

SUAD JOSEPH LAB: Media Project
Representing Muslims and Islam in the New York Times: 1850 – 2016.

The Middle East and North Africa in U.S Media Representations: An Analysis of the Term "Barbary" in the New York Times (1930-1939)

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The term “Barbary” was used by the West in reference to the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. I examined 401 articles published from 1930 to 1939, and critically analyzed 25 relevant articles where the term “Barbary” was used by New York Times correspondents. I discovered that the countries of the Barbary were represented as ahistorical and tied to a past of racketeering. I argue that this depiction of chaos and an uncivilized society was used to justify France’s colonial acts as it had “freed” the people of the Barbary from oppression and disorder. This misrepresentation by the New York Times, which is considered to be a liberal news source, engraved into American society that the people of the East were backwards and ill-mannered. I suggest that such news media misrepresentation which is persistent in the 21st century, served as an opportunity for the West to portray itself and Christianity as heroic, modern, and advanced in order to depict the East and Islam as backwards and oppressive. This research is part of an analytical project of the New York Times over 150 years conducted in Dr. Suad Joseph’s lab.