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The Uruguay Round Agreement: Implications for Pakistan's Textiles and Clothing Sector

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Uruguay Round (UR), which marked the conclusion of protracted multilateral trade negotiations, resulted in comprehensive agreements on multilateral trade in goods and services within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The newly created World Trade Organisation (WTO) provides an institutional framework that encompasses all the agreements and legal instruments negotiated in the UR as well as the dispute settlement procedures and provisions for the regular monitoring of policies of the member countries. The UR agreement has been widely perceived as constituting a major advance in the process of multilateral liberalisation of trade in goods and services and, when fully implemented, is expected to improve economic efficiency and welfare from the global, national and sectoral standpoints. An important feature of the UR agreement is the incorporation of new sectors like textiles and clothing within the ambit of the GATT/WTO framework. In view of the fact that the textiles and clothing industry is one of the few sectors in which developing countries enjoy a distinct comparative advantage over industrial countries, the UR agreement holds considerable significance for developing economies like Pakistan.

The present paper seeks to explore the implications of the Uruguay Round agreement for Pakistan's textiles and clothing sector. The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the textiles and clothing industry in Pakistan. Section 3 delineates major elements of the UR agreement on textiles and clothing (ATC). Section 4 spells out opportunities and challenges for the textiles and clothing sector in Pakistan in the post Uruguay Round period; and Section 5 concludes the discussion.

2. THE TEXTILES AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY IN PAKISTAN

The textiles and clothing sector is the mainstay of Pakistan's economy. With a 30 percent share in the value added of the manufacturing sector, the textiles and clothing industry accounts for about 8 percent of the GDP and employs 40 percent of the workforce in the manufacturing sector. The industry started from almost non-existence in 1947 with a meager size of 78000 spindles and 3000 looms, and that too largely in the unorganised sector. Since then, the industry has made substantial progress, especially in the spinning sub-sector, and now has 442 units, 8.3 million spindles and 10 thousand looms (Table 1).

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Table 1
Key Indicators of Textile Industry

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99
Number of Mills	336	503	503	439	442
Installed Capacity (000 Numbers)					
Spindles	8298	8709	8176	8325	8356
Rotors	132	142	143	145	146
Looms	14	14	10	10	10
Working Capacity (000 Numbers)					
Spindles	6023	6679	6455	6566	6579
Rotors	83	89	89	83	69
Looms	6	5	5	5	5
Working Capacity as a % of Installed Capacity					
Spindles	72.6	76.7	79.0	78.9	78.7
Rotors	62.9	62.7	62.2	57.2	47.3
Looms	42.9	35.7	50.0	50.0	50.0
Yarn Production (mln kg)	1369.7	1495.0	1520.8	1532.3	895.7
Cloth Production (mln.sq.meters)	321.8	327.0	333.5	340.3	220.5

Source: Pakistan (1998-99).

Growth in the size of textiles industry has been mixed: the number of mills and spindles more than doubled during the 1972-73 to 1998-99 period, whereas the number of looms fell by more than half during the same period (see Appendix). Total production of yarn and cloth as well as capacity utilisation of spindles and rotors registered positive growth rates during the Fifties and the Sixties. The rapid expansion of this industry during these decades was facilitated by the price advantage that Pakistan enjoyed in cotton textiles, due mainly to the domestic availability of raw cotton and cheap labour. Fiscal incentives, high rates of protection and export subsidies further enhanced the profitability of investment in this industry. However, in sharp contrast with its performance in the preceding decades, production in this industry either stagnated or declined during the seventies, and the industry remained under stress in the following decades. This is particularly evident in the case of cloth production, which consistently registered negative average annual growth rates from 1970 to 1998.

It is, however, noteworthy that despite its lackluster performance in recent years, the textiles and clothing industry continues to occupy a leading position in the trade structure of the country, accounting for more than 50 percent of its manufactured exports.

According to Table 2, Pakistan's exports of textiles increased from USD 2167.7 million in 1993-94 to USD 2904.4 million in 1995-96, and then declined to USD 2483.4 million in 1997-98. Cotton yarn and cotton cloth constitute a major

Table 2
Structure of Pakistan's Exports of Textiles and Clothing

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
	(Million US\$)				
Textiles	2167.7	2698.4	2904.4	2750.5	2483.4
Cotton Yarn	1259.3	1528.1	1540.3	1411.5	1159.5
Cotton Thread	4.0	1.9	1.5	1.7	1.8
Cotton Cloth	820.6	1081.4	1275.9	1262.4	1250.3
Cotton Bags	17.3	19.1	24.6	27.6	23.1
Cotton Waste	62.1	63.2	57.2	41.8	42.2
Waste Material of Textile Fabrics	4.4	4.7	4.9	5.5	6.5
Clothing	1694.8	2016.9	2166.8	2320.6	2456.0
Towels	129.2	144.8	174.1	194.1	200.1
Made up Articles	415.0	503.7	601.3	665.0	754.6
Tents and Canvas	29.2	38.2	39.5	36.2	58.1
Readymade Garments	612.2	641.7	648.5	736.4	746.5
Hosiery	509.2	688.5	703.4	688.9	696.7
Textiles and Clothing	3862.5	4715.3	5071.2	5071.1	4939.4
Total Exports	6803.0	8137.0	8707.0	8320.0	8628.0
Textiles and Clothing as a % of Total Exports	56.8	57.9	58.2	61.0	57.2
Textiles and Clothing as a % of GDP	7.6	7.8	8.6	8.3	7.9
Total Exports as a % of GDP	13.0	13.3	13.5	13.5	13.5

Source: Pakistan (1997-98).

proportion of textiles exports. Exports of clothing showed an increasing trend during the period under consideration, rising from USD 1694.8 million in 1993-94 to USD 2456 million in 1997-98. The share of textiles and clothing in total exports stood at 61 percent in 1996-97 and declined slightly to 57.2 percent in 1997-98.

Table 3 highlights destination-wise exports of textiles and clothing in 1997-98. North America is a major market for Pakistan's exports of textiles and clothing: more than 50 percent of exports of hosiery, towels and made-ups and about 49 percent of ready-made garments are marketed in the United States and Canada. Europe ranks second in terms of its share in Pakistan's exports of cotton fabrics, ready-made garments, hosiery, made-ups, and towels. Pakistan's exports of bedwear are mostly concentrated in Europe (50.71 percent), while Asia accounts for a major proportion of cotton yarn exports from Pakistan (66.36 percent).

Table 3

Destination-wise Exports of Textile and Clothing: 1997-98

(Million US\$)

	Cotton Yarn	Cotton Fabrics	Ready- made Garments	Hosiery	Made-ups Excluding Bedwears and Towels	Bedwears	Towels
North America	64.4	192.6	360.3	408.9	140.3	116.7	100.3
Europe	109.4	332.1	286.2	223.1	82.9	258	64.4
Australia	—	57.4	—	—	2.7	14.5	—
Middle East	40.2	65.4	29.2	13	—	16.4	—
Asia	769.4	96.7	—	—	—	—	—
Other	176.1	506.1	70.8	51.7	19.9	103.2	35.4
Percentage Shares							
North America	5.55	15.40	48.27	58.69	57.08	22.94	50.12
Europe	9.44	26.56	38.34	32.02	33.73	50.71	32.18
Australia	—	7.69	—	—	1.10	2.85	—
Middle East	3.47	5.23	3.91	1.87	—	3.22	—
Asia	66.36	7.73	—	—	—	—	—
Other	15.19	40.48	9.48	7.42	8.10	20.28	17.69

Source: Pakistan (1997-98).**3. THE URUGUAY ROUND AGREEMENT**

The global textiles and clothing industry has faced one of the most regulated international trade regimes during the past several decades. To protect the domestic textiles and clothing industry from foreign competition, developed countries have long followed restrictive trade policies in the form of high tariffs, tariff escalation, and non-tariff barriers. The principal obstacle to trade in textiles and clothing has been an array of quantitative restrictions embodied in the Multi-Fiber Arrangements (MFA)—a system of bilaterally negotiated agreements that regulates textiles and clothing exports from developing countries to participating industrial countries.¹

The Uruguay Round agreement on textiles and clothing emerged after intensive negotiations with the developed countries on the issue of bringing international trade in textiles and clothing under the normal GATT rules. It envisages abolition of decades of discrimination and restrictions on international trade in textiles and clothing through its integration into the multilateral trade discipline under GATT/WTO. The key element of the agreement is the phased elimination of the MFA over a ten-year transition period. The elimination proceeds in four phases, starting with the entry into force of the WTO on January 1, 1995. Importing industrial countries must initially integrate products accounting for at least 16 percent of total (1990) import volume into the WTO, followed by an additional 17

¹It is widely believed that the MFA has restricted potential imports in major industrial markets, and that growth in the volume of textiles and clothing exports of developing countries has been lower because of the agreement [Cline (1990)].

percent and 18 percent, respectively, in the fourth and eighth years; the remaining 49 percent is to be integrated at the end of ten years. It is noteworthy that the phased elimination scheme is back-loaded in that it leaves the major part of the liberalisation to the end of the period. Concurrent with the integration of textile and clothing products, outstanding quotas must be initially expanded by an additional 16 percent, over and above the growth agreed previously under the MFA; an additional 25 percent in the next four years, and 27 percent in the next three years. Table 4 summarises the integration scheme for textiles and clothing under the Uruguay Round agreement.

Table 4
Integration Scheme for Textiles and Clothing

	Integration (Based on 1990 Import Volume)	Growth Rate of Residual Quotas (Based on Previously Agreed MFA Growth Rates of Quotas)
Stage I (January 1, 1995)	16 percent	16 percent higher growth rate than initially
Stage II (January 1, 1998)	Further 17 percent (total 33 percent)	Increase by 25 percent
Stage III (January 1, 2002)	Further 18 percent (total 51 percent)	Increase by 27 percent
End of the 10 Year transition period (January 1, 2005)	Remaining 49 percent (total 100 percent)	

Source: Francois, McDonald, and Nordstrom (1995).

During the Uruguay Round negotiations, developing countries expressed their apprehensions that the liberalisation of the more important and “sensitive” items would be pushed to the later stage of the transition. To mitigate this possibility, the final agreement requires importers to include at least one product from each of the four groups (tops and yarns, fabrics, made-up textiles, and clothing). However, since the agreement does not specify how much from each of these four categories must be liberalised at each phase of the transition period, it still leaves substantial room for discretion on the part of industrial countries in structuring their quota liberalisation. There are also provisions for redistributing quotas in favour of quota-constrained and efficient exporters, and flexibility provisions (to carry over quotas across product lines and time periods) will continue to apply. Exporting countries must also commit to take anti-circumvention measures to deal with rerouting, false declaration of origin, and transshipment.

The agreement establishes transitional safeguard mechanisms in case of temporary surges in imports of products not yet integrated into the WTO or products

not currently restrained under the MFA. Developing countries were concerned that this provision could be abused to retain restrictions, thereby effectively negating the intent of the UR. Despite their efforts during the negotiations, they did not succeed in preventing the inclusion of this provision. But they were able to put time limits on these safeguards, which must be applied selectively and can be kept up to a maximum of three years. Also, there is less flexibility in the use of these safeguard measures against small exporters, the least developed countries, wool producers, outward processors, and cottage industries.

In addition to phasing out quantitative restrictions, the UR agreement provides for an average reduction of 22 percent in industrial countries' bound tariffs on textiles and clothing products (Table 5). However, products in these sectors will

Table 5
*Developed Country Tariff Reductions by Major Industrial Group
Before and After the Uruguay Round*

	Percent					
	Tariff Averages Weighted by					
	Imports from All Sources			Imports from Developing Countries		
	Before	After	Percent Reduction	Before	After	Percent Reduction
All Industrial Products	6.3	3.8	40	6.8	4.3	37
Fish and Fish Products	6.1	4.5	26	6.6	4.8	27
Wood, Pulp, Paper, and Furniture	3.5	1.1	69	4.6	1.7	63
Textiles and Clothing	15.5	12.1	22	14.6	11.3	23
Leather, Rubber, Footwear	8.9	7.3	18	8.1	6.6	19
Metals	3.7	1.4	62	2.7	0.9	67
Chem. and Photographic Supplies	6.7	3.7	45	7.2	3.8	47
Transport Equipment	7.5	5.8	23	3.8	3.1	18
Non-electric Machinery	4.8	1.9	60	4.7	1.6	66
Electric Machinery	6.6	3.5	47	6.3	3.3	48
Mineral Prod. and Precious Stones	2.3	1.1	52	2.6	0.8	69
Manuf. Articles n.e.s.	5.5	2.4	56	6.5	3.1	52

Source: Blackhurst, Enders, and Francois (1995).

continue to have a considerable number of tariff peaks (tariffs in excess of 15 percent). After full implementation of the UR, about 28 percent of industrial country imports of textiles and clothing will remain subject to tariff peaks, compared with 35 percent at the start of the UR [GATT (1994)]. Thus, the proportional tariff cuts in this sector will be limited as compared with the average reduction (close to 40 percent) in bound tariffs on industrial products as a whole.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEXTILES AND CLOTHING SECTOR

Implementation of the Uruguay Round agreement on textiles and clothing is expected to offer significant opportunities for the expansion of developing countries'

trade in textiles and clothing. While these new opportunities on the demand side of international trade are made available to all developing countries through the principle of non-discrimination, the implications of changes in market access conditions for export opportunities may vary for different developing countries and regions. For some countries, the MFA phase-out is likely to be the single most important aspect of the UR agreement, while for others it may relate instead to tariff concessions for textiles as well as other industrial products. The MFA phase-out in itself carries different implications for different textiles and clothing exporters. For the most constrained suppliers, elimination of textiles and clothing quotas should imply significantly increased export opportunities in those sectors. On the other hand, less constrained suppliers may suffer from an erosion of preferences, as they are forced to compete with what had been the more heavily restricted suppliers.

While the Uruguay Round agreement provides tremendous scope for export expansion in general, it also poses many challenges for textiles and clothing exporters like Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the leading producers of raw cotton and this provides a strong raw material advantage for the growth of the export oriented textiles and clothing industry. However, Pakistan has not been able to fully exploit its traditional edge of domestic availability of raw cotton and has not attained the optimum potential of the textiles and clothing industry.² The low MFA quota utilisation rates clearly indicate that Pakistan's textiles and clothing industry is facing supply side constraints. In this scenario, the extent to which the country can gain from improved market access opportunities crucially hinges on the ability of its textiles and clothing industry to generate a market-oriented domestic supply response. Encouragement of such a response would require a coherent strategy, involving both the private and the public sectors, to revamp all the segments of the textiles and clothing industry with a view to improving its efficiency and competitiveness.

It must be emphasised that the strategy to maximise gains from improved market access should focus as much on redefining the role of the government as on restructuring the textiles and clothing industry. The textiles and clothing industry has traditionally grown under the umbrella of high tariffs, subsidies, concessionary finances, subsidised cotton prices and a host of other incentives that the government has been providing it from time to time. However, despite enjoying complete protection, the industry has not been able to reciprocate through improved efficiency and competitiveness and has failed to make adequate investment in quality improvement. It is widely recognised that the incentive packages alone cannot help the industry to compete in international markets, and that the export performance of the textiles industry can only be improved by rationalising its cost structure, increasing productivity, and improving the quality of the final product. Therefore, public policy must be geared to resolving the structural problems of the industry

²Pakistan is among the top five cotton-producing countries in the world, but its share in world exports of textiles is only about three percent, less than half of the share of Korea (8.6 percent) [WTO (1997)].

rather than providing short-term solutions. In the following paragraphs, we discuss major policy issues that need to be addressed if the textiles and clothing industry is to face up to the future challenge of fierce global competition.

Firstly, if Pakistan wants to enhance its export earnings through textiles and clothing exports, it has to improve the quality standards starting from raw cotton to finished products. Spinners maintain that a major handicap of the textiles industry in producing fine counts of yarn is the low quality of domestically produced cotton. Too little research and development effort has gone into improving the quality of domestic cotton owing to which the country has not been able to develop superior varieties of long staple cotton. Therefore, to ensure the availability of good quality raw cotton to the textiles industry at competitive prices, a long-term cotton policy needs to be devised with particular emphasis on developing medium and long staple varieties of cotton as well as on improving productivity through better crop management techniques. In the short term, however, the spinning sector can take advantage of the government's policy of free trade in cotton to use superior quality imported cotton for the production of higher-count yarn. On the other hand, efforts should be focused on quality improvement in fabrics and made-ups through the introduction of modern production facilities in the weaving, processing and made-ups sub-sectors.

Secondly, there is a need to diversify the export base from the traditional cotton-based products to synthetic fibers. Pakistan's exports of textiles and clothing remain heavily concentrated in cotton-based products despite a predominant share of synthetic fibers in the consumption pattern of most major markets. For example, the consumption of synthetic blends as a proportion of total consumption of different fibers in 1992 was 56 percent in the USA, 66 percent in Germany, and 62 percent in Japan [World Bank (1997)]. Thus, Pakistan has effectively shut itself out of a large part of the world market for textiles and clothing products. As the demand for synthetic blends is expected to remain strong in the future, it is imperative that the production capability of synthetic blends be strengthened in the country to take advantage of the growing market for man-made fibers and products.

Thirdly, the key to maximising the gains in the emerging multilateral trade scenario is to focus on value-addition rather than on intermediate products. Pakistan has not been able to make major strides in the export of finished products and its exports remain mostly concentrated in cotton yarn and coarse fabrics. The objective of high value-addition in the textiles and clothing industry cannot be achieved without creating a strong and modern weaving and processing base. The weaving capacity of the textiles industry has been static at 10,000 shuttleless looms for the past many years, which is no match to the quantum jump that the industry has taken in the spinning sector. There is, therefore, a clear need to encourage the establishment of vertically integrated composite textiles units comprising spindles, rotors, shuttleless and power looms, and processing facilities.

Finally, with the managed trade era in textiles due to be phased out in 2005, it is important that the domestic textiles and clothing industry be prepared for a much

more competitive environment, both at home as well as in foreign markets. The industry must strive to enhance competitiveness by promoting efficient utilisation of resources like raw material, and financial and human capital. The strength of any industry lies as much in efficiency and productivity as in advantages arising from natural resources and factor endowments. It is, therefore, important that concerted efforts are made to attain competitiveness in all segments of the industry in terms of both unit price and product quality.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The textiles and clothing sector is of strategic importance to Pakistan, accounting for more than 50 percent of its manufactured exports. The phasing-out of MFA type restrictions and other trade barriers is generally expected to have positive effects on Pakistan's exports of textiles and clothing in the long run. At the same time, however, the erosion of preferential treatment embodied in the Multi-Fiber Arrangements poses many challenges to the textiles and clothing industry in Pakistan. The emerging scenario of freer trade in textiles and clothing highlights the need to enhance competitiveness in this sector by improving product quality, efficiency of resource use, and productivity. Also, there is a need to advance in the reforms and liberalisation of the economy, and to focus public policy towards addressing the structural problems of the textiles and clothing industry with a view to enabling it to compete better in the more competitive international market.

Appendix

Growth of Textile and Clothing Industry

Year	No. of Units	Installed Capacity		Working Capacity			Total Yarn Production (mln.kg)	Total Cloth Production (mln.sq.mtr.)	
		No. of Spindles (000)	No. of Looms (000)	No. of Spindles (000)	No. of Looms (000)	Spindle Hours (million)			Loom Hours (million)
1972-73	150	3226	29	3057	27	22606.0	190.6	376.1	588.6
1973-74	155	3308	29	3034	26	23617.0	192.7	379.5	592.2
1974-75	143	3392	29	2823	25	20438.0	179.2	351.2	555.9
1975-76	127	3478	29	2579	23	20095.0	167.4	349.7	520.3
1976-77	135	3544	29	2650	19	18118.0	138.6	282.6	408.3
1977-78	140	3560	26	2680	15	19776.0	110.5	297.9	391.3
1978-79	152	3704	27	2772	14	20456.0	95.0	327.8	339.4
1979-80	149	3731	26	2841	16	21468.0	99.1	362.9	342.3
1980-81	158	3983	25	3176	13	22217.0	90.5	374.9	307.9
1981-82	155	4180	25	2944	13	22924.0	85.1	430.2	325.0
1982-83	158	4265	24	3062	14	23011.0	78.6	448.4	335.5
1983-84	162	4224	24	3020	12	23683.0	91.6	431.6	296.6
1984-85	158	4396	23	3022	10	33274.0	69.8	431.7	271.8
1985-86	160	4422	19	3158	9	24620.0	64.7	482.2	253.5
1986-87	187	4293	17	3499	9	26836.0	57.8	586.4	237.9
1987-88	197	4330	16	3690	9	29823.0	66.2	685.0	281.6
1988-89	219	4790	17	3966	9	32089.0	67.9	757.9	269.9
1989-90	236	5195	16	4416	8	36170.0	67.5	911.6	294.8
1990-91	247	5493	15	4754	8	39542.0	60.2	1041.2	292.9
1991-92	271	6141	15	5260	8	43606.0	58.8	1170.7	307.9
1992-93	284	6768	14	5433	6	46364.0	55.5	1219.0	325.4
1993-94	320	8182	14	5886	6	47221.0	44.0	1309.6	314.9
1994-95	336	8298	14	6023	6	49734.0	41.8	1369.7	321.8
1995-96	503	8709	14	6679	5	52239.0	37.1	1495.0	327.0
1996-97	503	8176	10	6455	5	53625.0	36.4	1520.8	333.5
1997-98	439	8325	10	6566	5	55005.0	37.7	1532.3	340.3
1998-99	442	8356	10	6579	5	32570.0	20.6	895.7	220.5
Growth Rates (%)									
1950s	2.85	1.77	3.26	1.93	3.28	10.45	6.58	7.01	6.92
1960s	4.50	4.70	1.55	1.05	0.42	4.46	2.52	5.88	1.88
1970s	3.12	4.07	-1.58	1.47	-5.65	1.66	-7.65	1.99	-7.01
1980s	4.56	-1.56	-4.83	3.73	-5.25	5.56	-3.21	10.37	-0.47
1990s	5.23	6.03	-5.63	4.70	-9.43	4.83	-6.46	5.68	2.17

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey (Various Issues).

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