



Freedom of Expression versus Blasphemy: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and United States' News Media

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Abstract

This study compares the freedom of expression exercised by news media of the United States and the Pakistan; with reference to the controversial movie trailer "Innocence of Muslims"; released on You-tube by July 1, 2012.

Content analysis research design is applied. Our time frame is September 11-30, 2012 and 50 opinion articles from the Washington post, the Los Angeles Times, Dawn and the Express Tribune are our sample. The framing theory is applied; consistency and discord frame category system is adopted. Dominant frames and their changing trends in different quarters of the timeframe are studied. It was found that discord frame was dominant frame on both sides. The vitality of the discord and consistency frame coverage in Pakistani media was higher than United States' media. The US media was consistency oriented whereas PN media was discord oriented. However, overall trend of both media were found leaning towards the settlement.

Key Words: Blasphemy, Freedom of Expression, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, Dawn, Express Tribune, Consistency and Discord.

Introduction

The freedom of expression (FOE) is indispensable human right and it is guaranteed in most of the countries in the world (UIDHR, 1948). But its delimitations have not been properly outlined. Hence its application varies from country to country and from individual to individual (Georg, 2013). In the modern world of advanced media technology, this breach cannot be termed as a good sign for the global peace and harmony, as more and more individuals are interacting with each other. The modern media are considered as double-edge sword having potential of clash escalation and de-escalation (Siraj & Hussain, 2011). In our study, it is discussed that how the selected media reported the issue of controversial video clip Innocence of Muslims (IOM)? On the You-Tube, the video was uploaded in September 2012.

The Muslims world considered it a derogatory video, hurting the feelings of the entire Ummah. Just after the episode of 9/11 several movies and caricatures were produced and published by the Western artists, writers and media.

The early 21st and late 20th centuries have seen several major incidents of the Islamic world taking offence at written or pictorial representation of Muhammad (PBUH), the Islam, Qur'an and his philosophy of life (Marquez, 2012).

On the charges of committing blasphemy in different areas of the world, people have been brought to trial, killed or had a fatwa called on them (Mackey & Stack, 2012). Sam Basile posted two versions of 14-minute videos clips on YouTube On July 1, 2012. By September 2012, it was dubbed into Arabic and blogger Morris Sadek converted the attention of the Arab world (Zahos, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Lovett, 2012). The Pastor Terry Jones, famous for a Quran-burning debate; supported and promoted the controversial film which led to the

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world wide protests and riots. Terry Jones intended to demonstrate a 14-minute trailer on September 11, 2012; at his church, in Florida, USA.

On September 9, 2012, a two-minute extract dubbed in the Arabic was broadcast on "An-Naas", a famous Egyptian TV Network (Fenton, 2012). On September 11, first protest the derogatory video clip was demonstrated in the Egypt. On September 11, 2012; angry protesters attacked the US embassy in Benghazi (capital city of Libya) and killed the ambassador J. Christopher Stevens along with three other officials (CNN, 2012a). Just after that a storm of protests engulfed whole the world. In 20-days' storming protest, the participants were demanding the arrest and punishment of the film maker and removal of the clip from You-Tube. Eventually, US federal authorities arrested Nikola, from Los Angeles, on September 27, 2012, for suspicion of violating terms of his probation, including production of false statements regarding his role in the film and his use of the pen name "Sam Bacile" and the protests ended.

Literature Review

Scholars of communication and media studies have looked at freedom of expression regarding many other concepts like blasphemy, defamation and hate speech etc. Mostly, framing theory is used to investigate the matter; and Galtung's war and peace journalism frames are found very much convenient (Galtung, 1998). Framing is defined as an angle through which media shows a view. It clarifies that the spectacles by which the people see the world, shapes the logic of their everyday social understandings (Reese, 2003).

In most of the cases people have no sufficient knowledge of different political and social matters. In such situations especially, in a hegemonic political situation the framing upholds notable influence over the individuals' responses to the messages communicated (Entman, 1993). In framing analysis of war on Iraq reported in five Asian Newspapers; Maslog, Lee and Kim conclude that the faith is the most radical thing which shapes the frames (Maslog, Lee, & Kim, 2004). They further argue that Sri Lankan newspapers have demonstrated strongest war journalism frames which were followed by the Indian media and study concludes that news media are not impartial in reporting a clash, as a rule they are twisted (Carruthers, 2000).

Hasan and Subramani (2013) while conducting a content analysis of four Indian newspapers of Southern reign, on the innocence of Muslims film conflict, inferred that media is a significant instrument of communication of Islam and the Muslims can use it the most effectively.

They examined the problem with the help of different frames like news angle, sources of the news, articles tone, attribution, story type, language used in the story, headline's tone, articles about the dispute, articles by framing, and agenda setting presented on a whole, psychological outcome of report and overall impression about the story.

In a similar case, analyzing the opinion pages of The News and Dawn to political parties, Jan points out that partisan policy of daily the *News* is clearly violence-oriented by frame (Mirza, Raza, & Siddiq, 2013). He hints that editorial page of any newspaper generally depicts the policy of newspaper. Analyzing the war on terror, he argues that editorials of The News and The Nation have favored the Pro-US frames, so the violence-oriented frames were found dominant. In a similar study, Siraj analyzed Indo-Pakistan clash over Kashmir, through framing of peace and war journalism in the main newspapers of USA. He observed that figure of the war journalism news items and war-oriented frames were superseding (Siraj S. A., 2007). Zia and Hajrah conducted a content analysis of the coverage of Kashmir issues in daily the Dawn, The New York Times and The Times of India. Coverage given to the Kashmir conflict through the news, editorials, editorial notes and letters to editors, was analyzed and inferred that the issue is presented through negative frames and failed to draw attention to the serene options. And this line of framing projected extra violence (Zia & Syedah, 2015).

In such an ambiguous situation, actual players who were sprinkling oil on the flaming conflict were in dark, totally undetectable. So, it was significant to analyze the issue and identify the real cause of the problem. We accepted the challenge and to explore the problem. The media (the English language print media having their e-papers) of both countries were taken and their "opinion pages" were selected to observe how the issue was reported, in terms of consistency and discord frames. Through the literature review it was noted that two very important aspects of the conflict are yet unexplored; which are:

- 1) The freedom of expression worked out by the media all the way through consistency and/or discord frames and,
- 2) The change in the framing approach of media during the IMI.

In this context, it was found that these features were reasonable for the analytical study of the situation; and two questions were raised for the resolution of the issue.

Research Questions

RQ1. To what extent, if any, the consistency or the discord was a dominant frame, in the selected media, during the “Innocence of Muslims” issue?

RQ2. To what extent, if any, the media changed its framing approach during the “Innocence of Muslims” issue?

Method

The content analysis technique was applied in this study to investigate the portrayal of the movie “innocence of Muslims” in prominent newspapers of United States (US) and Pakistan (PN). The Washington Post (WP) and the Los Angeles Times (LAT) were selected from US media whereas the Dawn (DN) and the Express Tribune (ET) were selected from PN media (unit of study) (Riffe, Daniel; Lacy, Stephen; Fico, Frederic G, 2005).

Opinion Articles (the editorials and columns) discussing IMI published in the selected media (unit of content) during the time frame of September 11-30, 2012 were downloaded from the Archives of their respective websites. The words: Muhammad, Islam, Muslim, freedom and Blasphemy, were used as key words. In this way, 90 opinion articles (53 columns and 37 editorials) were saved and studied thoroughly. The news items having the phrase “Innocence of Muslims” (at least once) in their contents were selected. In this way, a list of 50 Articles (universe of study); 21 editorials and 29 columns, was finalized (see Figure 1).

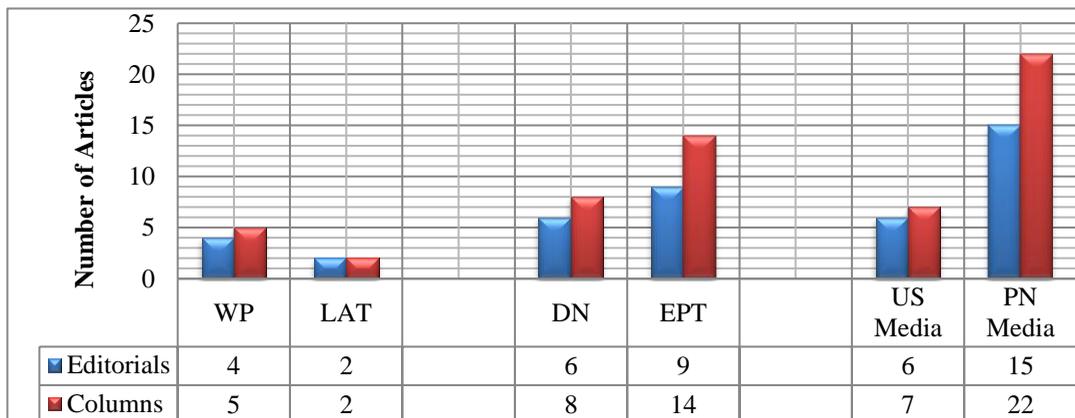


Figure 1: Coverage of IMI from 11 – 30th of September 2012.

The single sentence of each opinion article was selected for the assessment (unit of analysis). In this way 1408 sentences of 50 opinion articles were finalized for the analysis (universe of study). Due to small set of units, entire universe was taken for the study (census sample) (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

Selected columns and editorials were set in two special folders with their respective heading codes (for example WP-E1 or WP-C1). All the columns and editorials were arranged in sequential array. The news item published on September 11 was allotted number one and the last item published on September 30, was assigned the number 20.

Most of the items were in MS-Word format; whereas in some cases the files were found in PDF form and every single news items was saved in MS-Word file format separately. For further assignments, the numerical

bullets were inserted. In three different sessions two coders (MS students) were trained and inter coder reliability was tested using the Scott's Pi formula ($Pi = \frac{\%OA - \%EA}{1 - \%EA}$). The reliability was found satisfactory (Scott, 1955).

The files of the news items were handed over to the coders, who studied the items two times carefully and identified the defining indicator of micro frames. In third reading they marked each sentence (PC1, PC2 or PC3 and so on) with the help of FCS.

This system consists of four "Macro Frames". These are consistency frame (CONFR) discord frame (DISFR), neutral frame (NEUFR) and extreme frame (EXTFR). Initial two macro frames the CONFR and the DISFR each have five pairs of (opposite) sub categories "Micro Frames". These pairs of opposing micro frames are the depiction of peace (PC) or war (WR), hope (HP) or doubt (DT), gain (GN) or loss (LS), people (PL) or elite (ET) and deal (DL) or win (WN). These micro frame pairs and the final two macro frames the NEUFR and EXTFR each have further three indicators. All these indicators are self-explanatory (see Figure 2).

All the files (coded) were taken back and the sentences assigned different frame (CONFR, DISFR and NEUFR) were summed up separately with the help of code sheet (see Figure 3). Now the data was shifted to the SPSS files; and further analysis was continued, and frame frequency was calculated in cross tables. The frequencies were shifted in Percentage format for the transparent comparison and analysis.

Consistency Frame			Discord Frame		
PC	1	Convergence	WR	1	Divergence
	2	Simplification		2	Complications
	3	Clash-condemnation		3	Clash-commendation
HP	1	Optimism	DT	1	Pessimism
	2	Extra-players' exposed		2	Extra-players embedded
	3	Rights and duties		3	Rights or duties
GN	1	Responsibility	LS	1	Irresponsibility
	2	Confession		2	Denial
	3	Apologize		3	Reiterate
PL	1	Public's interest	EL	1	Leader's interest
	2	Common-concern		2	Selected-concern
	3	Majority focused		3	Minority focused
DL	1	Suggestion/Appeal	WN	1	Order/warning
	2	Both cults equal		2	One cult superior
	3	Settlement		3	Victory
Neutral Frame			Extreme Frame		
NL	1	No direct comment	EX	1	Defamation
	2	No commendation		2	Hate speech
	3	No condemnation		3	Blasphemy

Note. MACRO FRAMES: Consistency, Discord, Neutral and Extreme. MICRO FRAMES: PC: Peace; WR: War; HP: Hope; DT: Doubt; GN: Gain; LS: Loss; PL: People; EL: Elite; DL: Deal; WN: Win.

Figure 2: Frame's category system

<i>The Arab News C19.</i>													
<i>Neutral Frame</i>	<i>Consistency Frame</i>						<i>Discord Frame</i>						<i>Extreme Frame</i>
Total	PC	HP	GN	PL	DL	Total	Total	WR	DT	LS	EL	WN	Total

Figure 3: Coding sheet for different macro and micro frames of a news article.

Data Analysis

Now the research questions raised through the literature review are addressed. This step needs only consistency and discord frames, so the neutral frames are excluded (see Table 1). An overall view of consistency and discord framing shows that US media depicted the issue differently. In the Los Angeles Times consistency frame coverage (67%) was dominant frame whereas in the Washington Post, the discord frame coverage (62%) was dominant frame. However, the overall/average depiction of US media (52%) falls in the ambit of consistency framing.

In the Dawn consistency frame coverage (54%) was dominant frame whereas in the Express Tribune, the discord frame coverage was (59%) dominant frame. However, the overall/average depiction of PN media (53%) also falls in the ambit of discord framing (see Table 1).

Table 1 Frequency of the Consistency and Discord frames of opinion articles

COUNTRY	News Paper	Frames' Frequency		Total
		% CONFR	% DISFR	
USA	WP	38	62	100
	LAT	67	33	100
	Average	52	48	100
PN	DN	54	46	100
	EPT	41	59	100
	Average	47	53	100

RQ1. To what extent, if any, the discord or the consistency was a dominant frame, in selected media, during the “Innocence of Muslims” controversy?

The selected media is discussed independently under US Media and PN Media headings, and each one is further discussed in their respective newspapers.

The US Media

The Washington Post. It published 19 sentences on September 13. Thirty Eight Percent were consistent and 62% were discordant. Fifty-two sentences were published on September 14, in which, 65% were discordant and 35% were consistent. It published 95 sentences on September 16, in which, 68% were discordant and 32% were consistent. On September 20, 30 sentences were published where 50% were discordant and 50% were consistent. Seventeen sentences were published on September 25, in which, 59% were discordant and 41% were consistent. It published 14 sentences on September 26, in which, 29% were discordant and 71% were consistent.

The Los Angeles Times. It published 19 sentences on September 13, in which, 68% were discordant and 32% were consistent. It published 20 sentences on September 16, in which, 35% were discordant and 65% were consistent. It published 84 sentences on September 18, in which, 25% were discordant and 75% were consistent.

The Pakistani Media

The Dawn. It published 60 sentences on September 14, where 72% were consistent and 28% were discordant. On September 16, it published 19 sentences in which 58% were consistent and 42% were discordant. It published 49 sentences on September 19, in which 55% were discordant and 45% were consistent. It published 26 sentences on September 21, in which, 58% were discordant and 42% were consistent. It published 40 sentences on September 22, in which, 60% were discordant and 40% were consistent. It published 16 sentences on September 23, in which, 12% were discordant and 88% were consistent. It published 26 sentences on September 26, in which, 56% were discordant and 46% were consistent. It published 41 sentences on September 27, in which, 5% were discordant and 44% were consistent. It published 14 sentences on September 28, in which, 14% were discordant and 86% were consistent.

The Express Tribune. It published 20 sentences on September 14, in which, 65% were discordant and 35% were consistent. It published 11 sentences on September 17, in which, 82% were discordant and 18% were consistent. It published 11 sentences on September 19, in which, 36% were discordant and 64% were consistent. It published 56 sentences on September 21, in which, 61% were discordant and 39% were consistent. It published 75 sentences on September 22, in which, 56% were discordant and 44% were consistent. It published 57 sentences on September 23, in which, 49% were discordant and 51% were consistent. It published 73 sentences on September 24, in which, 63% were discordant and 37% were consistent. It published 39 sentences on September 29, in which, 69% were discordant and 31% were consistent.

Conclusion

- In the Pakistani media DISFR frame was dominant whereas consistency frame was dominant in US media. Overall PN media covered the issue through 53% DISFR sentences; whereas the US media covered the issue through 52% consistency frame (CONFR) sentences.
- In PN media CONFR was secondary frame; it covered the issue through 47% CONFR sentences; whereas in US media DISFR was secondary frame. US media covered the issue through 48% DISFR sentences.
- It shows that frequency of the DISFR coverage of PN media is 5% more than US media coverage and vice versa (See Figure 4).

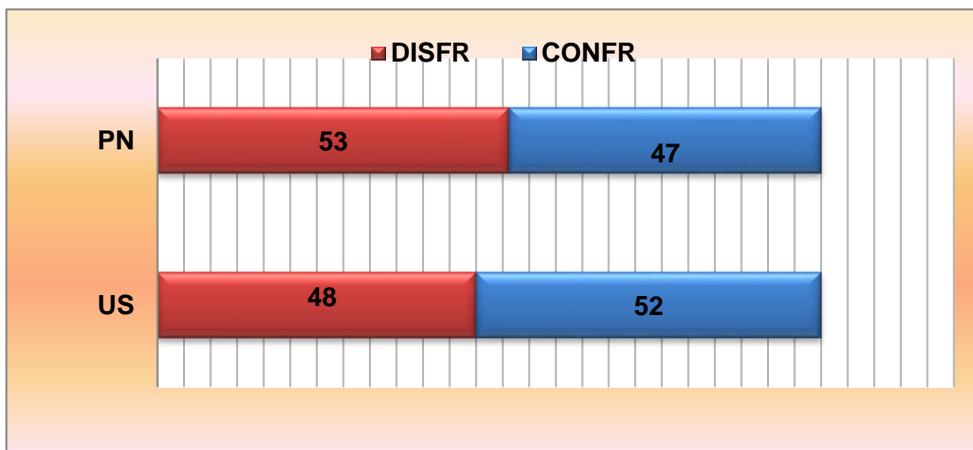


Figure 4: Dominant frames used by the media for the depiction of the IMI

RQ2. During the innocence of Muslims issue, to what extent, if any, the media changed its framing approach?

The time-frame of conflict is divided into four equal parts (quarters) to analyze whether media changed its framing trend over time or continued without any change. Each quarter consists of five successive dates, starting from September 11, 2012 and ending at the September 30, 2012.

The US Media

In first quarter of the selected time, overall US media depicted the issue through 76% DISFR and 24% CONFR sentences. In second quarter of the time frame, it depicted the issue through 58% DISFR and 42% CONFR sentences. In third quarter, the overall US media depicted the issue through 68% DISFR and 32% CONFR sentences. In fourth quarter, the overall US media depicted the issue through 31% DISFR and 69% CONFR sentences. The distribution of discord and consistency frames of the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, separately in four quarters was noted as following:

The Washington Post. It published 185 sentences in which, 23% were consistent and 77% were discordant. Quarter-wise coverage is as following:

First Quarter. It published 101 sentences on the IMI; in which 74% sentences are depicted through DISFR and 26% sentences are depicted through the CONFR.

Second Quarter. The Washington Post used 125 sentences about the issue; where 36% sentences were illustrated by means of consistency and 64% sentences through discord frame.

Third Quarter. It published 17 sentences about the issue; 59% sentences were depicted through DISFR and 41% sentences were depicted through CONFR.

Fourth Quarter. In this period, 14 sentences were used to discuss the issue; where 71% sentences used the consistency and 29% sentences used the discord frame.

The Los Angeles Times. It published 57 sentences in which, 72% were in DISFR and 28% were in CONFR. In different quarters' coverage shows that:

First Quarter. The issue is portrayed through 19 sentences; in which 32% sentences are in CONFR and 68% in DISFR.

Second Quarter. In second quarter it published 104 sentences on the issue; in which 27% fall in the ambit of discord frame and 73% sentences in discord frame.

Third Quarter. In this period, the newspaper did not publish any article on the given issue.

Fourth Quarter. Similarly, in this period, the newspaper did not publish any article on the issue.

The PN Media

Overall PN media (the Dawn and the Express Tribune) in their first quarter depicted the issue through 76% DISFR and 24% CONFR sentences. In second quarter of the time frame depicted the issue through 37% DISFR and 63% CONFR sentences. In third quarter of the time frame depicted the issue through 52% DISFR and 48% CONFR sentences. In fourth quarter of the time frame depicted the issue through 39% DISFR and 61% CONFR sentences. Separately, the distribution of discord and consistency frames of the Dawn and the Express Tribune in different quarters was noted as follows.

THE DAWN. It covered the issue through 46% discordant and 54% Consistent sentences. It's over the time coverage shows that:

First Quarter. In this period, 72% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 28% sentences through the DISFR.

Second Quarter. In this period, 49% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 51% sentences through DISFR.

Third Quarter. In this period, 50% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 50% sentences through DISFR.

Fourth Quarter. In this period, 50% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 50% through DISFR.

The Express Tribune. Forty-one percent sentences were published through CONFR and 59% through DISFR sentences; in the Dawn. Over the time, its coverage trend shows that:

First Quarter. In this period, 35% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 65 % sentences through DISFR.

Second Quarter. Forty-one percent sentences were published in this period through CONFR and 59% sentences through DISFR.

Third Quarter. In this period, the Express Tribune published 44% sentences by means of CONFR and 56% sentences through DISFR.

Fourth Quarter. The coverage of fourth quarter shows that 39% sentences were published by means of CONFR and 61% sentences through DISFR.

Findings

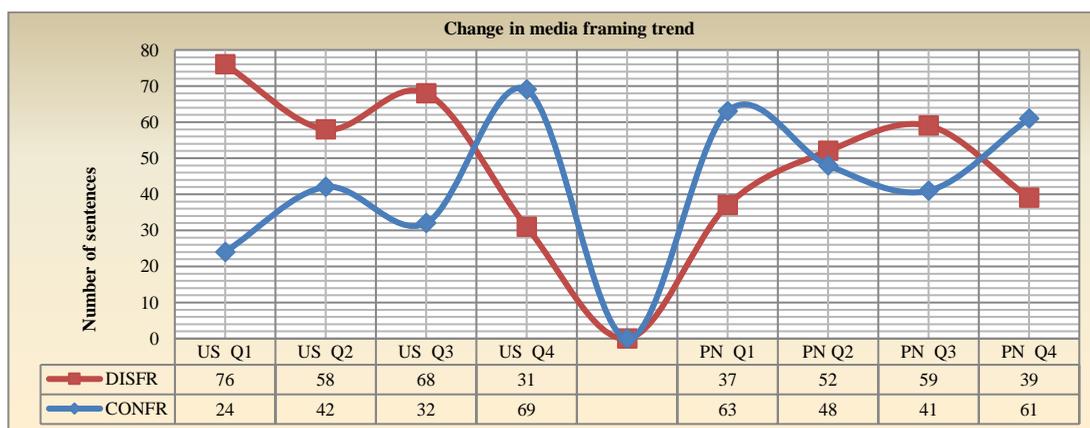


Figure 5: The variation in general framing style of Pakistani and United States media, in different quarters of the time frame.

1. The figure shows that overall consistency framing trend of US media ascended by 44.75 % and discord framing trend descended exactly by the same ratio.
2. It shows that overall consistency framing trend of PN media descended 2.6 % and overall discord framing trend ascended exactly by the same ratio.
3. It is clear from the figure that US media did not support the unrest and tried to bring the opponents closer. However, the PN media trend was opposite but with a very slow pace.

Conclusion

Through the overall facts finally we can conclude that:

1. The PN media covered the issue more forcefully. PN media published 37 articles whereas US media published only 13 articles. It means PN media gave 48% more coverage to the issue and took it more seriously as compared to the US media.
2. The PN media was more forceful in DISFR coverage, it gave 5% extra DISFR coverage to the issue. It shows, despite the more coverage, DISFR ratio is not very much high, and it is a responsible media.

3. Each newspaper of each country is equally free to see and report an issue through its own angle. However, this freedom depends upon their relative establishmentalities and governmentalities (Eko, 2014).
4. PN media visualized the problem through the lenses of blasphemy; its treatment was insistent in nature due to the sensitivity of the issue. However, its approach was not abrupt and fueling the flames of conflict. It covered the issue with slow and steady pace of DISFR coverage.
5. The US media was comparatively more provoked due to Stevens' murder and depicted the issue through the lenses of the terrorism. Its approach was nearly defensive and tried to resolve the problem. Its response was more responsible than PN media and it depicted the issue more forcefully through CONFR.
6. It means the United States media took part more forcefully to decrease anxiety and boost synchronization. The Sam Basle's case was handled in a very smooth and proper way; and finally, the Sam Basle was arrested; the conflict ended, and media finished its coverage (CNN, 2012a).
7. In short, the US and PN media are equally free in reporting the conflicts. While reporting the conflict, both have increased their tendency to resolve the problem with the passage of time.

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