

**GENDER STEREOTYPING: HINA RABBANI KHAR—THE FIRST PAKISTANI
WOMAN FOREIGN MINISTER’S FRAMED MEDIA PORTRAYALS**

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Abstract: *Using 60 articles, news reports, and captioned images containing coverage of the first 15 to 16 months of her office, this study extensively explores the media portrayals of Hina Rabbani Khar—the first woman foreign minister of Pakistan. Critical discourse analysis is used to interpret the data from the social perspective of language use whereas framing helped in highlighting the ways in which the media construct, uphold, and legitimize inequitable portrayals of women politicians. Qualitative content analysis serves as the tool for gauging the potential impact of the news content on the audience. Content analysis of the dataset demonstrates that Khar’s position as a female politician is framed and stereotyped to a greater extent compared to her accomplishments as foreign minister. Khar has been in the news more for her appearance and style and less for what she has been doing as the foreign minister. Furthermore, in contrast to the national media which concentrated more on agenda and policy issues, the international media indulged more in framing that shows no judicious representation of women politicians compared to men in politics. The salience of the media frames is thus, a conscious selection of a particular (gendered) aspect of the female politicians’ political career that best suits the causal interpretation of media’s own point of view and instantaneously turns the audience’s attention away from policy issues. The Analysis also reinforces the fact that there is a strong interrelationship of the media frames and the audience’s schemata. While upholding the already deep-rooted gender stereotypes, the media keeps selling their news in consonance with the way that suits their approach to influence the audience, and hence, preserve gender polarities. The media’s approach therefore, needs to change for acknowledging rising woman politicians’ position equal to men in politics and thus, work for confirming equitable media portrayals.*

Keywords: Gender Stereotyping; Media’s Language; Gendered Politics, Mediated Gender, Gendered Portrayals

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Introduction

Realization of the need for gender equality to ensure social stability is one of the essential aspects of the contemporary cultural consciousness that academicians and researchers highlight (Leavy, 2019; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020). This significant social development has prompted many moves for ensuring equal rights for both women and men in all contexts ranging from the private affair to the public and professional contexts (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019). The history of recent past is marked by the shifts that indicate retrieval of the patriarchal system, albeit partial, across the world (Miller & Peake, 2013). Nonetheless, these shifts could not shatter the “glass ceiling” (Ryan & Haslam, 2005) because women’s entrance to politics is treated as intrusion into male-dominated political domain (Campus, 2013; Dolan, 2014; Hayes & Lawless, 2016; Trimble, 2014). Gender biases and gendered identities continue to exist in various forms and the hegemonic patriarchy maintains its patriarchal institutions such as corporate business, family conventions, and professional competence through stereotyping women in power (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020).

A few studies (e.g., Malik & Kiani, 2012; Zia, 2007) suggest prevalence of the gender insensitivity towards women in the Pakistani society, as they have not been given equal representation in the positions of authority; rather they have been confined to the spheres of art, fashion and women institutions. In this regard, Zia (2007) observes that women either have under-representation or get very little coverage with reference to the matters associated with women due to the reason that

they do not occupy leading positions required for participation in decision-making. Malik & Kiani (2012) locate the issue of gender sensitivity in the discourses about the role of media and argue that TV channels in Pakistani could not play their role in discouraging gender stereotypes. The media priorities and filters, they maintain, still have a robust impact on the issues related to gender and commercialism of the news continues to contribute to gender polarities (Leavy, 2019). However, visible signs of shift are there that indicate the increased women involvement in various kinds of professional arenas and job market, and strengthening their position in the intellectual domain in Pakistan. But exploration of the media coverage of the women politicians’ is still scarce.

This study centers on representation of women from the Pakistani political sphere on media. Focusing on the way the media portray Hina Rabbani Khar— the first ever female Pakistani Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, the study engages with the socially significant issue. Since research on Pakistani women politicians’ media portrayals is scarce, this study will contribute to filling this wide gap in literature. Keeping in view the cultural dissonance and patriarchal political patterns is not only in Pakistan but across the globe, this study investigates the acceptability of women in politics in the sociopolitical context of Pakistan in particular, and across the globe at large. Having the purpose of enabling researchers of language, gender, communication and leadership, this study adds to bringing the media framing to the surface through critical discourse analysis so that the

space in leading positions for women leaders could be the due place.

For this purpose, we survey the degree to which women politicians' representation is gendered, stereotyped, and at times trivialized in both the national and international media that expands over the global audience. While bringing women politicians' gendered (both explicit and implicit) gendered portrayals, we do not merely accumulate scholarly work that tends either to undermine or celebrate female politicians' capabilities. Rather, we argue that the media portrayals (often gendered) have the potential of reducing the position of women in power to never equal to their male contenders. While endeavoring to explicate the interrelationship of the media portrayal challenging women as acknowledged politicians (if true), its effects (micro and macro), this study addresses: i) Whether Khar's media portrayals as foreign minister are framed and grounded in gender polarities and diminish her accomplishments? ii) Do the media (national and international) prefer female politicians' gender portrayals to policy matters and political agenda and sustain the deeply-rooted gender stereotypes?

The Media: Gendered Portrayals

Gender is a phenomenon based on conventional characteristics of cultural consciousness that work in generalizing expectations from and about others, imposes ascribed identities, and sustain stereotypes (Baxter, 2018). Though women have started showing progress in the leading careers, the stereotypical role-images such as the time spent on hairdressing, style, appearance, wife, mother, and grandmother, etc. stand unchanged (Baxter, 2018; O'Neill, Savigny & Cann, 2016). These roles are still deeply

entrenched the sociopolitical traditions because male-dominance (Dunaway, Lawrence, Rose & Weber, 2013) is pervasive even during the present world. Ibroscheva (2008) explains preference of the media for women politicians' appearances over their contribution and its tilt for constructing a definite distinction between 'soft news' depicting feminine gender as fragile and 'hard news' depicting masculine gender as stronger that further reinforce both masculine and feminine stereotypes in social settings. Besides, same kind of imbalance and maltreatment in both private and public life still exists, by and large, through the world (Tannen, 2012; Wodak, 1997; Rojo & Esteban, 2007). Cultural representation(s) of prejudiced gender system (Harp, 2019) is best understood through the way the media portray politicians as the products (cultural) of any given social setting at any given time that resonate with the themes and priorities that the society and the era enact and sustains.

A few studies on the media's coverage explain the representational bias that weakens the credibility of women as skilled, thoughtful, and qualified (e.g., Leavy, 2019; Miller & Peake, 2013; Norris, 1997, 2004; Ross, 2004). Norris(2004) deliberate son the agendathat is used for misrepresenting women through ascribing titles such as 'newcomers' and advocate that they are do not possess the potential occupy higher official positions. Women politicians are portrayed essentially and typically as women (housewives and mothers) having an accepted behavior (Jones, 2016) and as politicians on secondary levels (Miller & Peake, 2013; Ross, 2004; Sensales & Areni, 2017), and a better behavior is

expected from female politicians compared to male politicians (Vos, 2013). With the exception of few (e.g., Joshi, Hailu & Reising, 2020), previous scholarly exploration on women politicians criticizes the media (framed) portrayals and considers them as one of the sturdiest impediments in the path of gender equality (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019; Ross, 2004; Wright & Holland, 2014) for they prefer focusing women politicians' style and appearance to substance (Sisco & Lucas, 2015).

Media portrayals matter (Hoops, 2020) for women in power are 'discursively constructed' (Baxter, 2018) in the news no matter how barely noticeable it is, but subtle innuendo of gender stereotyping emits messages to the audience through mediated frames that women do not have the potential to be acknowledged as leaders. Despite remarkable progress of women in diverse spheres of professional avenues, the media still continues to represent women politicians in gendered, essentialized and/or stereotyped. This trend in the media portrayals potentially damage women politicians' position in the male-dominated political realm either through overtly critical but gendered comments or through more oblique, subtle, and hidden ways (Baxter, 2018). Research on women's inclusion in different professional walks of life (e.g., Adams 2016; Bengoechea, 2011; Brescoll 2016; Hayes & Lawless, 2016; Hoyt & Murphy 2016; Leavy, 2019) argue that having a considerable number in holding leading positions women in power still encounter challenges in achieving acknowledgement as equally competent as their male contenders. The predominant stance in the previous research is that varying forms of frames and

stereotyping in the media make leading political positions as an androcentric norm and ascension of women to such position is an exception.

Precisely, the media's influential role in shaping the public opinion and its tendency bias towards women (particularly women politicians) are two significant factors strengthening the gender polarities. We do not offer this as a mere claim, rather conclusions of the aforementioned previous studies on the issue of representation of women in power evince that regardless of gender a gap between theory and practice of the concept of equal treatment still exists. A thorough review of previous literature on women in power and scarcity of research on women politicians in Pakistan provides the niche for exploring the woman politician such as Hina Rabbani Khar's (the first woman Pakistani foreign minister) media portrayals in a country where gender roles have constantly been shifting. In addition, the representational style of portraying woman's aptitude to hold leading positions is still in need of revision for encompassing leadership qualities of women and coming out of the sturdy circle of cultural assumptions based gendered stereotypes.

Data and Methodology

Grounded in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 2003) and complemented with framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007; D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010; Goffman, 1974) as a conceptual rationale, this study is based on qualitative content analysis of Hina Rabbani Khar—the woman foreign minister of Pakistan. Critical discourse analysis helped in critical description and interpretation of the data whereas framing helped in highlighting the ways in which the

media construct, uphold, and legitimize inequitable portrayals of women politicians. The reason for opting framing as the complementary conceptual rationale for this study is that it is central to the problem of news reporting where relevant issues are ignored while reporting women politicians (McIntosh, 2013). Qualitative content analysis served as the tool for gauging the potential impact of the news content on the audience (Toor & Saleem, 2020).

The dataset comprises 60 articles, news reports, captioned photographs, and editor's opinions portraying Hina Rabbani Khar published in diverse national and international magazines, newspapers, and the news aired on national, regional, and international TV channels. As this study aims at exploring Khar's trendy media portrayals, the data sources selection is not confined to the local media sources only. Instead, the dataset encompasses both private and public TV channels based in Pakistan or Bangladesh, and or India and popular newspapers from Pakistan, Bangladesh, the United States, India, Australia, Malaysia, and the United Kingdom. The dataset extends over the period between Khar's elevation to position of foreign minister on the 19th of July 2011 to the 15th of November 2012 incorporating three central phases that have a noteworthy scope in her position as the foreign minister. First, Khar's elevation as the first and the youngest woman Foreign Minister that causes boom in the media, second, her maiden visit to India covered in lead pages of the media, and last, the publishing of stories about her alleged love affair with Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The study takes into account two broader categories of portrayals, which are: (i) gendered portrayals

(age, physical appearance, fashion icon, marital status, and love affair scandal), and (ii) political agenda and policy issues. The rationale for including approximately all the accessible sources (represented via the numbers in square brackets) is to gain a comprehensive insight into Khar's overall media portrayals. Moreover, qualitative content analysis is significantly effective in unmasking the underlying themes in mass media discourses and portrayals embedded in cultural representation, which usually shapes gender system and gender ideologies.

Analysis and Discussion

With a desire of depicting a positive image of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, the then President of Pakistan appointed Hina Rabbani Khar as federal foreign minister on the 19th of July 2011. Nonetheless, exploration (content analysis) of Khar's media portrayals show how social, cultural, individual (social status, gender, and so on) variables play the essential role in establishing women office-bearers officials' character, adequacy and appropriateness. Thus, the spotlight of this study is how Khar's sexual orientation, personal relationships, and actual appearance are inseparable from her reasonableness and abilities for the position of foreign minister. The recurring themes that emerged from data are, i) ascension to power: gender and suitability, ii) savvy and striking appearance matters!, and iii) precedence: media frames and policy issues.

Ascension to Power: Gender and Suitability

Asif Ali Zardari, the then President of Pakistan pronounced Khar's appointment as an accolade for her capacities and the Pakistani government's obligation to give women their due importance and a justifiable place in the

mainstream of public affairs (AFP, 2011; Crilly, 2011). While bunched around her experience, appropriateness for the political position as foreign minister, and sexual orientation, the media however, portrayed Khar's ascension to such a higher position meant only on the merit (Crilly, 2011) for few. Dawn, a widely read newspaper in Pakistan pronounced her as the unmistakable most youthful and first lady unfamiliar clergyman holding a position normally held by men. For Dawn, Khar's elevation to the distinctive political position as the first and the youngest woman foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was a big leap towards tolerance after the renowned Benazir Bhutto who was elected as the prime minister twice (Buncombe, 2011). While citing Nawa-e-Waqt, Pakistan, the Message, London based newspaper pronounced Khar as an incredible resource for Pakistan because expecting women head of government, state, and ministries in Islamic countries (Crilly, 2011). Few male editors, columnist, and journalists welcomed Khar's rise to the rank of foreign minister and implying to her sexual orientation as the representation of Pakistan as a country believing in gender equity.

While citing Rasul Bakhsh Rais, a renowned Pakistani political columnist, the Independent, a London-based newspaper passed on a message that females do not accomplish well on the social and political ladder in Pakistan. Nevertheless, women graduated from the West and having well-off family background such as Khar have the potential to gain higher political position. For Rasul Bakhsh Rais, Khar possesses "the political clout of her family name and the rich, feudal, patriarchal aura that comes with it" (Crilly, 2011). Subsequently,

Khar's feudal political benefaction precedes her Western schooling and experience as a politician that offered her opportunity to be raised to a higher political position. This might also be true about male politicians however; such depictions are not featured in the media with regards to men.

Likewise, The Times of India expressed apprehensions that her career as the foreign minister would have a dramatic end on the grounds that she is youthful and inexperienced for such a higher political position (Khan, 2011). Reuters took the stance, "Khar's position as the foreign minister will not be an easy ride...in a culture that "reveres the old" and a society that favours men will...really test her maturity" (Aziz, 2011). In the same vein, Express News in Washington, DC remarked that we cannot start cheering at Khar's the youngest woman parliamentarian's elevation to the position of foreign minister because in all likelihood she will be an overseer, and not a visionary (Shah, 2012).

For BBC News, Khar's appointment as the foreign minister was a positive step towards building a soft image of Pakistan but supplemented it with fear "... to be fair to her, countless men in this role have in the past failed to challenge the military's perception of how to run the country's foreign affairs. Will she fare any better?" This was expressed due to a strong political power of the military (Khan, 2011) and the demanding position (Buncombe, 2011; Gosh, 2011; Khan, 2011) she was elevated to ('The Age', 2012). The above-cited instances from the media reports underline that Khar's anticipated impact while heading the foreign ministry of Pakistan is not a fanciful since she was criticized being youthful compared to skilled male

politicians who failed to run the affairs of the foreign minister's office effectively while holding the said post for quite a long time before her.

While alluding to the media depictions of women in Pakistan, DAWN, one the leading newspapers in Pakistan profoundly condemned the media (especially the media in Pakistan) and proclaimed that Khar's appointment on the apex political position was not heartily greeted because of her physical appearance and age. It was contended that in the media, the women politicians' rise to important political positions is usually not celebrated on account of their accomplishments yet their age and looks make quite a height conceivable. Furthermore, Khar was being praised as the most youthful Pakistani foreign minister yet, her handbag and shades (Munawar, 2011; Walsh, 2011) and alleged scandals (Gayathri, 2012; Nadeem, 2012; Nelson, 2011; Shah, 2012; Shinwari, 2012; Times of India, 2012) were consistently the focal point of the media depictions and "her activities as Pakistan's highest-ranked foreign diplomat" are less valued (Shah, 2012).

Khar's appointment as foreign minister welcomed a blended ray of reactions both from Pakistani political arena and across the world. For some, her appointment was the first female foreign minister of Pakistan a historic move and "presently the most youthful foreign minister in the world." Nonetheless, owing to Khar's feudal background, others blatantly labeled her as 'just another feudal' (Islam, 2011), making her a politician as a 'default' (Khan, 2011). Another reason that assisted Khar to such an elevated political position was of Pervez Musharraf, ex-military despot's new

regulations of having a bachelor's degree to qualify as a contender for elections.

Most importantly, her sexual orientation and media-bashfulness was viewed as an issue. For example, one of the leading Pakistani commentators feared, "Rabbani is very media-modest, so it is difficult to understand her opinion or what her perspectives on specific subjects are, even those relating to her portfolios"(Gosh, 2011). This fear reinforced through proclaiming her deficient of diplomatic potentials, a pre-requisite to be recognized as foreign minister. The media portrayed, "She will be no match for her counterparts abroad...no match for your Indian foreign minister either. So how will she be able to stand her ground on thorny issues, and do the best for Pakistan? (Gosh, 2011).

Khar being depicted as a glamorous (Nadir, 2011) woman in the world ('Women in the World', 2011) was declared as "Pakistan's weakness, not strength' and an intellectual poverty of Pakistan people's Party"(Rizvi, 2011), and "a novice"(Ved, 2011). Khar was also described as "having horrible voice, poor personality, nil experience, even not good for being a private secretary of any 'astute boss (Shah, 2012). In spite of the fact that Awaz TV, Pakistan, Pakistan television (Sochta Pakistan, 2011; Hina Rabbani Khar, 2011), and NDTV, India ('Pak Foreign Minister', 2011) concentrated on policy issues and the issues she may confront or may have confronted because of her difficult task as foreign minister; nonetheless, those depictions appear to be essentially insignificant contrasted with the remainder of her depictions that are exceptionally gendered. Thus, Khar is supposed to maneuver the delicate political

terrain due to being a female politician within essentially patriarchal Muslim conventions and politics that is “still a man’s world”(Imtiaz, 2011).

It merits seeing that Khar has a remarkable experience as a politician since she has served Pakistan as both the acting foreign minister and secretary on foreign affairs, yet with the exception of the few (Sochta Pakistan, 2011) that extensive experience could not suffice the media’s expectations from a woman politician. While alluding to her so-called deficient diplomatic skills, the media portrayed her as undiplomatic while talking to the media personnel during the Territorial Gathering meeting of South East Asian Country (ASEAN) in July 2011. The Times of India reported, “...Khar's statement was undiplomatic...Ms Khar's comment sounded more familiar with the undiplomatic statement of Pakistan’s ex-FM Gohar Ayub who had said that one Pakistani soldier is equivalent to ten Indian soldiers”(Khan, 2011). The media communicated the dread that she probably would not have the option to contend with “the seasoned and experienced S M Krishna”(Khan, 2011), because of her diplomatic incapability.

The media’s arbitrary judgments about Khar’s potentials are thus highly gender-oriented and correspond with Lakoff’s (2004) findings of typical word choices for women such as ‘articulate and ambitious’ and ‘shy’ (Gosh, 2011) not used for men. Additionally, referenced to former political record and expressions such as ‘a mother of two’ (Khan, 2011) undermined Khar as an appropriate choice to be assigned the office of foreign minister for woman politicians are believed to

preserve their identity as a female and feminizing the key political positions too.

Rather than taking the popular opinion on Khar's appointment as the foreign minister of Pakistan, the media clung to the language that develops the popular conception (Falk, 2010) through the emotional misuse of language discourses. The media in this way, painted the picture of depicting her as a powerless gendered being and her appointment on such a remarkable political position was right to be treated as an unwelcomed arrangement in politics, the male-dominated arena. Khar’s media depictions astoundingly reflect the media’s conventions driven approach to politics wherein women are either not are rarely welcomed to hold the leading political positions. In case women get a chance of elevation to higher political position(s), they must be exceptionally competent to counter their male counterparts with average diplomatic capabilities. In addition, they have to beat the media bias through paying the cost of their gender and enduring the social pressure that the media advocates.

Savvy and Striking Appearance Matters!

Cultures across the globe have some imperceptible gender norms and individuals are expected to be aligned with those expected behaviors and conventions (Jones, 2016) for accomplishing their tasks and responsibilities (Kendall & Tannen, 1997). Khar’s ascension to the leading position of a Pakistani diplomat was depicted as an unwelcomed step on the male-dominated political arena. For instance, on her maiden visit to the Republic of India, the media adorned the news with Khar’s personal life, style, age, and physical appearance. The daily Telegraph stated, “A picture of the young mother of two wearing a

tight pair of blue jeans published in local newspapers raised eyebrows in a country where most women are expected to wear loose clothing” (Crilly, 2011).

Moreover, Khar was described as “a fresh, stylish figure, dashing, modern, a swish” (Buncombe, 2011). Instead of covering the political content of her visit, Khar was awarded “full marks” for her branded (Roberto Cavalli) sunglasses, branded bag (Hermes Birkin) and expensive classic pearl jewelry (Nadir, 2011; Ved, 2011). The media also labeled her with words such as “Pakistan’s new weapon of mass distraction” (Nelson, 2011), and “First they sent bombs, now they send bombshells” (Taseer, 2011). Instead of celebrating the breaking of a prolonged deadlock on Kashmir issue with India (after her visit to India as the foreign minister), the media adhered to the gendered colour of her achievements. It was proclaimed, “... her youth and glamour had been a factor in creating a “fresh start atmosphere”, which led to the most productive talks since the nations came close to war following the 2008 terrorist attacks on Mumbai”(Nelson, 2011). While quoting, Mumbai Mirror, an Indian newspaper, The Guardian stated, “Pakistan bomb lands in India” (Walsh, 2011).

Widely read newspapers across the globe depicted Khar as a “new smiling face” (Elliott, 2011) with “red lipstick”(India Today, 2011) and “age is no barrier. Hot is hot!” (India Today, 2011)which reflect injudicious portrayals of a female politician. Likewise, the international media had a shrewd response to gender stereotyping and undermining and trivializing women politicians’ capabilities. For instance, The Guardian justified Khar’s portrayals through saying that they were

trivializing one of the most celebrated women in the world for everyone was doing so (The Guardian, 2011). While going a bit further The Guardian stated, “... more glamorous than William Hague... more glamorous than any foreign secretary you can name...a polo-loving heiress who looks like a million dollars”(The Guardian, 2011). Similarly, the choice of words focused on Khar’s gender and physical appearance in reporting policy issues. For example, Times of India reported her vital visit to the US as, “Pakistan’s savvy and striking foreign minister visits Washington, DC, “to restore her country’s battered image and kiss and make up with the United States”Rajghatta, 2012).

Stereotypical approach of the international media also manifests in the comments, “She could be Pakistan's new weapon of mass distraction” (Nelson, 2011) and aligned that with the apprehensions Pakistan has ‘weapons of mass destruction’. For some she had a ‘flirting and shrewd smile’ (Rajesh, 2011) whereas others called her “a definite fashionista” (‘Profiling Hina R. Khar’, 2011), “a rare combination of beauty and brains” (‘Profiling Hina R. Khar’, 2011)famous for her “Birkin bag”(Munawar, 2011; ‘Profiling Hina R. Khar’, 2011).She also was labeled as “Glamorous women in politics”(Dogra, 2011; ‘Glamorous Woman in Politics, 2011)scoring “full marks on the style meter” (India Today, 2011; ‘Profiling Hina R. Khar’, 2011)in a “monotone blue suit” (Glamorous Woman in Politics, 2011; Weekly Blitz, 2011). Khar’s branded Birkin handbag, Cavalli sunglasses, physical appearance, and being a suitable choice to be elevated to such a higher political position were prioritized to the purpose of her visit India (Denyer, 2011)as a high-ranked

Pakistani foreign diplomat. Being a young female politician, she was even scandalized (Niarita, 2012) as having a love affair ('India Today, 2012) with Benazir Bhutto's son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari that was proved to be fake news and the editor of was arrested (Dublin News, 2012; Khan, 2012). Similarly, Weekly Blitz asserted that being a minister, one ought to be more cautious in appearance and public outfit. Being in the news due her new political position, Khar the media expected Khar to be a superwoman (Women in the World, 2011). Further, it was considered essential for Khar to be fair to herself and to the high office through showing sobriety to her outfit and make-up(Weekly Blitz, 2012). It was also stated, "She can dance diplomatic circles round the best. But... the question ... is whether this dazzle could singe us, and our vital interests?" (Dogra, 2012). In the same vein, Times of India decorated its pages with the Khar's captioned pictures and reported that let's meet the most stylish women in politics, Khar who has been in the news for her fashionista ways... spotted at the Delhi international airport in a "monotone outfit of blue—the colour of the season"(India Times, 2011).

The above-cited media coverage of the first Pakistani woman foreign minister demonstrates that even though countries such as Pakistan are promoting the political arena not only to be masculine. Additionally, these portrayals affirm that in place of underlining women politicians' competencies, the media not only uphold stereotypical and conservative presentations of women politicians (Corner, 2003) but also promote gender stereotypes (Baxter, 2018; Hall, 2007). This is exceptionally true about those women who

have been appointed on superior political posts and the media thus, foster undermining opinions of women's leadership potentials (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). It is also evident from Khar's media portrayals that instead of concentrating on significant political issues and the female politicians' accomplishments, the international media favor upholding gender stereotypes through focusing more on female politicians' physical appearance ('Profiling Hina R. Khar', 2011) and less on their capabilities.

It is evident from the above-cited excerpts that while welcoming her to power, sexist portrayals found the central place in Khar's media portrayals and was downgraded to the symbol of style. Khar's ascension to a leading political position was blatantly contested through gendered portrayals. As gender stereotypes are produced and sustained through culture, expressions such as populist, glamorous, having horrible voice (Shah, 2012), and Diva (Rajesh, 2012) etc., were associated with Hina Rabbani Khar. Thus, the media market is full of women's representations through gender-stereotypical commentaries such as a celebrity, a rock star, a bitch, and or someone having incredible legs (Milligan, 2007), which become the most cost-effective commodity. Such type of gendered media representations demonstrate that woman politicians are often ridiculed in the media for their so-called unskillfulness and naive political conduct reducing as being females first, and politicians second.

Scrutinized through the lens of framing (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), the above-cited excerpts from the data show that the media highlighted a bleak

picture of Khar’s future as the foreign minister owing to her deficiency as a seasoned politician and being a woman. It is reasonable to say that women politicians such as Khar are usually evaluated on the basis of their youth, beauty, and physical appearance instead of their achievements and capabilities (Baxter, 2018; Ibroscheva, 2010). Khar’s gendered portrayals eclipsed her accomplishments and experience as a politician because the media per iodized her feudal patronage to policy issues. This confirms that Khar’ media depictions are aligned to contention that the real power of the media is in showing people what and how is something important in politics to think about (McIntosh, 2013; Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997).

Precedence: The Media Frames and Policy Issues

Feminine gender being the controlling aspect of politics (Wright & Holland, 2014), women in politics still have to direct their behaviors via the conventional, robust, political terrain (male-dominated) so as to acquire acceptance and to preserve their individuality of being equally socially. Taking the recurring patterns and categories of physical appearance, age, fashion icon, and marital status as a collective depiction of Khar’s media portrayals, 80% of them were concentrated on her gender whereas the remainder of 20% concentrated on policy issues and political agenda (see Table 1).

Table 1

<i>Gendered Portrayal Versus Policy Issues and Political Agenda</i>		
Topics/Themes	No. of Occurrence	Frequency/Percentage
Gendered Portrayal	132	80%
Policy Issues & Political Agenda	33	20%
Total	165	100%

A reasonable standpoint is that in Pakistan, the political culture has seen a remarkable change when it comes to acknowledge female politicians and women in workplace as having competencies like men. Representation in the type of the media that is national and international is therefore, noteworthy for out of the total, only 20% policy issues and political agenda portrayals, 17% were in national media whereas the international media’s adherence to such portrayals was merely 3%. In contrast, out of the total 80% of gendered media portrayals, the proportion of the international media was considerably

higher that is 75% and the national media’s contribution was only 5% (see Table 2).

As sexual orientation is still intact in society, Hina Rabbani Khar has been in media reports and news more for her expensive clothing and physical appearance and very less for her accomplishments, political endeavors, and political vision. Additionally, the media still adhere cognizant choices through correspondents, editors, anchors, and producers for what, why, whom, and how to reflect for upholding gender bipolarities prevalent among human beings(Norris, 1997; Sensales & Areni, 2017).

Table 2

<i>Frequency of Topics in National and International Media</i>				
Media Type	Type of Portrayals	No. of Occurrence	Percentage	Total
National Media	Gendered portrayals	5	3%	20%
	Agenda & policy issues	28	17%	
International Media	Gendered portrayals	124	75%	80%
	Agenda & policy issues	8	5%	
Total corpus		60		100%

Moreover, the media, while depicting women in power adhere to gender orientation and pay little heed to their relationships with the corporate world (Milligan, 2007). Likewise, Khar's media depictions bunched around her gendered self and declared her a fashion icon and paid little attention to her accomplishment as potential politician. The possible interpretation could be that the deeply rooted cultural stereotypes still drive the media wherein the status and future of women politicians is at jeopardy compared to their male counterparts. Likewise, the findings of the study exhibited that male predominant political arena does not daunt the way of women politicians, rather the media portray women as incompetent to hold higher political portfolios. Females' physical appearance, age, family patronage, and sense of fashion have primary importance in the media whereas policy agenda and political issues are secondary.

The findings of the present study also indicate that gender polarizations (Sensales & Areni, 2017) are not limited to geographical boundaries of countries, they are rather global. It merits mentioning here that that the political milieu in Pakistan admits the capabilities of women that are testified through a

considerable number of women in Pakistani politics. However, the overall media portrayals show a total alignment to the already established conventions of gender disparities and stereotyping that the media have been upholding for centuries. Thus, the political milieu in any geographical location or country has very minimal effect on representing women as incompetent and misfit (Budak, Goel & Rao, 2016) to hold higher political positions. Though, society has transformed to a substantial degree in endorsing the value of 'equal opportunities' nonetheless, gender issues still govern the media portrayals a larger extent (Sensales & Areni, 2017) because the media preserve double standard in the hope better behavior, higher moral values, more integrity, and higher loyalty from women in contrast to men.

The salience of the media frames is thus, a conscious selection of a particular (gendered) aspect of the female politicians' political career that best suits the causal interpretation of media's own point of view and instantaneously turns the audience's attention away from policy issues. The Analysis also reinforces the fact that there is a strong interrelationship of the media frames and the audience's schemata. There is a strong

interplay between style, appearance and effectiveness in women politicians' media portrayals where masculine characteristics are considered vital for ascension to a leading political position and women are considered devoid of them. Women politicians thus have to deal with the stereotypical conventions the way the media wishes and deems fit to be accepted as competent enough to their contenders. It is therefore, argued that the media frames relying on gender stereotypes make women in power vulnerable and unacceptable for leading political positions through swaying the audience's attention from the core political and policy issues.

Putting it together, media portrayals of Hina Rabbani Khar indicate that the media frames still remain to be unyielding, coercive and regulator that offer very little room for women in power to exhibit their potential the way they desire. Though the media discourse is relatively moving towards change in some instances of gendered subject portrayals (Baxter, 2018; Bengoechea, 2011), painting equitable position of women in power with their male counterparts is yet far because gender stereotyping is usually operational. Conforming to previous studies (e.g., Budak, et al., 2016; Sensales & Areni, 2017; Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997; Vos, 2013; Wright & Holland, 2014) observations, this study affirms the media hold the real power to have a strong influence on the public disposition through making trivial matters worth seeing and worth thinking about. It is a matter of fact that gender stereotypes, especially with regards to feminine gender still have deep root in the media and the mediated politics.

Summation: The Way Forward

Content analysis of Hina Rabbani Khar's—the first woman federal foreign minister of Pakistan media portrayals present innumerable illustrations that can be interpreted as potential instances of the news stories that adhered to stereotyping and trivializing (Budak, et al., 2016; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009) her as one of leading female politician. Having the socially significant purpose of highlighting women politicians' biased representation in the media portrayals, finding of this study reveal that the media preferred the sexist coverage via manipulating the social and cultural conventions of gender stereotypes and stereotyping. Recurring themes in the findings of this study which are, i) ascension to power: gender and suitability, ii) savvy and striking appearance matters!, and iii) precedence: media frames and policy issues not only affirm the media's bias towards women in power but preference to gender on policy and political agenda too. The media are regarded as the custodians of the public interest by making leaders and politicians answerable to them through undaunted and robust questioning so as to establish 'the truth' (Graber, 2004). Nonetheless, this study shows that the media has the potential to discern that people depend on them as audience to have the knowhow of the world around them that makes the media to present news events in a manner they wish to be seen and understood by the audience both locally and globally.

The salience of the media frames is thus, a conscious selection of a particular (gendered) aspect of the female politicians' political career that best suits the causal interpretation of media's own point of view and instantaneously turns the audience's attention away from policy issues. While playing the

defining role in exerting its own point of view on the audience, the media frames not only define but also restrict the boundaries of discourse over political issues and politicians' media portrayals where female politicians' portrayals are primarily gendered. It also merits mentioning that media frames are self-reinforcing with regards to gender stereotyping because the media triggers debate on particular gender issues through a discourse that they want to be acceptable to the audience as newsworthy. The realm of politics being treated as the archetype of masculinity, the media portrayed Khar in an unwarranted position. What appears clear from Khar's media portrayals is that her leapfrogged steps in foreign affairs could draw very less support from the norm driven media preferences. From the very day of her ascension to the position of foreign minister, Khar's media portrayals grounded in her gender and upheld the deep-rooted gender stereotypes for selling their news in consonance with the way that not only suits their approach to influence the audience but also preserve gender polarities. The media's approach to rising women politicians' representation needs to alter for acknowledging their position equal to men in politics and thus, work for confirming equitable media portrayals.

Certain consistent frames that the media exploit trigger problems for issues such as gender stereotyping associated with women in particular are traditionally meant and reserved for men and stand unintelligible to the audience. Pakistani political arena mirrors due representation of women on higher positions that could be verified from Benazir Bhutto's (deceased) ascension to the Pakistani premiership twice and Hina Rabbani Khar's

rise to of the office of foreign ministry. However, the data affirms that the media (international media in particular) deliberately adhered to the deep-rooted gendered conventions in an attempt to draw the audience's attention to the content they want to be read and listened to. It is also avowed that that gendered stereotypes and media framing that women in power face are still alive and do thrive in media coverage. This study thus, affirms that the international media preferred Khar's appearance, style, feudal patronage, personal life to policy issues and political agenda.

To conclude, findings of this study align with the previous research on women in power, women politicians' unequal coverage, gender stereotyping and framing (e.g., Baxter, 2018; Budak et al., 2016; Harp, 2019; Jones, 2016; Leavy, 2019; Sensales & Areni, 2017; Wright & Holland, 2014) in the media. Nonetheless the limits of exploration of women politicians' media portrayals in this study are confined to Pakistan only. Furthermore, the notion of framing complemented with critical discourse analysis is merits through inquiries in the field of media and communication. A preliminary contribution to research on the women politicians' media portrayals though, this study exemplifies how the mediated gendered frames could be explored for broadening the scope of research paradigms that contribute to sociopolitical perspective of the media in a larger sense. Further studies would therefore, illuminate whether similar patterns of the women politicians' media portrayals exist in neighboring countries of Pakistan. Another noteworthy future research arena is to investigate the differences (if any) in women and men reporters' and editors' language

choices about female and male politicians' media portrayals. Likewise, a comparison of women and men politicians' media coverage and portrayals might be a remarkable addition to research concentrating on the media's framing, gender disparities, and the media's lexical choices with regards to news reporting.

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