly Rs. 2 trillion in capacity charges in FY2024 despite many power plants remaining underutilized (The News 2023). By 2024–25, debates had become increasingly focused on affordability and consumer protection. In 2016, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif addressed many concerns regarding affordability of electricity, especially for the industrial sector. He said,

A Rs4.4 reduction is being made in the electricity unit rate for industries ... if it were in his control, he would reduce it by another Rs10. However, my hands are tied, as you all know well. With the cooperation and support of Pakistan's banks, we are announcing a reduction in the export refinance rate from earlier 7.5pc to 4.5pc (Dawn 2026).

Because of its impacts of social stability and economic development, energy security has become a key national security concern in Pakistan. In this regard, a UN official in Pakistan writes: 'Energy security has become a national security issue for Pakistan ... [E]xternal shocks, including issues beyond the country's borders, could significantly impact energy shipments, foreign exchange stability and remittance flows that underpin Pakistan's economy. For a country heavily dependent on imported energy, the risks are immediate' (Yahya 2026). As argued by de Brouwer (2020), national interests consist of three interconnected dimensions: security, prosperity, and social well-being. In terms of national interests, Pakistan has consistently focused on the twin goals of state security and economic development. All three dimensions are clearly reflected in Pakistan's first National Security Policy in which energy security is central:

While necessary, energy imports make energy security vulnerable to international prices and supply fluctuations. In the future, the country will maximise energy production based on indigenous resources, including through a renewed focus on indigenous onshore and offshore energy exploration. Increasing oil and gas storage capacity to meet emergency demand and provide a buffer against global energy market shocks is also necessary (GOP 2022, 19).

At the foreign policy level, Pakistan has consistently prioritized energy security through participation in regional and international energy initiatives. One such effort was the establishment of the SAARC Energy Centre in Islamabad in 2005, aimed at promoting cooperation among South Asian states on energy planning, efficiency, and resource

development. However, persistent political tensions within SAARC, particularly between India and Pakistan, have limited the organization's ability to achieve meaningful progress in regional energy cooperation (Ahmed 2013; Bettani and Ahmed 2023). In response, Pakistan has increasingly engaged with alternative regional frameworks, particularly the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which provides a platform for deeper cooperation with CARs, Iran, and Türkiye. Energy cooperation has remained a key priority within the ECO framework, given the region's significant oil, gas, and hydropower potential. Pakistan has actively supported ECO initiatives aimed at developing regional energy connectivity, including electricity trade, pipeline projects, and the integration of energy markets among member states. The ECO Vision 2025 identifies energy security, diversification of energy sources, and regional connectivity as central objectives, emphasizing the development of energy corridors and cooperation among member countries (ECO 2017). Pakistan hosted the 2017 ECO summit, and which energy cooperation was a key issue reflected in key takeaways:

An emphasis by ECO member states to build and promote connectivity in sea, land and air transport, energy, trade as well as in cyberspace in order to give further impetus to intra-regional trade ... Enhanced regional cooperation in the energy sector, focusing on energy efficiency, energy infrastructure development, intra-regional energy trade and access to affordable energy (MOFA 2017b).

Case studies

To advance its national interests, particularly given the link between national interest and energy security, Pakistan has employed diplomatic and economic instruments. This section examines these efforts through selected bilateral relationships, focusing on Islamabad's pursuit of affordable and reliable energy supplies, especially oil and gas.

The Gulf region

The Gulf region, composed of six oil-rich monarchies—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman—holds some of the world's largest oil and natural gas reserves (EIA 2021c). Saudi Arabia, the largest producer of crude oil globally, plays a key role within the region. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states collectively account for more than 25% of the world's crude oil production and over 10% of its natural gas (EIA 2021c). These nations export their energy resources worldwide, with Asia, particularly China, India, Japan, and South Korea, as their primary market. Europe, including major importers such as the Netherlands, Spain, and Italy, is another important destination (EIA 2021c). Qatar is a leading global exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), supplying Asia, Europe, and North America, while the Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are diversifying their energy export markets (EIA 2021c).

In 2025, 26 percent of Pakistan's imports comprised mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products, highlighting the country's continued dependence on external energy supplies (Trading Economics 2025). The Gulf states remained central to this energy dependency, particularly the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, which collectively accounted for a substantial share of Pakistan's fuel imports. As shown in Table 6, the UAE was Pakistan's largest Gulf energy supplier, with oil imports valued at US\$5.63 billion, representing most of

Table 6. Pakistan's Imports from Major Gulf States in 2025 (US\$).

Country	Oil Imports	Total
UAE	5.63	6.95
Saudi Arabia	2.94	4.15
Qatar	2.94	3.17

Data sources: (Trading Economics [2026a](#), [2026b](#), [2026c](#))

its total imports from the UAE (US\$6.95 billion). Saudi Arabia and Qatar each supplied fuel imports worth approximately US\$2.94 billion, although their overall trade profiles differed, with total imports from Saudi Arabia reaching US\$4.15 billion and from Qatar US\$3.17 billion. These figures demonstrate the strategic importance of Gulf energy partnerships in meeting Pakistan's domestic energy requirements, particularly for petroleum products and LNG.

The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is heavily influenced by historical, cultural, and economic factors, with energy imports from Saudi Arabia being central to Pakistan's energy security. Saudi Arabia, as one of the world's largest oil producers, has long been a critical energy supplier to Pakistan, making energy cooperation a key feature of their bilateral relations (Kugelman [2015](#)). Saudi oil remains essential to Islamabad, and energy has been a consistent theme in their diplomatic exchanges (MOFA [2022b](#)). Following the signing of the historic defence pact in September 2025, Pakistan–Saudi Arabia relations have expanded beyond security cooperation into financial and energy partnerships. Saudi Arabia provided Pakistan with US\$3 billion in financial assistance in 2026 and extended an existing US\$5 billion deposit, reflecting Riyadh's continued economic support (Khan [2026](#)). In the energy sector, Saudi Arabia has committed to investing US\$10 billion in the proposed Gwadar oil refinery, a project first discussed in 2019. The refinery, involving Saudi Aramco and Pakistani companies including Pakistan State Oil (PSO), OGDCL, PPL, and GHPL, is expected to have a production capacity of up to 400,000 barrels per day, with Saudi Arabia contributing 60 percent of the investment and local firms' 40 percent (Dunya News [2026](#)). The project highlights the growing role of Saudi investment in strengthening Pakistan's energy security and reducing dependence on imported refined fuels.

The UAE remains another critical partner in Pakistan's energy sector. The UAE has provided substantial financial assistance, including a US\$2 billion bailout package in 2018, with US\$1 billion directed toward Pakistan's energy sector (Dawn [2018](#)). This financial support has helped stabilize Pakistan's economy and mitigate its energy crisis while strengthening bilateral ties. The Abu Dhabi Group, a major UAE conglomerate, has expressed interest in investing in oil and gas exploration in Pakistan, enhancing energy cooperation (The News [2019](#)). In 2025, the UAE was one of Pakistan's most important energy suppliers, with total imports from the UAE reaching US\$6.95 billion. Mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products accounted for US\$5.63 billion, representing more than 80 percent of Pakistan's total imports from the UAE (Trading Economics [2026a](#)).

Qatar, a significant player in the global LNG market, has also played an important role in Pakistan's energy security. Despite longstanding relations, Pakistan did not initially seek Qatari LNG until the 1990s, after Qatar had developed its substantial gas reserves. In 2015, Pakistan signed a 15-year deal with Qatar for the supply of 3.75 million tons of LNG annually, supplemented by a separate 5-year contract for an additional 0.75 million

tons per annum (GOP 2018). However, mismanagement during the winter of 2020–2021 resulted in an estimated loss of US\$200 million. In February 2021, Pakistan signed a new agreement with Qatar, securing 3 million tons of LNG over ten years at a rate 31% lower than the previous contract, yielding significant economic benefits (Kiani 2021). This updated agreement reflects the continued strength of the bilateral relationship and Qatar's commitment to supporting Pakistan's energy needs. Qatar's investment in Pakistan's energy sector is further evidenced by the acquisition of a 49% stake in a 1320 MW coal-fired power plant by Al Mirqab, a private Qatari entity, reinforcing Qatar's active involvement in Pakistan's energy infrastructure (Rana 2022). Qatar has emerged as a critical energy partner for Pakistan, particularly through the supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG). In 2025, Pakistan's imports from Qatar were heavily concentrated in petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons, reflecting Qatar's importance in meeting Pakistan's natural gas requirements. According to Trading Economics (2026c), Qatar's exports of petroleum gases and other gaseous hydrocarbons to Pakistan amounted to approximately US\$3.43 billion in 2025.

The Gulf States have significantly influenced Pakistan's foreign policy, particularly in the realm of energy security. Pakistan's energy crisis has deepened its reliance on the Gulf States for energy imports, strengthening both economic and political ties. Investments from these states in Pakistan's energy sector, along with financial assistance, have been crucial in addressing Pakistan's energy challenges and stabilizing its economy. This energy-driven cooperation underscores the importance of some Gulf States in shaping Pakistan's foreign policy and economic strategies.

Iran

Pakistan's neighbour, Iran, ranks among the world's largest producers and exporters of natural gas and oil. In 2021, Iran held the second-largest natural gas reserves and the fourth-largest crude oil reserves globally (EIA 2021a). Iran's substantial oil and gas resources have cemented its role as a significant player in the global energy market. A substantial portion of Iran's oil exports is directed toward China, India, South Korea, and Japan. As a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Iran produces approximately four million barrels of oil per day (EIA 2021a). Moreover, Iran has considerable potential for renewable energy, especially in solar and wind power, though its renewable energy sector remains underdeveloped due to international sanctions and insufficient investment. Despite these challenges, Iran has set a goal to achieve 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity, emphasizing renewable energy development (Modern Diplomacy 2022). Iran's energy prospects have been further strengthened by a 25-year agreement with China, under which Beijing plans to invest US\$400 billion into Iran's oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors as part of the BRI (Fulton 2021, 204).

Pakistan and Iran share a long history of energy cooperation, formalized through various agreements over the years. However, international sanctions on Iran have hindered formal trade, with much of it taking place through informal channels, particularly across the Balochistan border (Ahmed and Akbarzadeh 2018). Despite these challenges, Iran remains a key potential energy supplier for Pakistan. In 2019, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance cooperation in the oil and gas

sectors. A significant initiative in this partnership is the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, which was proposed in the early 1990s. This project aims to supply natural gas from Iran's South Pars gas field to Pakistan, with a projected capacity of 750 million cubic feet per day. However, the project has faced numerous obstacles, including US sanctions on Iran, security issues in Pakistan's Balochistan province, and Pakistan's financial inability to fund its portion of the pipeline (Ahmed and Akbarzadeh 2018). Nonetheless, both nations remain committed to advancing energy cooperation, as evidenced by a joint statement after a 2018 meeting between their foreign ministers, which underscored the importance of enhancing trade and investment relations, particularly in energy, connectivity, and border management (MOFA 2019). Pakistan has sought to increase its electricity imports from Iran to meet rising energy demand (Imtiaz 2019). In 2025, Pakistan's imports from Iran reached US\$1.26 billion, with energy products constituting the largest component of bilateral trade. Mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products accounted for approximately US\$872.95 million, representing nearly 70 percent of Pakistan's total imports from Iran (Trading Economics 2026d).

Despite its potential, Pakistan has yet to fully realize energy cooperation with Iran. Although Iran is not currently among Pakistan's leading energy suppliers, including formal and informal trade, it remains an important partner due to geographical proximity and the potential for affordable energy imports. Islamabad has continued efforts to expand cooperation with Tehran, particularly through the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. However, the project remains delayed due to Pakistan's financial constraints, limited external financing, and international sanctions on Iran. While institutions like the Asian Development Bank have shown interest, they have not provided the required funding, prompting Tehran to threaten international arbitration over Pakistan's failure to meet its commitments (Mustafa 2023). China's growing regional influence, including its investments in Iran and mediation of the Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement, could create opportunities for Pakistan to enhance energy cooperation with Tehran (Khan 2023b). However, Pakistan's balancing strategy between Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States continues to constrain deeper engagement. Its expanding economic and strategic ties with Saudi Arabia have occasionally complicated relations with Tehran (Ahmed and Akbarzadeh 2020). Nevertheless, Pakistan has continued to pursue energy cooperation with Iran. During Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan in 2024, both countries agreed to accelerate progress on the gas pipeline project (MOFA 2024). However, given continuing sanctions on Iran, Pakistan's economic limitations, and broader geopolitical challenges, the project is likely to face further delays.

The 2026 US-Israel war with Iran demonstrated the growing connection between Pakistan's diplomatic role and its energy security interests. As a country highly dependent on imported oil and gas, Pakistan faced significant risks when Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupted one of the world's most important energy corridors. In response, Pakistan emerged as a key mediator between Washington and Tehran, helping facilitate a ceasefire and the subsequent Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which included provisions for reopening the Strait of Hormuz and easing restrictions affecting energy flows (ul Khaliq 2026). This diplomatic role provided Pakistan with some strategic dividends, including improved access to oil shipments during the crisis when maritime routes were disrupted by Iran's closure and the US blockade of Iranian ports (Tan and Chow 2026). At the same time, the conflict increased informal energy exchanges across

the Pakistan–Iran land border, with reports of greater illegal fuel trade that annually stands at US\$1 billion (BBC 2026). Following the ceasefire and the June 2026 MoU, Pakistan renewed its efforts to revive stalled energy cooperation with Iran, particularly the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline, which has remained constrained by international sanctions. If sanctions relief allows the project and broader energy trade to proceed, Pakistan could reduce its dependence on more expensive imported fuels and potentially save an estimated US\$280–340 million annually on crude oil imports (Arab News 2026). These developments highlight how Pakistan’s foreign policy engagement with regional conflicts increasingly reflects domestic energy security priorities, with diplomacy being used not only to manage geopolitical risks but also to secure affordable and reliable energy supplies.

Central Asian republics

Despite not sharing direct borders, CARs occupy an important position in Pakistan’s energy security strategy due to their substantial reserves of oil, natural gas, and other minerals. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are among the region’s leading energy producers. Kazakhstan is Central Asia’s largest oil producer with significant natural gas reserves, while Turkmenistan possesses the world’s fourth-largest natural gas reserves (Zakhidov 2008, 218). Uzbekistan is also a major gas producer and has pursued policies to attract foreign investment in its energy sector. These countries export energy resources to major markets: Kazakhstan supplies oil to China, Russia, and European markets; Uzbekistan exports gas mainly to China and Russia; and Turkmenistan supplies natural gas to China, Iran, and other destinations (EIA 2021d). Given their energy potential, the CARs have attracted interest from major consumers, including China, Russia, India, and Pakistan. China has invested extensively in the energy sectors of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, while Russia has maintained influence through energy cooperation and pipeline networks. India has sought access to Central Asian resources through investments such as the Chabahar port in Iran, whereas Pakistan has focused on projects including the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline (Taye and Ahmed 2021).

Pakistan’s growing energy demands have encouraged Islamabad to strengthen engagement with Central Asia as part of its broader foreign policy objectives. While discussions on projects such as TAPI began in the 1990s, Pakistan’s recent ‘Vision Central Asia’ policy reflects a greater emphasis on regional connectivity, trade, and energy cooperation to enhance energy security (MOFA 2022a). Islamabad has repeatedly highlighted the importance of closer relations with CARs in energy and economic sectors. In 2017, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif emphasized cooperation with Central Asian states in energy, trade, and connectivity (MOFA 2017a). Pakistan also expressed interest in the CASA-1000 electricity transmission project, designed to transfer surplus electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan (MOFA 2017a). Similarly, during Pakistan–Turkmenistan discussions in 2018, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to advancing energy cooperation through TAPI, highlighting its potential contribution to regional economic integration and Pakistan’s energy security (MOFA 2018).

Pakistan has also sought to expand energy cooperation with Kazakhstan, which possesses substantial oil reserves. The proposed Kazakhstan–Pakistan Oil Pipeline (KPOP) is intended to facilitate Kazakhstan’s oil exports to Pakistan and potentially beyond

through the Gwadar Port (Makarevich 2022). In 2024, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin noted Pakistan's interest in importing Kazakh energy resources, including coal, oil, petroleum products, and gas. However, geographical constraints and the need to transit through multiple countries, including Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, China, or Tajikistan, continue to complicate these plans (Kazinform 2024). Turkmenistan remains Pakistan's most significant energy partner in Central Asia due to its vast natural gas reserves and the proposed Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) pipeline. The project has the potential to meet a substantial share of Pakistan's gas demand while providing Turkmenistan access to South Asian markets. In 2023, Turkmenistan began exporting liquefied gas to Pakistan through Afghanistan's Kandahar region, with an initial shipment of 50 tankers carrying a total of 1500 tons of gas (Caspian News 2023). Pakistan has also explored electricity cooperation with Uzbekistan and other CARs, while bilateral cooperation with Uzbekistan has expanded into sectors including energy, agriculture, textiles, and technology (MOFA 2021). According to Trading Economics (2026e), Pakistan's imports from Tajikistan remained very limited, totalling only US\$4.35 million in 2025. The composition of these imports was dominated by cotton (US\$4.09 million) and other non-energy products, while mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products accounted for only US\$182,640 in 2022, with no significant oil imports recorded from Tajikistan in 2025.

The TAPI pipeline remains in limbo, and proposed oil and electricity connectivity projects continue to face significant logistical and geopolitical barriers. While the CPEC has created new opportunities by adding energy projects and improving regional connectivity, including access to Gwadar Port for CARs, broader energy integration remains constrained. Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed a transit agreement in 2021 allowing Uzbekistan to use Gwadar for trade, while Tajikistan has also explored similar arrangements (Bhutta 2021, 2022). This strategic policy signals Islamabad's commitment to diversifying its energy sources and enhancing its geopolitical and economic standing. Its 'Vision Central Asia' policy highlights Pakistan's efforts to leverage the region's abundant energy resources, such as oil, natural gas, and hydroelectric power, to mitigate domestic energy shortfalls and promote economic growth (Kugelman 2015). China's growing influence in Central Asia, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has facilitated this vision by enhancing infrastructural development, regional cooperation and geo-economic tilt in its foreign affairs. Pakistan's deepened collaboration with CARs aims to harness synergies in energy efficiency and economic productivity, benefiting all involved parties (PMO 2021).

The continued delay of TAPI shows the gap between strategic ambitions and implementation. Although the project has received support from institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (Bhutta 2016), security challenges in Afghanistan remain a major obstacle. Following the Taliban takeover in 2021, instability and international isolation complicated the pipeline's progress. More importantly, by June 2026, Pakistan's increasingly conflictual relationship with the Afghan Taliban had emerged as a critical hurdle. Islamabad's allegations that the Taliban provides space to anti-Pakistan militants, particularly the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), have strained bilateral relations and reduced confidence in Afghanistan's ability to provide a secure transit route for TAPI (Ahmed 2022). Hence, despite the strategic importance of Central Asian energy resources

for Pakistan, political tensions, security concerns, and regional geopolitics continue to limit the realization of these projects.

Russia

Despite a historically difficult relationship shaped by Cold War alignments and Moscow's close ties with India, Pakistan's pursuit of energy security has encouraged greater engagement with Russia. Russia's position as a major global energy producer makes it an attractive partner for Pakistan's efforts to diversify energy imports. It is the world's second-largest producer of dry natural gas, third-largest producer of crude oil, and fourth-largest producer of coal (EIA 2021b; 2021e). Energy exports remain central to Russia's economy, with Europe historically representing its largest market; in 2020, Russia supplied approximately 40% of the European Union's natural gas demand (Eurostat 2021). However, following the Ukraine conflict and Western sanctions, Russia has increasingly shifted its energy focus toward Asia and the Middle East, including expanding cooperation with China and other emerging markets (Tsafos 2022).

Pakistan–Russia relations have improved significantly in recent years due to shared interests in Afghanistan, counterterrorism, and economic cooperation. During the Cold War, Pakistan aligned with the United States during the Afghan-Soviet War, while Russia supported India and opposed Pakistan's position in Afghanistan (Withington 2001). However, changing geopolitical dynamics, including alignment with China, have encouraged Islamabad to diversify its partnerships, including with Moscow (Biswas 2021). Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasized this shift by noting that both countries sought to enhance cooperation in 'trade, energy, education, culture, security and counter-terrorism' (MOFA 2023). Energy cooperation has become a central pillar of this rapprochement. The 2015 agreement to construct the North–South Gas Pipeline, designed to transport gas from Karachi to Lahore and Faisalabad, represented a major step toward strengthening Pakistan's energy security (MOFA 2015). During Prime Minister Imran Khan's 2022 visit to Moscow, Pakistan expressed interest in importing discounted Russian oil and expanding energy cooperation. The Foreign Office stated that the visit aimed at 'deepening Pakistan's relations with a key global power and enhancing economic and energy cooperation between the two countries' (MOFA 2022b). Although the timing of the visit, coinciding with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, generated criticism, Khan defended the engagement by emphasizing that Pakistan's energy needs should guide foreign policy decisions (Chaudhury 2022). Similarly, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari later defended the visit, stating that Pakistan could not have anticipated the outbreak of conflict at that time (Iqbal 2022).

Despite geopolitical constraints, Pakistan continued cooperation with Russia. In June 2023, Pakistan received its first shipment of Russian crude oil, consisting of 96,000 metric tons (Hussain 2023; Khan 2023a). By 2025, Pakistan had received three shipments totalling more than 200,000 tons of crude oil from Russia (Hussain and Jahanzaib 2025, 174). According to Trading Economics (2026f), Pakistan's imports from Russia remained relatively limited, amounting to US\$149.37 million in 2025. The composition of these imports was dominated by edible vegetables and agricultural products (US\$142.86 million), while energy-related imports remained negligible. Imports of mineral fuels, oils, and distillation products were valued at only approximately US\$39,000 in 2025,

indicating that Russia had not yet become a major energy supplier for Pakistan despite earlier agreements and diplomatic efforts to expand oil cooperation.

Energy cooperation with Russia remains constrained by Western sanctions on Russia, financing difficulties, and regional instability, particularly in Afghanistan, which represents the most direct transit route for potential Russian gas supplies. Thus, while Russia has become an important element in Pakistan's energy diversification strategy, the scale of future cooperation will depend on evolving geopolitical conditions and Islamabad's ability to balance relations with Russia, China, and Western partners like the US. While because of tilt with China, Pakistan is keen to maintain relations with Russia, it is highly unlikely that those would expand amidst Western sanctions on Russia. Hence, Pakistan's approach is quite pragmatic it enjoys good relations with the Trump administration for geopolitical gains, for instance, through prominent role in mediation efforts between Iran and the US, and role in the Board of Peace. Besides this, the US remains Pakistan's top export market. According to Trading Economics (2026f), Pakistan's exports remain concentrated among a limited number of major markets, with the US, China, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the UAE emerging as the country's top five export destinations. The United States is Pakistan's largest export market, accounting for approximately US\$5.7 billion in exports in 2025–19 percent of Pakistan's total exports.

Conclusion

Pakistan's energy insecurity has emerged as a critical non-traditional security challenge, shaped primarily by persistent concerns over the availability and affordability of energy. Rapid population growth, inadequate planning, economic instability, and limited investment in domestic energy infrastructure have constrained Pakistan's ability to meet rising demand. These challenges have affected economic development, industrial productivity, and social stability, as shortages of electricity, gas, and oil, combined with rising tariffs, have generated increasing pressure from citizens, businesses, and political actors. Consequently, Pakistani policymakers have increasingly framed energy security as a national security concern, reflected in parliamentary debates, political party manifestos, and the National Security Policy, which recognizes economic and human security as essential components of national security.

Given the domestic implications of energy insecurity, energy security has become an important driver of Pakistan's foreign policy. Islamabad has expanded diplomatic engagement with energy-producing states to secure reliable and affordable supplies. However, Pakistan's energy imports remain heavily concentrated in the Gulf region, particularly from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, which continue to serve as its primary sources of oil and gas. While Pakistan has attempted to diversify its energy partnerships by engaging with Iran, Russia, and the CARs, several major projects remain unrealized due to geopolitical tensions, financial limitations, and security challenges. The Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline and the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) pipeline projects demonstrate the difficulties of translating diplomatic commitments into practical energy connectivity. Alongside external partnerships, Pakistan has increasingly focused on strengthening indigenous energy production. China's investment under the CPEC has played a significant role in expanding domestic energy capacity through coal, nuclear, hydropower, and renewable energy projects. Initiatives such as the Thar Coal

Power Project and solar energy investments have contributed to addressing supply shortages.

Author contributions

CRedit: **Zahid Shahab Ahmed:** Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Muhammad Jahanzaib:** Formal analysis, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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ORCID

Zahid Shahab Ahmed  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2084-0253>

Muhammad Jahanzaib  <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-1711-9357>

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