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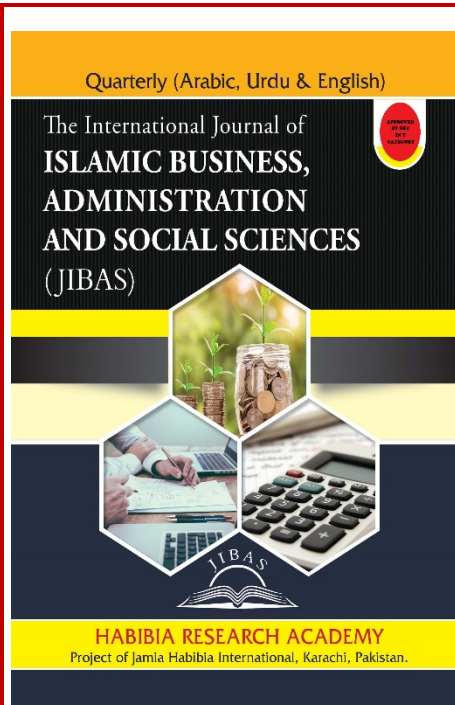
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**TOPIC:**  
**PAKISTAN AND EUROPEAN UNION TRADE RELATIONS: IMPACT OF GSP PLUS STATUS ON ACCESS TO EUROPEAN MARKETS**

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## PAKISTAN AND EUROPEAN UNION TRADE RELATIONS: IMPACT OF GSP PLUS STATUS ON ACCESS TO EUROPEAN MARKETS

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### ABSTRACT:

*The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) Plus is a method by which the European Union (EU) aims to support economic growth as well as free trade with developing nations through duty-free access to EU markets. Pakistan was also granted GSP Plus status as a result of joining the EU's tariff-free entry markets for a number of its exports. Pakistani exports to the EU have climbed by more than 47.25 percent since 2013, with textile exports increasing by 66.6 percent. The report examines how GSP Plus has aided Pakistan's exports to the EU and alleviated trade barriers between the EU and Pakistan, while also making recommendations to strengthen prospective commercial links between the two countries. When the GSP Plus status is fully utilized, it implies that the government has a big current account deficit, concerns with public debt, and a weak balance of payments, all of which will result in the collection of additional foreign reserves for a country like Pakistan.*

**Keywords:** European Union, Trade Relationships, Pakistan, GSP

**Introduction:** Pakistan was granted Plus General System of Preferences (GSP) status in December 2013, allowing it to access European Union markets without tariffs (for two-thirds of all commodity categories) (EU). The GSP Plus scheme's main goal is to boost developing nations' economic growth by promoting their export markets. The EU's purpose with the GSP Plus project is to encourage sustainable development in poor nations. Countries with GSP Plus status have more access to EU markets since their products are subject to preferential tariff treatment. GSP Plus countries, on the other hand, are bound by the 27 key UN (United Nations) climate change, equal governance and political, workforce, children, and women's rights conventions. Instead of automatically extending the European Union's GSP Plus designation, countries must be eligible and meet all requirements. (b) The country's economy should not be undiversified, i.e., its GSP imports should not account for more than 75% of the total volume of its imports, and its exports should not account for more than 2% of the world's GSP imports of the Europe<sup>1</sup>. A considerable number of studies conducted in Pakistan focused on the implications of the GSP Plus status on Pakistani exports, mostly on textiles. This article examines the effects of GSP Plus on enhancing EU-Pakistan trade links in light of a paucity of literature on EU-Pakistan trade links and the effect of GSP Plus on EU exports to Pakistan. The following research question will be addressed in the essay.

- a) Has Pakistan's export level to the EU increased as a result of GSP Plus status?
- b) What are the primary trade limits and limitations that Pakistan and the EU face?

### Literature Review:

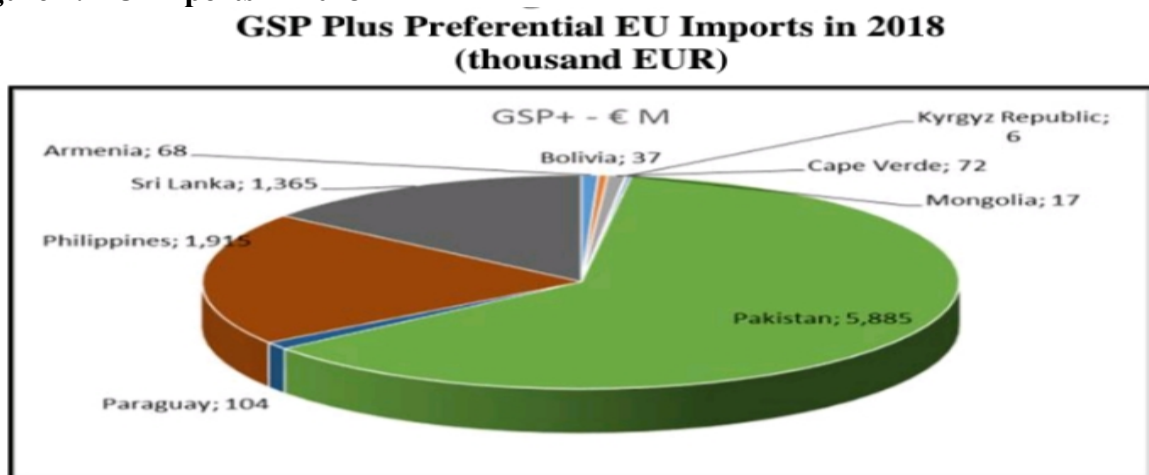
The Theory of Factor Proportion, developed by Bertil Ohlin and Eli Huckster in the early 1900s, shows how a nation might gain a competitive edge by exploiting the forces that make up the region's excess supply. They came to the conclusion that because high-offer factors are less expensive than their wants and vice versa, countries would export things

that required a vast supply and hence cheaper manufacturing elements, while importing those with higher demand from limited resources. Michael Porter developed a novel model to explain national comparative advantages in 1990, resulting in the creation of international exchange theory. The Porter theory also demonstrates how many nations in international trade have a comparative advantage. According to Porter, the desire and capacity to update and be inventive is the key to worldwide expansion in any market. As a result, it becomes clear that certain nations have an advantage over others in specific industries<sup>2</sup>. Local market demand factors, business plan structure composition and competitiveness, local suppliers and complementary industries, and factor circumstances are the four primary drivers outlined by Porter in his theory. Local market demand is concerned with the size and reach of the consumer base, which generates demand and supports innovation and quality development. As a consequence of competition, businesses looking for means to boost competitiveness through advancing technological innovation would often greatly encourage ingenuity by the involvement of rivals in the industry and their amount of technical competence. Local producers and complementary businesses relate to the upstream and downstream industries that foster competition through exchanging ideas. The prerequisite is that the infrastructure of a country should be developed by itself, according to Porter, such as capital, a sufficient group of skilled employees, assets and technological development. Both these considerations then determine how much market share an export nation can gain in the international market<sup>3</sup>.

#### **An Outline of Pakistan-EU Trade Affairs:**

The EU and Pakistan have become key economic partners over the years. In 2018, the EU was Pakistan's most important export destination, absorbing 34% of Pakistani exports, compared to 16% for the US, 9% for China, and 8% for Afghanistan. The EU contributes for 10% of Pakistan's total exports and is the third largest source of imports. A cooperation agreement between Pakistan and the European Union was struck in 2004 to control their bilateral trade interactions. The EU and Pakistan formed a trade sub-group inside the European Union in 2007. To enhance bilateral trade growth, Pakistan and the EU have formed a joint committee, providing a venue for the debate of trade problems and policy problems, including trade-inhibiting individual market access between the two countries. Pakistani exports to the EU are mostly made up of clothing and textiles (80%), as well as non-profit organizations<sup>4</sup>. Pakistan's exports to the EU have expanded significantly since January 2014 as a result of its status. Pakistan's exports increased by 47.25 percent to EU between 2013 and 2017. Pakistan is a large GSP Plus beneficiary because 76 percent of these are GSP Plus protected. Pakistan accounted for the greatest portion of all GSP Plus exports to the EU, as shown in the diagram below:

Figure 1: EU Imports in 2018



Source: European Commission,

[https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2018/january/tradoc\\_156536.pdf](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2018/january/tradoc_156536.pdf)

The EU-wide growth was the highest in the export of clothing and households in 2013 to 2017. The growth of house textiles in the household sector was up 92%, accompanied by a growth of 71,66% and carpets and rugs up by 17,34% and the growth of the textiles industry up to 13,80%. Value-added sectors have increased over the past five years. Following GSP Plus, this growth in Pakistan's exports is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Trend of Pakistan's Exports to EU

Sector	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Impact of GSP+ (%)
Textile Garments and Hosiery	1,398.6	1,830.5	2,281.6	2,467.3	2,685.2	92.00
Home Textiles	980.0	1,270.9	1,456.3	1,564.1	1,682.4	71.66
Cotton & Intermediary Goods of Textiles	738.8	765.1	792.4	805.1	840.8	13.80
Carpets	30.3	31.6	37.2	37.9	35.6	17.34
Grand Total	3,147.7	3,898.0	4,567.4	4,874.5	5,243.9	66.60

Source: Pakistan Economic Survey 2017-18,

[http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters\\_18/08-Trade.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_18/08-Trade.pdf)

The majority of this rise in EU exports was due to an improvement in UK exports from Pakistan (UK). Exports from Pakistan to the UK grew from US\$1,432 million to

US\$1,664,7 million, a 16.25% rise in 2013-2019.<sup>18</sup> The GSP Plus programme shows substantial growth in Pakistan's exports to Germany and Spain. Exports to Germany rise by 18% from USD 1272.3 million during the same period, while exports to Spain grew by 54% to US \$ 928.3 million, increasing from USD 602 million to USD 928.3 million. Similarly, exports to Pakistan increased from 628 million to 970.2 million dollars and to Poland by 151% from 102 million dollars to 255.8 million dollars. Exports to Italy grew 24.5 percent from 632 million dollars to 788.1 million dollars over a period from 628 million dollars to 970.2 million dollars. Moreover in order to obtain strong support in the European Parliament for future preferential arrangements, such as the Brexit deal, which was signed in 2020, Pakistan also wishes to expand relations with other EU countries rather than with the UK<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Restrictions and Limitations in EU-Pakistan Trade Relations:**

Pakistan's export production plummeted before it was designated as a GSP Plus country. Pakistan's proportion of global exports fell from 0.18 percent in 1990 to 0.13 percent in 2015, according to World Bank estimates. Over the same time period, the number of Pakistani competitors has raised dramatically in global export shares: Bangladesh's share of global exports has increased from 0.06 percent to 0.19 percent, India's share has increased from 0.61 percent to 1.65 percent, and Vietnam's share has increased from 0.14 percent to 1.17 percent.<sup>6</sup>

#### **a) Lack of Competition of Pakistani Goods in International Markets:**

A major constraint confronted by Pakistani farmers is a lack of energy sources. The automotive sector has run less than 70 percent of its entire output in the last few years owing to the long-standing and ongoing oil shortage. Many Pakistani textile factories have moved to places where electricity, such as Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, is cheap and easily available. Those businesses who do exist are utilizing alternative actions that boost their production costs and, eventually, their world consumer values as a result of higher energy costs. In Bangladesh, India, China or Vietnam, these high-priced goods are ineffective on the international market and lose their relatively low-priced EU market commodities. Exporters face big obstacles in retaining and reinforcing their market share in the foreign markets. Pakistan lost about 35% of its export income in 2013 as a consequence of energy losses. In the years ahead, the new energy projects set up under the China-Pakistan economic corridor are expected to reduce the energy crisis (CPEC). Nevertheless, energy rates have increased following the severity measures implemented by the government under the bail-out scheme (IMF)<sup>7</sup>. The tax structure and time-consuming customs clearance processes are also issues for exporters. Unlike other industries, the textile business pays higher tariffs on raw materials, allowing finished items to be more expensive on foreign markets. Another factor driving up the cost of Pakistani exports to the EU is the time it takes for products to cross customs and arrive at Karachi's port. In his paper,<sup>8</sup> has stressed the need of encouraging investing and reducing bottlenecks in order to enhance the number of exporters. In Pakistan, business expenditures are high, and the country's

lengthy licensing procedures and legislative restrictions prevent new businesses from joining the export market. In October 2017, the Federation of Pakistan's Sustainable Development Policy Institute, SDPI (Sustainable Development Policy Institute), hosted an event on "Achieving Export Competitiveness in Pakistan. Other countries, considerably lowered their costs of developing new sectors between 2009 and 2016. He also drew attention to the flaws in the tax and tariff systems, emphasizing the necessity to speed up the anti-corruption effort<sup>9</sup>. In order to attract exporters, the government must not only remove bureaucratic stiffness, but it must also include all stakeholders before formulating an export plan. To improve the competitiveness of Pakistani products in the EU market, sound policy efforts such as reduced market costs must be implemented. Pakistan is the least innovative zone, owing to its manufacturing base's ability to adapt to new global technologies. According to the global innovation ranking, Pakistan ranked 109th out of 126 countries, with seven out of 126 countries, while India maintained its regional supremacy, rising from 60th to 57th in 2019. According to the 2017/18 Global Competitive Survey, Pakistan is ranked 110th out of 137 nations in terms of infrastructure, whereas India is ranked 66th. Despite Pakistan's relatively substantial textile and apparel export volume, international standards and patterns have not evolved in lockstep, particularly in light of expansion in comparable industries in countries such as Turkey and Bangladesh. According to a 2013 research titled "Popular evaluation of Pakistan's clothes market," Pakistan's over-reliance on low-value commodities, such as exports, was mostly attributable to a lack of competitiveness. 234 Pakistani manufacturing enterprises in were evaluated and compared to Bangladesh and Turkey. On the basis of productivity measures such as cost of development, product mix, diversity of export destinations, labour skills, and the efficacy of government policy, the relative production of manufactured clothing in Turkey, Bangladesh, and Pakistan was examined. Although Pakistani companies have made substantial strides in recent years, in other nations, big efficiency indicators such as export diversification, production performance and value-added goods have stayed behind firms. Unlike other nations in the area, Pakistan has invested little in R&D to increase its export industry production. Systemic export reforms, such as research, education, and company diversification, have played a vital role in expanding exports in Pakistan, according to regional competitors.<sup>10</sup> The market's scarcity of developing ideas and sophisticated manufacturing has resulted in the manufacture of low-demand items that are incompatible with international standards. Pakistan's incapacity to do comprehensive market analysis to build new markets and create niches in overseas markets also impeded its enterprises from fully exploiting their GSP Plus status in EU markets. Pakistan also needs a sector-wide environmental policy. It is critical to accomplish technological innovation and to develop in order to keep a competitive advantage in overseas commerce<sup>11</sup>.

**b) Over-Dependency on Fewer Goods:**

Pakistan's exports are heavily reliant on items like clothes and textiles, surgical instruments, sports, and leather. The country's export portfolio has remained relatively unchanged, resulting in EU supply-driven rather than demand-driven exports. As a result, Pakistani exporters have prevented them from gaining market share in EU markets. Clothing and apparel are extremely important to Pakistan's economy. In 2016, garments and textiles accounted for almost 80% of Pakistan's exports to EU markets. Overdependence on a single product, like in Pakistan's case, might jeopardize the export sector's stability, particularly in textiles and clothes. Cotton's failure has an impact not just on the international balance of payments, but also on the local economy. Climate change and global warming are causing significant improvements in weather and seasonal patterns, which will harm crop yields, as observed in Pakistan during the 2010 and 2011 floods<sup>12</sup>. Bangladesh has obviously achieved significant economic development by reform of its export industry. Over the years, its export composition has undergone major structural changes. By the 1990s Bangladesh focused on jute merchandise, moving to the production of garments and transforming its export system dependent on resources into a manufactured export framework. Thanks to these structural changes, Bangladesh has been able to dramatically increase its investment, from US\$1.718 million in 1991 to US\$27.027 million in 2013. Furthermore, the GSP Plus scheme's export limiting mechanism limits average total growth of 17.5% (13.5 percent for ethanol and 14.5 percent for textiles) to zero customs charge. As a voluntary export restriction, this prevents Pakistani exporters from exporting further textile goods to the EU (VER)<sup>13</sup>. Instead of exporting completed goods, Pakistan relies heavily on resource-based exports. Keep an eye on their raw materials and semi-finished product export basis. Pakistan's fundamental structural flaw is that it exports a large volume of high-quality raw yarn rather than increasing demand. Asian nations such as Japan and South Korea acquire Pakistani yarn and refine it into high-demand items before selling it to the EU industry at somewhat higher costs. These nations do not produce cotton, but they have turned their textile industry into a viable value-added sector in response to the EU market's need for textile items. Unlike Pakistan, most competitors and provincial neighbors have effectively transitioned to value added commodities during the last two decades. In comparison to regional competitors, manufactured exports in Pakistan accounted for 16 percent of overall exports, with a 43 percent growth rate over the last two decades. There is also a pressing need to diversify Pakistan's export profile in order to exploit the countless mammoth market opportunities.

**c) Volatility in Exchange Rate and Economic Instability:**

Exchange rate instability and the significant depreciation of the Pakistani rupee are also important constraints for Pakistani exporters in the international and EU markets. In a research by Alam et al. (2017), the implications of Pakistan's currency rate volatility on bilateral business exports were explored with the country's primary trade partners: the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan. Because of the long-term relationships between factors, exchange-rate volatility is, in most cases,

favorable and consistent in terms of exporting Pakistan. On the other side, exchange rate uncertainty has a negative long-term and short-term impact on key trading partners, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom. This demonstrates that currency volatility has not benefitted from rising exports of Pakistan. The State Bank financed the rupee for years in its day-to-day business activities and depreciated the currency due to a balance of payment burden, declining foreign reserves, and a rising current-account deficit. Exporters would be able to make their products cheaper on foreign markets thanks to the rupee's depreciation from 105.4 per dollar in 2017 to 154.24 per dollar. However, firms that rely significantly on imported gear and raw materials may see their manufacturing costs rise in 2020. Exporters, on the other hand, are dissatisfied with the rupee's depreciation by the State Bank. According to Currency Devaluation, a major knitwear exporter in Lahore has increased the cost of doing business as a result of rising raw material, energy, and transportation costs. Due to the volatility of exchange rates, this prevents investors from participating in manufacturing that produces commodities for sale because the risk and volatility are much higher than other economic possibilities<sup>14</sup>.

**d) Violation of Human Rights Affects Trade Relations:**

As one of its policy action goals, the EU places a high priority on strengthening human rights conditions. GSP Plus is a system used by the EU to encourage conformity in developing countries with 27 important UN agreements on human and labor rights, environmental stability, and good governance. Every two years, the EU assesses the nations to which it has given GSP Plus status. Sri Lanka lost its GSP Plus status in 2010 as a result of alleged human rights violations in 2009, after the end of decades of civil conflict. This has wreaked havoc on Sri Lanka's ready-made textile industry, which employs thousands of people from impoverished backgrounds and helps to alleviate suffering. Similarly, several economists and researchers expressed fear in 2017 that Pakistan might lose its GSP Plus status as a result of ongoing human rights violations in the country. Fortunately, this was not the case, as the EU Parliament has extended Pakistan's GSP Plus status for another two years, until 2020. When it comes to exchanging information on actions conducted in compliance with the 27 UN Conventions<sup>15</sup>. Pakistan achieved tremendous strides on the political and legal fronts by enacting regulatory laws on women, children, and labour rights, according to a 2017 GSP Plus research study delivered to the European Parliament. It has, however, denounced Pakistan's inability to fully enforce such legislation, stating that incarceration, the death penalty, greater restrictions on freedom of expression, extrajudicial executions, and involuntary disappearances continue to occur. The reality that the state of human rights in Pakistan is deteriorating cannot be disregarded. Given the EU's emphasis on human rights, Pakistan's government will need to take major steps to protect its minority and vulnerable groups if it wants to keep its GSP Plus status.

**Policy Recommendations:**

Pakistan must significantly diversify its export portfolio, since relying solely on textiles would stifle the country's export economy and lead to increased trade imbalances. Pakistani

exporters must do a thorough market study in order to uncover new possibilities and niches in the EU market where Pakistani goods may readily penetrate. Rather of depending just on a few things, this helps Pakistan to diversify its export commodities. The Pakistani diaspora will also play a key role in exploring and improving new exchange opportunities between the EU and Pakistan. E-business is growing currently, thanks to the incorporation of social networking, allowing small-scale Pakistani firms to sell their goods to the EU in a variety of methods. The government should also concentrate on expanding its export base, exploring new opportunities, and promoting e-commerce. It is necessary to make big changes in the export industry. They must make it feasible to use current technology, creative sciences, inventions, and industrial processes, particularly in terms of worker training and development. SMEs should be encouraged to join larger enterprises' supply chains and alleviate bottlenecks in order to increase the number of exporters in a nation. In order to maintain competitiveness in the worldwide market, uninterrupted energy supply and taxes on raw materials for export-oriented firms may be reduced. Providing Pakistan with GSP Plus status does not guarantee the EU's continuous access to the market unless the government verifies that the exported items meet market demand and EU packaging criteria. As a result of the high output of items on EU markets, the government might provide help and incentives to exporting enterprises in order to foster technical innovation and the elimination of bottlenecks alongside commodities from China, Bangladesh, India, and Italy. Commercial diplomacy might be used to encourage exporters to form relationships with dealers, allowing Pakistani producers to access European markets. B2B dialogues, trade fairs, and buyer-seller interactions should be fostered, as well as government contacts. This enables us to determine the precise needs of our customers, place orders in accordance with their specifications, and keep track of their progress. Commercial diplomacy may flourish as a result of innovative marketing strategies such as exhibition centers in a number of EU member nations. Pakistan must also focus its soft diplomacy in order to promote a favorable worldwide image of the country. It is vital to lobby at the highest levels inside EU Member States to develop communication with trade and media groups while also preventing corruption. The gorgeously coloured buses portraying Pakistan's history on a busy London street in 2017 were a great achievement on the side of the Pakistani government. This sort of service is essential in the future. In order to stimulate the inclusion of women within the labor market in particular gender mainstreaming needs to be encouraged in the garment and clothing industry, which forms the base of its exports. In comparison, Pakistan also falls behind other major textile exporting countries in terms of the number of women working in the industry. This will add to Pakistan's gender disparity status and improve household revenue from urban areas. Lastly, Pakistan should take seriously the reports from the human rights monitoring bodies of the Convention in Pakistan, and devise an action-oriented strategy to fully implement them in partnership with civil society and human rights organizations. Unable to do so,

Pakistan is in danger of losing its GSP Plus status as well as deprives Pakistani citizens of their basic civil rights.

**Conclusion:**

The GSP Plus scheme has substantially increased exports of Pakistan to the EU market, with the textile industry as its largest recipient. Pakistan's government has to ensure that barriers are resolved and limits on commercial links between the EU and Pakistan are which. This involves a shortage of competitiveness from multinational firms, over-reliance on some export resources, exchange-rate volatility and human rights violation. The GSP Plus status can be stated to be capable of obtaining more foreign reserves for a country with a substantial current account deficit, massive public debts and concerns regarding balance of payments, if fully used. Pakistan does not have a permanent rank of the GSP Plus provided by the EU. Pakistan must also ensure that appropriate steps are adopted and investments made to allow its export sector to succeed.

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