

# Strategic Dimensions of Pakistan's Foreign Policy: The Role of CPEC, Energy Security, and Environmental Sustainability

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the critical factors shaping the effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy, emphasizing economic, energy, environmental, and diplomatic dimensions. Employing multivariate regression analysis, the research examines the influence of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), energy security concerns, environmental sustainability perspectives, and diplomatic engagements on public perceptions of foreign policy effectiveness. The findings reveal that the economic benefits of CPEC significantly enhance the perceived effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy, with respondents linking positive economic outcomes to stronger foreign relations. Conversely, energy security concerns show no substantial impact on public perceptions, while attitudes toward environmental sustainability and diplomatic initiatives demonstrate a positive correlation. The study underscores the importance of integrating economic initiatives, environmental priorities, and robust diplomacy to strengthen public confidence in foreign policy. These insights provide valuable guidance for policymakers aiming to enhance the strategic effectiveness of a nation's foreign relations.*

**Keywords:** Foreign Policy Strategy; Economic Impact Analysis; Energy Security; Environmental Sustainability; China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; Diplomatic Engagement.

## Introduction

Establishing foreign policy priorities is essential for fostering regional and global cooperation while advancing Pakistan's national interests. Protecting strategic and economic interests through clear foreign policy objectives is vital, especially amid shifting geopolitical power alignments (Ullah et al., 2024). This study examines the potential benefits of Pakistan's foreign policy initiatives, such as forming strategic alliances, enhancing economic cooperation, and fostering

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diplomatic relations. Economic diplomacy, a vital element, aims to support regional prosperity and security, while an inclusive, peaceful approach is emphasized. The analysis includes vital events, official statements, and geopolitical developments (Hussain et al., 2024). As a participant in the global economy, Pakistan's economic stability is shaped by factors like trade, investment, and global economic trends. Pakistan's international trade agreements have supported its economic growth, though challenges remain, such as external debt and currency volatility. Geopolitical dynamics further emphasize Pakistan's economic interdependencies with the global economy (Rathore et al., 2024). Pakistan is a strategic partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative, receiving substantial financial support for infrastructure projects (Martadinata et al., 2024). Additionally, Pakistan seeks stronger ties with Central Asian Republics (CARs) to promote economic interests and counter regional rivals like India (Rasool et al., 2024). The media landscape in Pakistan significantly shapes diplomatic strategies through discourse on foreign policy (Khan et al., 2024). Pakistan's foreign policy also faces unconventional security challenges, such as terrorism, climate change, and financial instability. Amid a multipolar world order, Pakistan has opportunities to secure its national interests through effective diplomacy (Hussain et al., 2023).

The evolving global order signals a shift away from U.S.-led hegemony toward multipolarity, with China's Belt and Road Initiative as a central force. Rising powers, like China, Russia, and India, along with Europe's strategic autonomy, shape this new order. In this shifting landscape, Pakistan's security depends on a balanced foreign policy to navigate regional and global dynamics (Abbasi, 2023). Pakistan's internal political landscape significantly shapes its foreign policy, including public opinion, political ideologies, and leadership in both civilian and military sectors. Regional conflicts, such as the Kashmir dispute and terrorism threats, also heavily impact these decisions. Pakistan's economic factors, like relationships with international financial institutions and trade partners, are equally influential. Religious and cultural aspects further shape its foreign policy objectives. Historically, Pakistan's foreign policy inconsistencies have hindered its international standing and strategic goals (Ahmad et al., 2023). Pakistan's stability and counterterrorism efforts are intricately linked to Afghanistan's security situation, given the nuclear dimension that complicates regional peace efforts (Rashid, 2023). Islam's influence on Pakistan's governance has also impacted its foreign policy. Since 2014, India's nationalist policies have aimed to encircle Pakistan diplomatically and regionally, while Pakistan's reactive foreign policy lacks preventive strategies to counter these moves (Khan et al., 2023). Pakistan faces regional and international constraints affecting its foreign policy choices, particularly regarding CPEC, amid balancing US relations. Since 1947, Pakistan has sought security alliances, particularly with the US and China, driven by its rivalry with India. This focus on military strength has often led the military to influence foreign policy, overshadowing democratic governance and comprehensive strategies (Bastos, 2021). Although a Western ally, outside powers have historically shaped Pakistan's internal and external policies, especially during the Afghan-Soviet war and post-9/11, leading to its strategic pivot toward China (Darabu & Daud, 2021). Pakistan's influence has declined in the Middle East, and its balancing strategy, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran, faces challenges due to shifting regional dynamics and complex alliances, as exemplified by the Yemen conflict and the Qatar crisis (Syed & Khan, 2021).

Pakistan's foreign policy is shaped by its economic, security, and geopolitical needs, particularly about major powers such as China, India, Afghanistan, and the U.S. (Chattha, 2023). In recent years, Pakistan has shifted focus from geopolitics to geoeconomics, aiming to redefine its international image and strategic position. However, growing competition between the U.S. and China has placed Pakistan in a complex situation, pressing it toward "camp politics" (Baqai, 2023).

Pakistan's official stance emphasizes "connectivity" and "balance," recognizing that peace and regional connectivity are intertwined. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), underscores Pakistan's strategic importance to Beijing's global ambitions. This initiative links China to over 60 countries, impacting trade, energy, and political relations. Through CPEC, China benefits from Pakistan's geographic location, accessing energy resources and markets while strengthening its regional presence against rivals like India (Khan et al., 2023; Islam & Cansu, 2020). Chinese investment in CPEC has reached \$87 billion as of 2020, with projects aimed at boosting infrastructure, trade, and energy (Javed & Ismail, 2021). Historically, Pakistan has supported China's diplomatic goals, from ending its communist isolation to facilitating pivotal U.S.-China interactions in 1972. This deep-rooted partnership continues, with both nations collaborating on various strategic fronts (Ismail, 2023). While CPEC advances China's influence in Pakistan, the project's evolution reflects the role of local dynamics and opposition, leading China to adapt its approach to address Pakistan's unique political landscape (Abb et al., 2023).

Pakistan's energy dependence on imported coal, oil, and LNG strains foreign exchange reserves and exposes the economy to global price shocks, heightening inflation and economic instability. From 2011 to 2017, Pakistan's energy security was assessed through the 4-As framework, addressing availability, applicability, acceptability, and affordability (Malik et al., 2020). Economic uncertainty also drives emissions, emphasizing the need for emerging economies to integrate environmental considerations into economic planning and promote resource pricing for sustainability (Doğan et al., 2023). Transitioning to sustainable production and adopting new technologies are essential for achieving COP26 and sustainable development goals (Qing et al., 2024). The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) offers Pakistan potential military cooperation, economic collaboration, and energy security benefits, helping it leverage regional infrastructure and commerce for broader economic and security gains (Khan et al., 2024). China and Pakistan's cooperation through the CPEC aims to counter Indian influence and enhance China's energy security. Tehran's support for China and its energy resources has further strengthened this relationship (Hussain et al., 2024). Trust plays a pivotal role in global diplomacy, with declining multilateralism impacting diplomatic practices (Versloot, 2022). Pakistan's foreign policy, heavily shaped by its military, has evolved to address security concerns with major powers like the U.S. and China, influenced by longstanding tensions with India (Bastos, 2021). Pakistan's weak maritime infrastructure and maritime security issues stem from legal and management challenges, impacting the nation's potential in blue diplomacy to support economic and political goals (Naseer, 2022). The country's defense diplomacy has adapted over the past decade to address new security concerns (Khalid & Ahmed, 2023). The Just Energy Transition Partnership under CPEC could also help Pakistan shift to renewable energy, reducing carbon emissions with international support (Mushtaq & Waleed, 2024). However, logistics center selection criteria challenges have hindered the implementation of logistics networks as part of CPEC (Ilyas et al., 2024). Based on the stated discussion, the following are the study's objectives, i.e.,

1. To investigate the influence of economic factors, particularly the perceived economic impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), on the effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy.
2. To examine the relationship between energy security concerns and public perceptions of the effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy.
3. To assess the role of environmental sustainability attitudes and diplomatic engagements in shaping public evaluations of the effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy.

The study has the following sections. After introduction, literature review is presented in section 2. Methodology is shown in section 3. Results are discussed in section 4. Section 5 concludes the study.

### **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Realism, a theory in international relations, views world politics as a constant struggle between self-interested states in an anarchic global system. Realists believe states prioritize power, security, and national interest, with military force and alliances essential to influence and balance power (Lawson, 2015). Although realism is a recent formal theory, its roots trace back to Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, where parallels were drawn to modern political behavior (McGlinchey et al., 2017). Realism contrasts liberalism, emphasizing competition over cooperation, as states seek dominance rather than justice, often dismissing morality in global affairs (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010). This study applies realism to examine CPEC's security challenges across political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It explores the role of major powers, like the U.S., China, India, and Pakistan, in shaping security dynamics driven by self-interest (Marwat & Khan, 2023). Pakistan's strategic alliance with China originated during the Cold War to counter India, evolving as regional tensions and U.S. interventions increased distrust between Pakistan and the U.S. (Hassan, 2019). CPEC, a component of China's Belt and Road Initiative, is crucial to Pakistan's socio-political landscape as China pursues regional influence in South Asia (Kuszevska & Nitza-Makowska, 2021). Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, emerging in the late 1970s, adapted realism to the shifting U.S.-Soviet relations, underscoring changes in global power dynamics (Glenn & Howlett, 2018). Neoclassical realism further examines global structures and how they shape policies like China's OBOR initiative, reflecting distinct "Chinese characteristics". The study also evaluates Pakistan's alignment with China post-2005 amid rising geopolitical pressures and evolving foreign policies. Social constructivism, a related theory in education, emphasizes learner-centered approaches, influencing teaching and learning practices (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). Constructivist frameworks focus on collaborative learning and assessment, applicable across disciplines.

Pakistan's economic trajectory is shaped by global economic trends, trade agreements, and challenges like external debt and currency instability, while regional tensions add further economic vulnerability. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) introduces opportunities and challenges for Pakistan's development (Rathore et al., 2024). Bukhari et al. (2024) analyze Pakistan's energy sector through a geopolitical lens, highlighting the links among resource dependence, regional dynamics, and security. By examining policy frameworks and socioeconomic impacts, the study underscores the importance of transitioning to clean energy while adapting to shifting geopolitics, offering insights for policymakers to bolster Pakistan's strategic resilience. Fazal et al. (2023) discuss Pakistan's geo-economic shift, examining its efforts to enhance regional connectivity, engage in economic diplomacy, and attract foreign investment. The study uses CPEC as a case study to assess Pakistan's success in leveraging economic strategies for regional integration through strategic alliances. Ali & Rizwan (2024) examine CPEC's complex effects on state sovereignty, noting how its economic dependencies and security concerns challenge traditional sovereignty principles, thus reshaping geopolitical concepts in the modern context. Hamid et al. (2023) provide an overview of critical internal and external factors shaping Pakistan's foreign policy, including historical influences, regional conflicts, economic conditions, and socio-cultural dynamics, collectively informing its foreign relations. Bukhari et al. (2024) provide a geopolitical analysis of Pakistan's energy sector, highlighting its dependence on regional dynamics, security,

and clean energy needs. Through a comprehensive review of policies and socioeconomic impacts, the study emphasizes proactive management of sociopolitical shifts and global energy challenges, suggesting that policymakers can strengthen Pakistan's strategic position with insights from this study. Ali (2024) investigates South Asia's security environment shaped by superpower rivalry, focusing on Pakistan and India's alignments with China and the US. This study explores how these partnerships affect nuclear deterrence and strategic stability, emphasizing South Asia's evolving strategic landscape amid rising US-China assertiveness. Khan and Jamal (2024) discuss Pakistan's potential within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) regarding military, economic, and energy cooperation. The study suggests that Pakistan can capitalize on SCO's opportunities for regional collaboration to gain diplomatic, economic, and security advantages. Shah & Karki (2024) analyzes India's foreign policy through a realist lens, noting its strategic pivot from a continental focus to the Indo-Pacific as a shift from classical to neoclassical realism in response to China's rise. The study concludes that India's policy links two regions: its Quad partnership with the US, Japan, and Australia in the Indo-Pacific and its military cooperation with the US influenced by events in Eurasia. Safdar (2024) examines delays in Pakistan's ML-1 railway project, questioning why progress lags despite China's vital interest. Using a two-phase framework, the study highlights railway officials' roles in negotiations and the influence of political and economic shifts, including conflicts with local elites' visions and domestic political changes. Additional delays stem from China's challenges in gaining international support, financial issues, and disputes over financing terms. Kiran (2024) explores the strategic cultures of Pakistan and India, tracing their historical evolution and effects on South Asia's strategic balance. It highlights significant differences in their military cultures, which affect their complex nuclear-armed relationship.

Based on the stated discussion, the study has the following research hypotheses, i.e.,

*H1*: There is a significant positive relationship between the perceived economic impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the effectiveness of Pakistan's foreign policy.

*H2*: Energy security concerns have a negative impact on the public perception of Pakistan's foreign policy effectiveness.

*H3*: Positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability and favorable evaluations of diplomatic engagements are associated with higher perceptions of Pakistan's foreign policy effectiveness.

The study identifies unique factors shaping each nation's strategic culture, influenced by national identities, political systems, and history.

## Methodology

The study thoroughly examines foreign policy perspectives among Pakistan's university faculty and students, especially concerning the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its socioeconomic and environmental implications. Participants in this study are drawn from a wide range of disciplines and exhibit a profound awareness of foreign policy matters, including the complex influence of CPEC on Pakistan's economy and diplomatic engagements. Focusing on individuals well-versed in foreign relations and international politics, the study seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of public and academic perceptions of Pakistan's foreign policy objectives, specifically about regional partnerships and environmental sustainability.

In order to capture diverse insights, a random sample of participants was selected from various academic backgrounds, including but not limited to Pakistan Studies, International Relations, Economics, Physics, History, Computer Science, English, Sociology, Foreign Affairs, Geography, and Political Science. This broad disciplinary representation aims to reflect a balanced perspective



on Pakistan's foreign policy strategy and its perceived effectiveness in both domestic and international arenas. Faculty and students from reputable institutions such as Abbottabad University of Science and Technology, COMSATS University, the University of Haripur, and Comwave University were surveyed. Their informed views offer valuable insights into the broader academic discourse surrounding Pakistan's foreign policy, economic initiatives, and environmental considerations within the framework of CPEC.

The research methodology incorporates a mixed-methods approach, employing qualitative and quantitative techniques to yield a well-rounded understanding of the research questions. Data collection was conducted through surveys, structured and unstructured interviews, and observational techniques, enabling participants to express their views on various topics related to Pakistan's foreign policy. The survey utilized Likert-scale questions to capture quantitative data, while interviews and open-ended questions provided qualitative insights, allowing participants to elaborate on specific foreign policy issues. This combination of methods allows the study to gather numerical data on perceptions and detailed qualitative narratives, ensuring that the findings encompass measurable trends and nuanced viewpoints.

Qualitative data collection included open-ended questions that encouraged respondents to articulate their views in depth, capturing the complexity of issues such as Pakistan's role in the CPEC project, the influence of energy security on foreign policy decisions, and integrating environmental concerns into diplomatic strategies. This approach allowed participants to offer comprehensive responses on how they perceive Pakistan's diplomatic initiatives, including its positioning within the CPEC framework and its broader impact on economic development, environmental sustainability, and regional influence. Questions were designed to explore key aspects of foreign policy, such as Pakistan's strategic engagements, the effectiveness of its diplomatic efforts, and how national interests are promoted on the global stage.

To analyze the data, regression analysis was employed to assess the relationships between the study's dependent variable, Foreign Policy Effectiveness, and a set of independent variables, including Perceptions of CPEC's Economic Impact, Energy Security Concerns, Environmental Sustainability Attitudes, and Evaluations of Diplomatic Engagements. Regression analysis provides a statistical estimation of these relationships, enabling the study to identify significant predictors of foreign policy perceptions and quantify these associations' strengths. This analytical approach contributes to a data-driven understanding of how specific factors, such as economic and environmental considerations, shape perceptions of foreign policy effectiveness among the academic community.

By adopting an open-ended format, the study encourages participants to share their unique perspectives, expertise, and experiences, enriching the qualitative dataset with diverse responses. This approach ensures that the study captures faculty and students' complex and varied views regarding Pakistan's foreign policy trajectory, allowing for a more accurate and comprehensive analysis.

This study engaged a diverse and knowledgeable group of participants, including academics, professors, analysts, and practitioners experienced in international affairs. Their broad expertise in foreign policy dynamics and insights into Pakistan's diplomatic strategies, particularly regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), played a crucial role in shaping the study's findings. These participants were carefully selected from various academic institutions, government bodies, and private colleges, offering a wide array of perspectives that enhanced the depth and scope of the research. The study captured insights from individuals who bring unique

academic and practical experience to analyze CPEC's economic, environmental, and diplomatic dimensions, thus enriching the qualitative data gathered.

The study's open-ended questions allowed participants to freely articulate their views, resulting in nuanced, multi-dimensional responses. Participants expressed their thoughts on Pakistan's strategic role in CPEC and its influence on diplomatic relations. They reflected on key areas such as energy security and environmental sustainability, examining how these issues shape Pakistan's foreign policy and its interactions on the regional and global stages. The participants' varied backgrounds provided a rich tapestry of insights, contributing to a comprehensive examination of the complex factors influencing Pakistan's foreign policy.

Participants were prompted to discuss how they perceive Pakistan's involvement in CPEC impacting its diplomatic relationships with other countries, providing a detailed view of this large-scale initiative's role in regional and global politics. They were also asked to share their views on energy security concerns and their influence on Pakistan's foreign policy decisions, highlighting the intersection between energy needs and diplomatic strategy. Additionally, participants were encouraged to reflect on environmental considerations and how they influence Pakistan's strategic engagements with other nations. Other prompts explored perceptions of CPEC's impact on Pakistan's economic development and regional influence and assessments of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts in promoting its national interests globally. These open-ended questions allowed participants to elaborate on key foreign policy concerns, providing valuable insights into the strategic dimensions of Pakistan's engagement with CPEC and its broader diplomatic priorities, i.e.,

1. How do you envision Pakistan's strategic role in the CPEC project affecting its diplomatic relationships with neighboring countries and major global powers?
2. In what ways do you think energy security concerns shape Pakistan's foreign policy, especially concerning alliances, partnerships, and regional stability?
3. How significant are environmental considerations in Pakistan's foreign policy decisions? Could you elaborate on how these issues influence its strategic partnerships, particularly within CPEC?
4. What are your views on how Pakistan's involvement in CPEC could influence its economic trajectory and enhance or limit its influence in the regional political landscape?
5. Based on your knowledge, how effectively has Pakistan promoted its national interests globally through diplomatic channels? Are there specific strategies or initiatives that you believe are particularly impactful?

The range of responses collected offers a nuanced understanding of how knowledgeable stakeholders perceive Pakistan's evolving role in the region, especially as influenced by CPEC and its economic and environmental ramifications. This qualitative approach enabled the study to capture diverse insights, contributing to a well-rounded analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy landscape and informing the broader discourse on Pakistan's strategic goals in the context of CPEC.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study draws from a highly knowledgeable group of participants, including academics from Pakistan studies, international relations, history, and political science, as well as postgraduate researchers, professors, students, and educators from both public and private institutions. Selected based on their expertise in foreign policy, participants represent a spectrum of institutions such as Government Postgraduate College Abbottabad, Hazara University, Abbottabad University of

Science and Technology, and various private colleges. The diversity in participants' academic backgrounds and qualifications, including Ph.D. and M.Phil. holders, has provided an in-depth perspective on the strategic dimensions of Pakistan's foreign relations. Their insights into the complex diplomatic landscape offer a rich qualitative foundation for this research.

### **Q1. Perception of Pakistan's Role in CPEC and Diplomatic Relationships**

Participants expressed a range of perspectives on Pakistan's involvement in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), highlighting both strategic benefits and diplomatic challenges. Many participants recognized CPEC as a "game-changer" for Pakistan's regional influence, asserting it enhances Pakistan's role in China's broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). As one academic remarked, "CPEC is not just an economic corridor but a diplomatic bridge that solidifies Pakistan-China ties and, in doing so, reshapes Pakistan's strategic position in the region." Conversely, several respondents emphasized the diplomatic complexities introduced by CPEC, particularly regarding Pakistan's relations with the U.S. and India. While acknowledging the economic potential, some participants expressed caution, with one participant noting, "CPEC has indeed opened new avenues, but it also risks putting Pakistan in a delicate balancing act, especially in managing relations with countries that view China's growing influence with concern." This nuanced view reflects the interplay between economic gain and diplomatic maneuvering that CPEC necessitates for Pakistan.

### **Q2. Impact of Energy Security Concerns on Foreign Policy Decisions**

The analysis revealed that energy security is a primary concern shaping Pakistan's foreign policy. Many participants observed that securing stable energy sources has driven Pakistan to forge partnerships with energy-rich nations, prioritizing these relationships even at the cost of other policy interests. One professor noted, "Energy security has become a cornerstone of Pakistan's diplomatic agenda, as it underpins national security and economic stability." In light of shifting global energy dynamics, some respondents highlighted the importance of diversifying energy sources, including nuclear and renewable energy investments, to mitigate dependence on any single supplier. A participant emphasized, "In pursuing energy partnerships, Pakistan must look beyond traditional sources and explore renewables to ensure a sustainable and resilient energy future." This approach underscores the significance of energy diversification as a strategic priority in Pakistan's foreign relations.

### **Q3. Environmental Considerations in Strategic Engagements**

Environmental considerations emerged as a growing factor in Pakistan's strategic engagements, with participants acknowledging the importance of global climate agreements, such as the Paris Accord, and the role of environmental sustainability in diplomacy. According to one expert, "Environmental diplomacy is not just about addressing climate change but about securing Pakistan's long-term development goals within the global sustainability agenda." Participants noted that Pakistan's alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a framework for diplomatic engagement, especially in promoting renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure development. The evolving concept of "environmental security" was highlighted, with one participant observing, "The environmental dimension of diplomacy is vital; it allows Pakistan to leverage international partnerships for sustainable development while addressing transboundary issues like water management." These insights underscore the multi-dimensional role of environmental policy in Pakistan's diplomatic strategy.



#### **Q4. Economic Development and Regional Influence through CPEC**

CPEC's potential to bolster Pakistan's economic development and regional influence was a recurring theme. Participants acknowledged that CPEC has contributed to Pakistan's infrastructure development, mainly through investments in special economic zones (SEZs) and energy projects. According to one Professor, "CPEC is instrumental in transforming Pakistan's economic landscape; it has the potential to make Pakistan a central trade hub in South Asia." Many participants also addressed the broader regional implications of CPEC, noting its role in enhancing Pakistan's connectivity with neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. However, some expressed concerns about the geopolitical challenges associated with CPEC, particularly its impact on India-Pakistan relations. As one respondent aptly stated, "While CPEC may position Pakistan as a regional leader in connectivity, it also compels us to navigate complex regional tensions." This dichotomy reflects the opportunities and challenges inherent in Pakistan's economic engagement through CPEC.

#### **Q5. Effectiveness of Pakistan's Diplomatic Efforts**

Views on Pakistan's diplomatic effectiveness were mixed, with participants acknowledging achievements and improvement areas. Notably, Pakistan's diplomatic success in keeping the Kashmir issue on the international agenda and its contributions to the Afghan peace process were highlighted as critical accomplishments. As one respondent noted, "Pakistan has shown significant diplomatic acumen in maintaining global attention on Kashmir and fostering peace dialogues in Afghanistan." However, some participants critiqued aspects of Pakistan's diplomacy, particularly its relations with Western countries. One respondent echoed the need for a more proactive approach, remarking, "To fully realize its diplomatic potential, Pakistan must address perceptions surrounding issues of democracy and human rights, which often influence its global standing." This sentiment underscores the importance of strengthening diplomatic strategies to address evolving international expectations.

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the study's respondents, highlighting key characteristics and their familiarity with the topic. Thus, it ensures a diverse and informed perspective on the research themes related to Pakistan's foreign policy, diplomatic relations, and the strategic implications of initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The sample comprises 68% male and 32% female respondents, indicating a balanced gender representation with a slight male majority, often reflective of academic and policy-oriented research contexts. Participants span a range of age groups, with the majority (69%) in the 26-35 age bracket, which often correlates with early to mid-career academic and professional expertise. Specifically, 35% of respondents fall within the 26-30 age range and 34% in the 31-35 bracket. Younger respondents aged 20-25 account for 20% of the sample, while those above 35 represent 11%, adding a layer of experienced viewpoints. The respondents primarily consist of graduate students (60%) who bring current academic insights to the discussion. Faculty members and teachers comprise 33% of the sample, providing professional academic perspectives. A smaller segment includes undergraduate students (5%) and other affiliations (2%), reflecting a diverse range of educational levels. Nearly all respondents are familiar with the study's core themes on Pakistan's international engagement and foreign policy. Specifically, 48% identify as "very familiar," and another 49% as "somewhat familiar," with only 3% indicating a lack of familiarity. This distribution suggests that the responses are likely well-informed, contributing nuanced insights into the complexities of Pakistan's foreign relations, particularly concerning CPEC and its broader regional implications.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

Demographic Characteristic	Response Options	Percentage
Gender	Male	68%
	Female	32%
Age	20 - 25	20%
	26 - 30	35%
	31 - 35	34%
	More than 35 Years	11%
Educational Background	Undergraduate student	5%
	Graduate student	60%
	Faculty/Teacher	33%
	Other (please specify)	2%
Familiarity with Topic	Not familiar at all	3%
	Somewhat familiar	49%
	Very familiar	48%

*Source:* Author's survey.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the key variables examined in the study. The variable *Foreign Policy Effectiveness* exhibits a mean score of 4.22 with a standard deviation of 0.823, reflecting a generally positive perception of Pakistan's foreign policy efficacy, albeit with moderate variability. This suggests a consensus among participants that Pakistan's foreign policy efforts are perceived as effective. However, responses display some divergence, potentially due to varying satisfaction levels with specific diplomatic outcomes or strategies. *CPEC's Economic Impact*, with a mean of 1.92 and a standard deviation of 0.720, reveals a more cautious assessment, indicating that participants may have reservations or diverse views about the economic implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The relatively low mean score, combined with a lower standard deviation, suggests a consistent perception that, while influential, CPEC's economic benefits may be insignificant and partially realized at this stage, possibly due to implementation challenges or regional complexities. *Energy Security Concerns*, with a mean of 2.96 and a standard deviation of 1.062, represent a moderately concerned stance, highlighting energy as a significant factor in Pakistan's foreign policy considerations. The higher standard deviation indicates a broader range of opinions, suggesting that while energy security is a recognized issue, perceptions of its urgency or impact vary among respondents, likely due to differing familiarity with Pakistan's energy challenges or awareness of geopolitical dynamics in energy trade. The variable *Environmental Sustainability Attitudes*, with a mean of 3.48 and standard deviation of 0.926, reflects moderately favorable attitudes toward the importance of environmental considerations in Pakistan's policy decisions. This moderate mean and notable variability imply a growing acknowledgment of sustainability issues. However, the mixed responses may reflect the varying emphasis on environmental factors relative to economic and security priorities. Finally, *Evaluations of Diplomatic Engagements* has a mean score of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.807, indicating a generally positive view of Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, yet with some diversity in perspectives. This suggests that while participants recognize achievements in diplomatic relations, especially within the context of regional partnerships, some variation in satisfaction levels may stem from differing perceptions of specific bilateral or multilateral outcomes.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Variables**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Foreign Policy Effectiveness	4.22	0.823
CPEC's Economic Impact	1.92	0.720
Energy Security Concerns	2.96	1.062
Environmental Sustainability Attitudes	3.48	0.926
Evaluations of Diplomatic Engagements	3.88	0.807

*Source:* Author's survey.

The results of the multivariate regression analysis in Table 3 provide essential insights into the determinants of Pakistan's foreign policy effectiveness, as perceived by the respondents. Demographic variables, such as gender, age, and educational background, exhibit limited influence on foreign policy perceptions. Gender, however, shows a slight but statistically significant negative relationship with foreign policy effectiveness, suggesting that male respondents tend to view foreign policy less favorably. This could reflect a more critical stance among men, potentially due to differing socio-political expectations or personal experiences. However, the economic impact of such demographic differences remains minimal. Age and educational background, on the other hand, do not show a significant association with foreign policy effectiveness. This suggests that foreign policy effectiveness, within the context of this study, is likely influenced by factors beyond personal demographics, such as specific policy outcomes that affect economic and national interests. Likewise, familiarity with the topic exhibits a positive trend, with those more informed about Pakistan's foreign policy more likely to perceive it as effective. This finding aligns with the expectation that individuals familiar with foreign policy's economic and strategic elements are better equipped to evaluate its success.

**Table 3: Multivariate Regression**

Variables	Standardized $\beta$ value	t-value	Prob. Value
<b>Demographic Variables</b>			
Gender	-0.038	-2.399	0.038
Age	0.057	0.609	0.544
Educational Background	-0.002	-0.023	0.982
Familiarity with Topic	0.202	1.966	0.052
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
CPEC's Economic Impact	0.363	3.752	0.000
Energy Security Concerns	-0.090	-0.862	0.391
Environmental Sustainability Attitudes	0.185	1.973	0.052
Evaluations of Diplomatic Engagements	0.242	2.875	0.028
<b>Statistical Tests</b>			
$R^2$	0.625		
Adjusted $R^2$	0.587		
F-statistics	4.306		
F-prob.value	0.002		

*Note:* Dependent variable: Foreign Policy Effectiveness. Source: Author's survey.

Among the independent variables, the economic impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands out as the most influential factor. Respondents who view CPEC as a beneficial economic initiative are more likely to rate Pakistan's foreign policy as effective. This outcome underscores the vital link between economic development initiatives and foreign policy perceptions. CPEC, one of Pakistan's most significant foreign policy and economic endeavors, is a critical driver of positive policy outcomes (Khan et al., 2024). The favorable view of CPEC correlates with a broader sense of national progress, suggesting that economic factors play a central role in shaping public opinion about the effectiveness of foreign policy (Zaidi et al., 2024). Concerns regarding energy security, however, do not appear to significantly impact perceptions of foreign policy effectiveness. This may be due to the complex and often indirect relationship between energy security and foreign policy outcomes. While energy security is undeniably essential, its connection to foreign policy effectiveness may be less readily apparent to the respondents, especially in other more immediate economic developments like CPEC.

Environmental sustainability attitudes also show a positive, albeit marginal, association with the perception of foreign policy effectiveness. Respondents with more positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability tend to perceive foreign policy as more effective. This relationship reflects the growing importance of global environmental concerns in shaping national policy priorities, suggesting that those who view environmental sustainability as an essential aspect of governance will likely view the country's foreign policy as successful when it aligns with such goals (Awewomom et al., 2024). Finally, evaluations of diplomatic engagements exhibit a strong positive correlation with foreign policy effectiveness. Respondents who view Pakistan's diplomatic efforts favorably are more likely to rate the overall effectiveness of the country's foreign policy as high. This finding is not surprising, as successful diplomatic relations often result in beneficial trade agreements, security partnerships, and geopolitical influence, all of which directly impact the nation's economic and strategic interests (Aziz, 2024).

The regression model explains a significant portion of the variance in foreign policy effectiveness, indicating that the factors included in the analysis, particularly economic and diplomatic considerations play a substantial role in shaping public perceptions. Overall, the results highlight the centrality of economic outcomes, particularly the perceived benefits of CPEC and diplomatic engagements, in forming opinions about foreign policy effectiveness. These findings suggest that Pakistan's foreign policy is often judged by its tangible impact on national development, economic prosperity, and global positioning.

## **Conclusions and Policy Recommendations**

The analysis of Pakistan's foreign policy effectiveness reveals that economic initiatives, particularly the perceived impact of CPEC, are central to shaping public perceptions of policy success. While energy security concerns did not emerge as a significant factor, the positive influence of environmental sustainability attitudes and diplomatic engagements underscores the importance of multifaceted policy approaches in fostering public support for foreign policy. The study further suggests that individuals who view foreign policy as successful are more likely to do so when they perceive tangible economic benefits, such as those from significant initiatives like CPEC, and when the country's diplomatic efforts are aligned with their expectations for global positioning and environmental concerns.

Given the significant role of economic development initiatives like CPEC in shaping foreign policy perceptions, the government should continue focusing on large-scale projects with visible and tangible benefits for the population. This could include promoting further investments, improving

infrastructure, and enhancing trade relations to foster broader public support for foreign policy. While energy security concerns did not strongly impact this study, Pakistan should still prioritize energy security as a critical component of its foreign policy. Engaging in regional energy partnerships and diversifying energy sources could help address public concerns, especially as energy issues remain a top priority in global and domestic politics. The positive association between environmental sustainability attitudes and foreign policy effectiveness highlights the need for Pakistan to integrate environmental concerns into its foreign policy. Policymakers should pursue international collaborations focused on sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and green technology, aligning Pakistan's foreign policy with global environmental goals. The findings emphasize the importance of effective diplomatic engagements in shaping foreign policy perceptions. Pakistan should strengthen its diplomatic ties, particularly with critical economic and regional partners, through strategic partnerships, cultural exchanges, and international cooperation on global issues.

These recommendations aim to align foreign policy with national priorities and global expectations, enhancing its perceived effectiveness among the population.

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