

**Portrayals of Arab Countries and People in U.S. News**

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**Abstract**

This research paper will determine “Are all portrayals of Arab countries and people in the U.S. news harmful and stereotypical?” This paper will first cover different stereotypes and misrepresentations of Arab people and countries in the U.S. media from the literature review, such as gender, leader, oil and wealth, criminal, and common stereotypes, as well as stereotypes after 9/11, and discuss how the U.S. has distrustful feelings towards Arabs. This will be followed by testing out the research question through content analysis of examining thirty articles in The New York Times. Five op-ed articles in The New York Times were specifically studied closely in a recent time period between October 2023 and March 2024 to show the authors opinions and message they are communicating to the readers. That will help to determine if Arabs are portrayed negatively or not, to answer the research question.

## Introduction

There are many harmful stereotypes about Arab countries, Arab people, and Arab Americans through the U.S. media. People often get swayed by stereotypes and believe there is truth in them. The U.S. media is very influential on people's perceptions. Creating hurtful stereotypes about Arab culture does not accurately represent many Arab countries. Arab Americans face discrimination in the U.S. for being a minority race, which is why the U.S. media frames them into making them look like criminals (Elsamni 2016).

There are twenty-two Arab countries that are in different areas around the world, such as the Middle East and North Africa. Arab countries each have their own ethnicity, such as Lebanese, Jordanian, Saudi Arabian. The Arabic language is how they are all connected through, since Arab is a broad term for people from many different countries under that category. Arabic is the language spoken in these countries and certain Arab countries even speak different dialects of Arabic. Arabic is one of the six official languages in the United Nations. The reality of Arab culture is not depicted in the U.S. media. The West has always belittled Arab culture and undervalued it as the opposite of Western civilization. Stereotyping Arabs is not a recent trend, but rather an old tradition that could be traced back to the earliest interactions between Arabs and Westerners (Elsamni 2016). According to a well-known sociologist, Edward Said, he discusses orientalism, which studies the issues of representations of other cultures, societies, histories, the relationship between power and knowledge, the role of the intellectual, and the methodological questions that have to do with the relationships between different kinds of texts, between text and context, and between text and history (Said 1985). This research paper will study the representations of Arabs in the U.S. news. That will the answer the research question of "Are all portrayals of Arab countries and people in the U.S. news harmful and stereotypical?"

## Literature Review

This paper will begin by examining specific stereotypes starting with an overview of the meaning of race. The following sections include representations of Arabs in the media, common stereotypes of Arabs, gender stereotypes, stereotypes of Arab leaders, stereotypical representations of Arabs in relation to oil resources, American distrustful towards Arabs, stereotypes after 9/11, and concludes with criminal stereotypes.

### The meaning of race

In the U.S., racial labels have traditionally been treated as an ascribed characteristic with group membership either devoid of choice or structured by legal and social norms, such as hypodescent (Davenport 2016). Race on its own is not intrinsically meaningful and its significance is socially constructed. However, racial labels have consequences, since racism negatively impacts people. Ethnic identities are communicated through language, a prominent measure of cultural exposure, such as how Arabs have the Arabic language (Davenport 2016). The Arab race unites all the specific Arab ethnicities within it since they still share a common language and culture. There are over three million Arab Americans living in the U.S., and these citizens occupy a unique position within the American populations since they relate to American ideology but suffer from prejudice from mainstream Americans, since stereotypes create a divide between mainstream Americans and Arab Americans (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter and Narissra 2019).

### Representations of Arabs in the Media

Learning about the harmful effects marginalized people face is essential to understanding what Arabs experience in America on a frequent basis. Association with a devalued group can have negative psychological consequences such as deflated sense of self-worth and group esteem (Bergstrom, Veronica. N. Z., Cadieux, Jonahan., Thakkar, Drishti., and Chasteen, Allison. L.

2023). Members of marginalized groups might experience negative emotions such as shame, whenever stereotypes about their group are confirmed in mediated contexts, because already Arabs have been repeatedly accused of being a threat to the American population (Bergstrom, Veronica. N. Z., Cadieux, Jonahan., Thakkar, Drishti., and Chasteen, Allison. L. 2023), (Tukachinsky, Mastro and Yarchi 2017).

Mass media is a major source for creating misrepresentations about Arabs since mass media plays a role in pushing stereotypes on the public, exposure to mass media content can shape perceptions about a group's status and value in society (Tukachinsky, Mastro, and Yarchi 2017). Mass media uses stereotypes to control images about dominated groups (Collins 1986). It is essential to be aware of the power of controlling images in dominated groups everyday experience (Collins 1986). An element of the media is the U.S. news; it shapes a kind of image and narrative that they control, to push people to believe it if they only see negative images of Arabs. News stories can shape collective identities and help groups' causes and social movements (Johnson 2019). The U.S. news is creating a large misconception for the public to believe harmful stereotypes about Arabs since the news is portraying harmful images to push that agenda. The news media may be influential in reinforcing stereotype accuracy or even be responsible for changing or creating stereotypes (Johnson 2019). The negative effects of stereotypes in the U.S. news affects general well-being since there are concerns that continue to grow about negative racial and ethnic stereotypes, by activists, researchers, and health practitioners (Tukachinsky, Mastro and Yarchi 2017).

#### Common stereotypes of Arabs

The misrepresentations of Arabs in the media may be grouped in three themes which are, the distortions of language, the characterization of women, and the representations of terrorism (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter, and Narissra 2019). Common stereotype examples are that Arabs are

wealthy and irresponsible regarding the spending of money, uncivilized, and barbaric.

Misrepresentations have affected the American mainstream perception of the reality of the Arab world, which has fueled general conflict between the Arab world and the U.S, and individual Arabs all over the world, including Arab Americans (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter, and Narissra 2019). These media misrepresentations and misinformation about Arab culture play a significant role in building Americans' perception and understanding of Arab Americans.

That is a difficult circumstance for Arabs and Arab Americans as they are a marginalized group, since the U.S. news confirms harmful stereotypes that already exist about them. The way many Americans view Arabs is that they are backward, scheming, fanatic terrorists, and are dirty, corrupt, and dishonest and the Arab world has been grossly misrepresented by the U.S. media (Saloom 2006), (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter, and Narissra 2019). While some Arab countries are going through crises and poverty, many Arab countries are wealthy, safe, and progressive. Arabs are often stereotyped as woman-haters, barbarians, and violators of human rights, which are all negative portrayals (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter, and Narissra 2019). Michael Suleiman, a leading scholar on the Arab-American community argues that within American culture, a mindset exists that encompasses negative images of Arabs (Saloom 2006). Clearly, the negative stereotyping of Arabs is ingrained and enrooted within the American society. These common stereotypes are shown on the U.S. news frequently since the U.S. news is pushing this certain narrative for Americans to believe. Even if a bad event happened in an Arab country, the U.S. news will categorize all Arabs to be that way and will use it as an excuse to justify racism and discrimination. Ideologies that are racist treat dominated groups as the "others" such as if they are lacking full worth as a human being and seen as different from what is normal to the mainstream (Collins 1986).

Gender stereotypes

Portrayals of gender, ethnicity, and age have changed, but inequalities still exist, especially for Arab women (Appel and Weber 2021). Arab women have been portrayed as abused, oppressed, and as pawns in terrorist activity. American media mainly shows Arab women as helpless and controlled by a culture of male domination that persists in the Arab world (Melhem, Pnyanunt-Carter and Narissra 2019). Arab women have been portrayed as passive victims, misguided political participants, and terrorists (Johnson 2019). Arab women's representations in the media ignores the social, religious, and cultural discrepancies that characterize Arab societies, thus Arab women tend to be considered by Western media as one homogeneous group despite the numerous cultural, ethnic, and social differences among them (Tabaza and Mustafa-Awad 2022). The West sees Arab women as needing to be free, since there were images implying that Iraqi women need Western liberation, Syrian women who were refugees were framed as victims of their own families who married them off for money, and Palestinian women were blamed for their victimization (Tabaza and Mustafa-Awad 2022). There are dangers of representing all Arab women as a homogeneous group since each Arab ethnicity has its own set of culture differences and face different kinds of stereotypes.

#### Stereotypes of Arab Leaders

Often, the stereotyping of Arabs occurs through the stereotyping of leaders in Arab countries (Saloom 2006). Americans thought Saddam Hussein represented the entire Iraqi country and H.W. Bush used the word "he" when referring to the country Iraq or the Iraqi army. Saddam was used as a replacement for the entire Iraqi military which took away the attention of the devastation and hardships that the Iraqi people faced, since the focus was placed on one evil person (Saloom 2006). Some Americans have the mindset that all Arabs are terrorists and do not value human life much like how Americans do, and Americans even started perceiving those of Arab descent as clones of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden (Shaheen 2003).

## Stereotypical Representations of Arabs in relation to Oil Resources

Many Arab countries have significant and high-quality oil reserves, yet the U.S. media finds a way to make it look bad through negative stereotyping. Americans stereotyped Arabs in regard to oil since Americans held Arabs responsible for the oil embargo that was a result of the 1973 war (Saloom 2006). The American perception of Arabs was that they were getting rich and using oil as a weapon against the U.S. Melani McAlister, an expert in the field of American perceptions of the Middle East, states that editorial cartoons of this time depicted Arabs as beady-eyed and greedy with long hooked-noses (Saloom 2006). Newspaper advertisements suggested that Arabs were using oil as a means of attack against America.

### America distrustful towards Arabs

Not only is the belief that Arabs are the West's default enemy, but their image has also been long distorted due to Western media (Ragab 2004). Common feelings that Americans have towards the distorted image of Arabs is abhorrence and mistrust. The word Arab has become synonymous to terrorist, such as how in the 1995 Oklahoma bombing, announcements of suspects were lists of Arab names, without even considering the facts and evidence (Ragab 2004). America seemed disappointed when the facts revealed that an American citizen did the bombing, which shows a clear connection to how Americans think of Arabs being the only kind of people to commit terrorist acts as the default, which is a deep prejudice.

### Stereotypes after 9/11

After 9/11, the stereotypes and misrepresentations of Arabs in the U.S. news skyrocketed. There was a big increase in hate crimes, bias incidents, workplace discrimination, and airline discrimination towards Arab Americans after 9/11. According to the FBI, hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims multiplied by 1,600 percent from 2000 to 2001 (Alsultany 2013). In just the first few weeks after 9/11, the Council of American-Islamic Relations and the American-Arab



Anti-Discrimination Committee documented hundreds of violent incidents experienced by Arab and Muslim Americans and people mistaken for Arabs or Muslims (Alsultany 2013). There were several murders and dozens of airline passengers perceived to be Arab or Muslim were removed from flights; hundreds of Arab and Muslim Americans reported discrimination at work, receiving hate mail, physical assaults, and attacks on their property, mosques, and community centers were vandalized or set on fire. Americans were less likely to trust Arabs after 9/11 and the media tries to frame the problems in line with its audiences' feelings (Wasif 2021). Newspapers are sensitive to their readers' opinions and employ media frames that closely align with these views and the media uses and reinforces stereotypes by framing news around predominant themes and stereotypes (Wasif 2021). The image of Arab Americans in newspapers in the U.S. five years before and five years after September 11, was studied by Parker (2008) who analyzed pertinent articles in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*; between 1996 and 2006. Arab Americans were most portrayed as victims or out-group members rather than as in-group members (Elsamni 2016).

### Criminal stereotypes

General assumptions people in the U.S. assume about Arab Americans is that they are more likely to engage in terrorism than people from non-Arab ethnicity and an Arab American is more likely to get convicted and charged with terrorism than a non-Arab (Joseph, DongWon, Feldman, Cooper and Cooper 2022). Americans expect jurors to assign guilt to Arab Americans. Even while evaluating evidence, everything is already pre-judged and assumed about Arab Americans when compared to White Americans (Joseph, DongWon, Feldman, Cooper and Cooper 2022). A biased mindset is already in place by the court. When Americans imagine a terrorist, they visualize someone who looks Arab and believes they are guilty when there is evidence suggesting potential involvement in terrorism (Joseph, DongWon, Feldman, Cooper

and Cooper 2022). What is even more surprising is that the stereotype will not extend to criminality in general but will be limited to terrorism: for defendants in the Middle/Eastern Arab condition versus those in the non-Middle Eastern/Arab condition, there is no reason to expect a difference in guilt ratings for a criminal charge that is not terrorism (Joseph, DongWon, Feldman, Cooper and Cooper 2022). Even despite the evidence, people would vote in favor of indicting an Arab person than a White person (Joseph, DongWon, Feldman, Cooper and Cooper 2022). This is clearly problematic since these stereotype Arabs as criminals by default. Without examining the evidence carefully, it would put Arabs in a stressful position since they would be judged as guilty when they are innocent. These negative stereotypes of viewing Arabs as criminals appear on the U.S. news, causing the general population to believe it. The U.S. news shows Arabs as suspects from any potential threats of terrorism and many news reporters use language to perpetuate the misconceptions about Arab people.

The literature review showed a variety of examples of how Arab countries and people have been portrayed negatively in the U.S. media of many different stereotypes, in regards to gender, oil and wealth, criminal stereotypes, stereotypes after 9/11, and Arab leader stereotypes. This brings us to examine stereotypes in a current time period of the Gaza war. Orientalism can help explain some of it since Israeli commentator Dani Rubenstein has remarked, the Israeli occupation of the WestBank and Gaza, the destruction of Palestinian society has been led and staffed by Orientalists (Said 1985).

## **Research Methods**

### **Timeframe**

U.S. news articles will be examined from a recent time, which will be starting from October 7, 2023 till March 31, 2024. October 7, 2023 was when the Middle East had a violent outbreak when a terrorist group Hamas, from Palestine attacked innocent Israelis. This is a very

relevant and recent case to study Arab stereotypes in U.S. news articles from that day and onwards. Many news articles have been out since that day and new ones are constantly being created about the current situation. The U.S. news finds something new each day to write about a particular situation to continue its goal to push their ideas on the public.

#### Data collection and sampling

This research method for this study will be content analysis of U.S. news articles from The New York Times. Thirty news articles will be reviewed from the New York Times from October 7, 2023 till March 31, 2024 to observe different stereotypes over five months since the Middle East conflict. The New York Times is a popular U.S. news source that contains their point of view of current world events and their intake on certain kinds of people, such as Arabs. The New York Times is commonly read by many people and is a solid research material. This study will look for qualitative data in the news articles to analyze possible similar patterns they have amongst each other for misrepresentations of Arab people and countries. Possible stereotypes that the news articles will contain about Arabs are referring to them as terrorists, criminals, and are violent, will have stereotypes about leaders of Arab countries and of oil and wealth, as well as gender stereotypes such as how Arab women are viewed as oppressed and a victim. This study will examine how the words and phrases are carefully made in the news articles and its thought process while writing it, that shows how news writers form their opinions and writing style in a technique to make the narrative they want be very influential on the audience.

#### Coder agreement

Main key terms to find U.S. news articles are Arab and Middle East, which are general terms regarding the race and region where Arab people are from. Other key terms for searching for articles are descriptions and characteristics, such as terrorist, criminal, leader and violence.

Oil and wealth are key terms, as it represents important aspects to what Arab countries have. To find articles with gender stereotypes of women include key terms of victim, oppressed, and abused. This will show the kinds of words and themes that stereotypes and misrepresentations of Arab people and countries have in different U.S. news articles. The New York Times news articles all have different main ideas portrayed about a certain topic but are interconnected with these kinds of key terms to help influence their main ideas and goals on the readers.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Amongst the thirty articles studied, the five op-ed were examined even closer to determine how authors in The New York Times influence their opinions regarding Arab people and countries through their news articles. The majority of these authors are liberal leaning, which reflects the general qualities of The New York Times (Eisinger, Veenstra and Koehn 2007). Liberal news sources are typically more tolerant and respectful of different ethnicities and are less likely to misrepresent and stereotype racial groups. The opinions of authors on the news events studied closely in these five articles do not represent all of Arabs in a harmful way. They are mainly providing facts of an event, but do not stereotype all of Arabs to be a certain way that is negative.

Author Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Linda Thomas-Greenfield the author of the article “The World Has Been Unforgivably Silent on Sudan” is an American diplomat who serves as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under President Biden. She served as the U.S. assistant Secretary of State for African affairs from 2013 to 2017. Greenfield would have liberal views due to the work she has done. This article she wrote explains the struggles, violence, and discrimination that women in Sudan are facing. This article is not stereotyping all of Sudanese women to be oppressed, but rather Greenfield is showing her empathy to those affected by the Sudan crisis. She expresses her deep

emotions to show sympathy and wants the audience to feel the same way, based on how she wrote the article.

Greenfield has expressed her sad and empathetic emotions through several examples in the article.

“It was equal parts newly horrific and tragically familiar.”

“Today, civil war has once again turned Sudan into a living hell...little attention or help has gone to the Sudanese people.”

“The world’s silence and inaction needs to end, and end now.”

“We should all stand behind the International Criminal Court’s continuing investigation into allegations of war crimes in the region, local and international documentation efforts and other accountability initiatives.”

(Greenfield 2024).

Since Greenfield works in the United Nations, she has even urged them to do something about the Sudan crisis.

“For almost a year, I have been pushing the United Nations Security Council to speak out.”

“We also believe that the United Nations should appoint a senior humanitarian official based outside Sudan to advocate humanitarian access, scale up relief efforts and mobilize international donors.”

(Greenfield 2024).

Greenfield also explained ways of how she thinks that the Sudan crisis should be managed, such as what other political leaders in different countries should do.

“The first thing that must happen is we must send a surge of humanitarian support to Sudan’s most vulnerable.”

“Regional and global leaders must unequivocally and publicly demand that the warring parties respect international humanitarian law and facilitate humanitarian access.”

“The international community must also demand the protection of civilians and pursue justice for victims of war crimes.”

“This conflict will not be solved on the battlefield. It will be solved at the negotiating table.

Those with influence, particularly the African Union and leaders across East Africa and the Persian Gulf, must push the warring parties toward peace.”

(Greenfield 2024).

These examples in Greenfield’s article of “The World Has Been Unforgivably Silent on Sudan” has demonstrated that she is influencing the public to feel sympathy for those suffering in Sudan and to take political action to help solve the crisis. Since she works in the United Nations, she is calling attention to how they should manage the Sudan crisis, so that way it can make the United Nations and other readers of this article aware of her opinion and to use it to advocate for this situation as the New York Times is very influential. The purpose of this article is to use it as a format to learn the opinion of the author’s emotions and work experience background, in order to make the world aware of the issues that many Sudanese are facing, and to especially use it as motivation to take action. This article shows how Greenfield is trying to help Sudanese people in their current crisis by using this article as a way to make her voice heard. She does not use misrepresentations of all Arab people to be cruel and inhumane, she instead shows how she wants to help them and believe others should do so as well.

Author Charles Blow

Charles Blow is an American journalist, commentator, op-ed columnist for The New York Times, and political analyst for the MSNBC. He has done work regarding showing portrayals of Arab people and countries from situations that happened in the past, such as the

Iraq war. He wrote an article published in the New York Times “Arab American Fury Toward Biden.” This article discusses how Arab Americans are outraged at President Biden for not helping Palestine during the war. This article is not necessarily speaking in an anti-Israel tone but shows how Arab Americans want U.S. President Biden to help Palestine. This article is pro-Palestinian, which reflects the author’s thoughts and opinions because he has done work regarding portrayals of Arab countries and people and is well educated in this area. He does not stereotype Arabs in a negative way. He explains the struggles they are facing and how he urges others to help, especially U.S. leaders.

In this article, the state of Michigan and cities in Michigan, especially Detroit and Dearborn are mentioned many times. This is significant to the relevance of this article because Michigan is the U.S. state with the highest number of Arab Americans, especially in city Dearborn. By using this specific location in the U.S., it brings more insight of a wide representation for the Arab American population of what they think about President Biden. Since this article is through a pro-Palestinian perspective, the author interviewed different Arab Americans who are influential to speak on their thoughts that are included in the article. “On Monday, at a hip Arab coffee shop in Dearborn, Mich., Nihad Awad, a co-founder and the national executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or the CAIR, told me that as a Palestinian American Muslim who voted for Joe Biden in 2020, he feels ‘betrayed bitterly’ over the administration’s position on the war in Gaza.” “Of the president, Awad says, ‘I don’t think he can continue to lead our country.’” “When I asked there is anything Biden can do to change his mind, Awad said, ‘He can retire.’” The author, Blow, even went to the interviewee’s place of worship to learn more about the interviewee’s opinion. This shows his tolerance by being alright going to another religious place.

“Earlier I had put the same question to Dawud Walid, the executive director of CAIR’s Michigan chapter, who said that for most Muslims, anything short of Biden ‘resurrecting 29,000 dead Palestinians like Jesus’ would mean that they will never vote for him again.”

“I met back up with Awad on Monday evening at the Masjid Mu’ath Bin Jamal, a mosque in Detroit where he addressed a large gathering in Arabic...and argued that because Muslims voted for Biden in 2020, they’re complicit in the part the president has played in Gaza, and that it was, their obligation to vote uncommitted as a form of repentance.”

“On Tuesday morning, Abbas Alawieh—a former staffer both for Representative Cori Bush of Missouri and Representative Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, and a spokesman for Listen to Michigan, a group that helped lead the uncommitted campaign—told me ‘We feel like our movement has already succeeded because we know that we’ve generated a moment.’”

“Awad said that Biden’s long career in national politics should end ‘with the shame and the disgrace of the genocide in Gaza.’”

(Blow 2024).

This article is also trying urge other Arab Americans and even the rest of the American public to not vote for Biden in the upcoming election. There are even several references to Trump, because the Arab Americans in the article feel that Trump would be better between the two evils of either having Biden or Trump as President. The Arab Americans would have to prepare themselves for Trump since they feel more betrayed by President Biden since they feel he pretended to care about them but does not take any action.

“Any notion that the voters now seething over America’s role in Gaza will simply ‘come home’ and vote for Biden in the general election needs serious adjustment.”

“Awad believes there are enough Muslim voters in Michigan and Georgia, two swing states, to make it nearly impossible for Biden to win re-election without their support.”



Khalid Turaani, one of the organizers of the Abandon Biden movement said, “I and my community need to punish Joe Biden by making him a one-term president.”

“Walid said that in a lesser-of-two evils debate, Trump was, in some ways, the lesser.” “As he put it, ‘As bad as Mr. Trump’s rhetoric was, and him putting a travel ban on five Muslim countries, he wasn’t overseeing and actively arming a genocide.’”

“Awad said he doesn’t like Trump and doesn’t welcome a second Trump term, but he’s prepared to accept that outcome for the sake of punishing Biden.” “I cannot live under someone who pretends to be my friend,” which Awad referred to Biden since he mentioned that he survived under Trump because he knew clearly that Trump was his enemy.

(Blow 2024).

The author Blow even mentions that the upcoming election is a moral mission as well, not just only political.

“For some voters, this isn’t just a policy dispute.” “It’s a moral mission, and the mark of victory is a Biden defeat.”

(Blow 2024).

This article is meant to influence the American public morally for the upcoming general election in November 2024 to not vote for President Biden due to the ways of how influential Arab Americans are representing their population of how President Biden has made things worse for Palestine. This article wants the public to have sympathy for Palestine and understand the reasoning for Arab Americans furious feelings towards President Biden, to be able to think their decision carefully of who to vote for in the general election. This article is pushing a political agenda with it being tied into further moral issues through the interviewee's points of views in the article.

Author Thomas Friedman

Thomas Friedman is an internationally renowned author, reporter, and columnist. He has written books regarding Beirut and Jerusalem. Friedman is considered a liberal conservative. He has a mix of both views and has also been criticized by the left for being too conservative. Two articles examined by Friedman published in The New York Times are “Israel Is Losing Its Greatest Asset: Acceptance” and “Israel Needs to Know the Arab Oil States Won’t Rebuild Gaza for Free.” In both of these articles, Friedman is showing a point of view of sympathy and understanding of the Gaza war from both the Israeli and Palestinian point of view. While he shows his understanding for both sides, he does not misrepresent all of Arabs to be terrorists like Hamas. Friedman is demonstrating his point of view for innocent victims in Israel and Palestine, but does not call all Arabs terrorist and does not say that Hamas represents all of the Palestinian population. He is specifically pointing out the cruelty of Hamas and how it is affecting innocent Palestinians negatively, and even mentions how other Arab leaders are outraged at what Hamas did.

Examples of Pro Israel opinions in his article discuss of how Israel had a right to respond the way they did due to what Hamas did to them.

“I have real sympathy for the strategic dilemma that Israel faced on Oct. 7—a surprise attack that was designed to make Israel crazy by murdering parents in front of their children” (Friedman 2024).

“Hamas had embedded itself in tunnels under homes, hospitals, mosques and schools and made no preparations of its own to protect Gazan civilians from the Israeli retaliation it knew it would trigger” (Friedman 2024).

“Because Hamas built a vast tunnel network under Gaza, Israeli forces, in their quest to eliminate that vicious terrorist organization, are having to destroy huge numbers of structures.” It’s the

only way they can kill a lot of Hamas fighters and demilitarize Gaza without losing a lot of their own soldiers” (Friedman 2023).

“Hamas plotted and executed a campaign of unspeakable barbarism that seemed designed to make Israel crazy and lash out without thinking about the morning after the morning after.” “And that is just what Israel did” (Friedman 2023).

Friedman discusses how another Arab country; Saudi Arabi and its main leaders are handling the Gaza war. Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, is mentioned several times as well. Friedman discusses a lot about Saudi Arabia to show an international perspective and action plan and Saudi Arabia is a strong choice to use, because it is a large and influential Arab country with a lot of oil resources. Writing an article that includes that country would have a large impact on the public, especially since the more famous and wealthier a country is, the higher influence it has on pushing its narrative and ideas on the public.

“The most hopeful thing I can report from Riyadh, and from talking to U.S. officials in Washington before I arrived, is that when the war in Gaza ends, Saudi Arabi remains committed in principle to resuming the negotiations that were underway before Oct. 7.” “What the negotiators were discussing was a grand bargain in which the U.S. would enter into a security treaty with Saudi Arabi and, at the same time, Saudi Arabia would normalize relations with Israel—provided that Israel committed to defined steps to work with the Palestinian authority toward a two-state solution” (Friedman 2023).

“I was left with the very strong impression here that the Saudis want the Americans to shut down the Gaza war as soon as possible, because the death and destruction in Gaza is radicalizing their young population...while frightening away foreign investors and generally getting in the way of what Saudi Arabia wants to focus on: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s 2030 plan for

transforming the country, from education to infrastructure to women's empowerment" (Friedman 2023).

"Saudi Arabia's willingness—if it holds—to proceed with the U.S. Saudi-Israeli-Palestinian dialogue when this war stops is so important" (Friedman 2023).

"The Saudi government did a private poll asking Saudis how they felt about normalization with Israel—if it were done in the context of Saudi support for Palestinian statehood." "Seventy percent approved" (Friedman 2023).

Friedman also shows his empathy for Palestine and even discussed how other Arab leaders are against Hamas. Many leaders from an ethical viewpoint are against what Hamas did since they believe it was wrong since they believe there are other ways to gain independence for Palestine.

"Many Saudis did not support Hamas, because its mass murder of civilians and abduction of children in war was expressly banned by the Prophet Muhammad" (Friedman 2023).

"Detest the Muslim Brotherhood offshoots like Hamas" (Friedman 2023).

"Israel to help nurture a revamped Palestinian Authority, and to offer some long-term political horizon for Palestinian statehood in order to develop a Palestinian partner that can one day govern a Gaza liberated from Hamas and Israel" (Friedman 2023).

"The leaders here are not the least bit sympathetic to Hamas" (Friedman 2023).

"Many Arab leaders who privately want to see Hamas destroyed" (Friedman 2024).

Friedman also has some criticism towards Israel for not working respectfully with Palestine to reach a solution, which is why Friedman mentions that Israel is losing acceptance around the world, which he believes is Israel's greatest asset.

"Still so traumatized by Oct. 7, Israelis, in my view, are failing to see that at least making an effort to move slowly toward a Palestinian state led by a transformed Palestinian Authority and

conditioned on demilitarization and hitting certain institutional governance goals is not a gift to Palestinians or a reward for Hamas” (Friedman 2024).

“Israel and the U.S. are seen as driving events now and getting most of the blame” (Friedman 2024).

“Each day brings new calls for Israel to be banned from international academic, artistic and athletic competitions or events” (Friedman 2024).

“Many of Israel’s friends are now just praying for a cease-fire so that they don’t have to be asked by their citizens or voters—especially their youth—how they can be indifferent to so many mounting civilian casualties in Gaza” (Friedman 2024).

"It is losing the global narrative that it is fighting a just war. It has no plan to ever get out of Gaza, so it will eventually sink into the sands there with a permanent occupation that will surely complicate relations with all its Arab allies and friends across the globe. And it is losing regionally to Iran and its anti-Israel proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, who are pressuring Israel's northern, southern and eastern borders” (Friedman 2024).

“There is one fix that would help on all three fronts: an Israeli government prepared to begin the process of building two nation-states for two peoples, with a Palestinian Authority that is truly ready and willing to transform itself.” “That changes the narrative.” “It gives cover for Israel's Arab allies to partner with Israel in rebuilding Gaza, and it provides the glue for the regional alliance Israel needs to confront Iran and its proxies” (Friedman 2024).

“Collection of fanatics currently running Israel, who are committed to annexing the West Bank and the craziest of whom even look longingly on adding Gaza” (Friedman 2023).

“If Israel does not come up with a long-term political vision to entice the world to help it fund the rebuilding of Gaza, it is going to be in for a lot of diplomatic and economic hurt” (Friedman 2023).

Friedman has taken an overall stance that would seem fair and reasonable, which would be to condemn Hamas and support innocent Israelis, while supporting the freedom of Gaza and sympathize with the innocent Gazans killed. He is trying to send that message to the public through these articles, so they can also be understanding of both sides and take this equitable stance. He discusses a lot about Saudi Arabia to show how that specific country is handling the war, because Saudi Arabia is an Arab country that has close ties to Palestine. Saudi Arabia is rich in oil and would have a lot of resources to help rebuild Gaza. That is showing how this article is bringing attention to Saudi Arabia to continue helping Gaza and shows Saudi Arabia as an example for other countries to consider helping rebuild Gaza as well. By showing how one large country like Saudi Arabia is an ally of Palestine, it serves as an example for other countries to do the same. It also gives the public the perspective that Saudi Arabia has, which is that they are willing to make peace with Israel, as long as Israel compromises and lets Palestine be free to create two separate countries. While Friedman was showing different points of views in these two articles to demonstrate his stance, he did not misrepresent all of Arabs to be like Hamas and did not mention anything stereotypical about Arab people. These two articles would not have a negative impact on the Arab race of how the representations are shown.

Author Ross Douthat

Ross Douthat is an American political, analyst, author, and New York Times columnist. Douthat is generally conservative and has support for Israel regardless, which especially shows in his article “Where Hamas Is Winning.” In this article, Douthat shows how terrorist groups like Hamas use extreme violence to get what they want and gives his support to Israel. However, he does not create harmful stereotypes about all Arab people and does not misrepresent the entire Arab population.

Ways that Douthat shows his support for Israel in the article is by describing a lot of the violence Israel faced from the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack.

“But you can see, for now, the shape of a dark strategic triumph that only extreme violence could obtain.”

“The atrocities perpetrated by Hamas against innocent Israelis, the snuff films, mutilations and delight in simple cruelty, inspired by immediate analogies to the Islamic State’s depredations.”

“A desperate but calculated leap to barbarism.”

(Douthat 2023).

Douthat also discusses a lot about terrorist groups and how they resort to extreme violence to reach a goal. He discusses it to demonstrate why Hamas did an attack on Israel, which its goal was to push the notion to free Palestine.

“The Islamic State enjoyed a temporary recruitment boom.”

“Raised a question about Hamas’s strategy...true grisliness would yield the kind of Israeli reaction required to scuttle peacemaking between Israel and its Arab neighbors?”

In reference to Hamas’s strategy, “maybe in matching the Islamic State’s cruelties it also matched that regime’s self-destructive folly.”

“Hamas and its terrorists have held or expanded their popular support across the Muslim world, they have brought powerful figures like Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan rushing to their defense, they have turned out protesters and inspired a surge of antisemitism in Western cities, and they have retained various forms of sympathy within the activist-academic complex.”

“A movement deliberately going into extremes risks the Islamic State scenario, where you isolate yourself so completely that you end up first morally delegitimized and then cornered and destroyed...it didn’t just hold power in Gaza, it enjoyed a certain kind of legitimacy, a degree of favor with parts of the Western left and the Arab world that the Islamic State never enjoyed or

ever sought,” in reference to Hamas. “And in embracing barbaric violence it showed itself willing to light that legitimacy on fire.”

(Douthat 2023).

Douthat is not misrepresenting Arab people to all be terrorists like Hamas in this article. He is writing about how the public should be aware of how terrorists achieve their goals by resorting to extreme violence. Security agencies in other nations who might read this, could take into account of how terrorist groups use their strategies to push an agenda, in order to best protect their citizens. This article would help people and especially security agencies, to watch out for specific tactics that terrorists use, to be able to defend themselves from terrorist groups.

## **Discussion**

These five op-ed articles in The New York Times show a variety of opinions from authors, such as pro-Palestinian, Pro-Israeli, and a mix of both regarding the Gaza war, and being sympathetic for what Sudanese people are facing in their crisis. Friedman would be the one who has a fair and just stance because it is obviously wrong what Hamas did and for anyone to support them and it makes sense that he is empathetic for innocent civilians in both countries, rather than just taking only one country’s side over the other. His views would be influential on the public to have that mindset as well. Greenfield’s opinions would make more people aware about the Sudan crisis and feel sympathetic towards Sudan. It would make the public determined to take political action and make their voices heard to encourage other citizens and large public organizations determined to help Sudan immediately and not be silent about the Sudan crisis.

Even though these five articles had a mix of sympathetic feelings for Arab countries and liberal, and conservative perspectives from the authors, none of the articles had harmful misrepresentations about Arab people. There were criticisms of people who have done hurtful things to innocent people like Hamas and the Sudan crisis, but it was not used as an agenda to



refer to all Arab people to be that way. This is a good example of moving away from how news sources use current events to make one race, like Arabs all be represented in the same negative way. These New York Times articles are a leading source to not portray Arabs harmfully and stereotypically.

These research findings from a liberal leaning source of The New York Times could make one consider examining a comparison of other news sources such as Fox News to study how they portray Arab people and countries, such as if it will be in a similar way to The New York Times or very different. This research of U.S. news articles for content analysis could also promote further research in content analysis in this topic, such as examining news videos, films, television, and print newspapers for example. Even though the research question “Are all portrayals of Arab countries and people in the U.S. news harmful and stereotypical?” was shown to not be true in these New York Times articles, this one specific U.S. news source does not mean that there are not harmful stereotypes and misrepresentations of Arabs in other U.S. news sources. This could make one interested to observe a variety of sources and other specific parts of content analysis to further dive into this topic.

## **Conclusion**

The literature review confirmed that harmful stereotypes and misrepresentations of Arab people and countries exist in the U.S. news. The research findings in The New York Times, however, showed portrayals of Arab people and countries that are not misrepresenting the entire race and being stereotypical about them. This goes back to answer the research question, “Are all portrayals of Arab countries and people in the U.S. news harmful and stereotypical?” Based on the research results, the answer is that not all portrayals of Arab countries and people in the U.S. news contain negative stereotypes and misrepresentations. While the literature review demonstrated that there are stereotypes and misrepresentation of Arab people and countries in

the U.S. news, reasonings that the research from The New York Times could have portrayals about Arab countries and people that are not negative, compared to what the literature review showed from a variety of news sources, is that The New York Times is liberal leaning, so they are unlikely to stereotype and misrepresent ethnicities and other kinds of minority groups. The New York Times had articles showing different viewpoints, while maintaining tolerance and respect for Arab countries and people.

This research demonstrated that there is accurate and nonharmful representations about Arab countries and people, even in a sensitive and difficult time, due to the Gaza war, and other hard situations, like the Sudan crisis. The New York Times did a professional job of maintaining respect for Arab people and countries for how they portrayed them, especially in the five op-ed articles. The research findings from The New York Times spark at least a little bit of hope to continue to not have stereotypical portrayals about Arab countries and people and are a leading example of for other news sources to follow, to not be stereotypical and misrepresentative of Arab people and countries. This will create more accuracy for the American media to show to the public about Arab countries and people and help reduce racism towards Arab people in the U.S. media.

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