

**The Identity of Moroccans: A Comparative Analysis of Arabic and Western Media
Representations during World Cup Qatar 2022**

Nousayba Fekhaoui

Northwestern University in Qatar

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Professor Claudia Kozman

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The World Cup 2022 in Qatar was a highly anticipated event, drawing global attention and sparking discussions about the representation of participating countries in the media. One of the countries whose representation was of particular interest was Morocco, a North African nation with a complex cultural and historical identity. The debate over whether Morocco is an African, Arab, or Amazigh country has existed for a long time, with some arguing that it is a mixture of all with the recent World Cup, the debate was further intensified as Morocco's performance on the field and its portrayal in the media became delicate and sensitive topics of discussion. Morocco successfully ran in the tournament, progressing to the knockout stages and making headlines in both Western and Arab media. In addition, the country's cultural and historical context played a significant role in shaping its portrayal in the media, as did the ongoing debates around Moroccan identity. Some people started to argue that Morocco was the first African country to reach the semi-finals. However, others argued that Morocco is an Arab Muslim country which made the Gulf proud since the primary official spoken language is Arabic, and the official religion is Islam.

The World Cup served as a platform for the Western and Arab media to showcase their perceptions of Morocco, shape public opinion, and get people's reactions. This paper examines the intersection of football and identity in the Arab world, focusing on Morocco. It also explores Morocco's representation during the World Cup Qatar 2022, specifically how it was portrayed in Western media versus Arab media. It will investigate how Morocco is referred to by others and whether the media labeled it Arab, African, or Amazigh, depending on the team's success or failure.

Literature Review

This literature review focuses on three main areas: the World Cup Qatar 2022 and the media coverage of the games, Morocco as a country, its origins and the Moroccan identity, and the contestation of identities that happened but with a closer look during the world cup. The media and the way it helps shape identities. The Moroccan national team's success in FIFA World Cup 2022 highlighted Morocco as the 'first' 'Muslim,' 'African,' and 'Arab' state to have earned such status, as well as from a post-colonial and anti-colonial standpoint, given the symbolism of its defeating Spain,' much has been proudly asserted about Morocco's advancement into the World Cup semifinals, more could have been stated if Morocco had also defeated France, from which it earned independence (Warshel, 2023).

When examining the identities of the populations in Morocco, it is vital to look at the history, specifically the history of the Arab world; instead of being purely based on ethnicity, language is the basis for defining Arabness (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). This definition was popularized and accepted when the Arab League established in 1945 said that all nations where the majority speaks a dialect of Arabic are members of the League of the Arab States (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). They argued that the Arab world is divided into three worlds, sub-Saharan Africa, Arab fuel-endowed economies, and a third one which they called the Arab Mediterranean (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). They compare those to non-Arab sub-Saharan Africa, non-Arab fuel-endowed economies, and the rest of the non-Arab world (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). That being said, geographically and historically speaking, most Moroccans believe they belong to Africa, considered a weak country in sports. We got used to Western success, especially because of Western media's framing, coverage, and dominance. However, according to Darby (2005), several eminent experts have projected that the name of an African nation will soon appear on

the World Cup trophy due to the rise of African football in the international playing arena over the past 25 years since FIFA's Eurocentric bias has historically prevented African teams from competing at the World Cup. The participation of five countries in the France 98 and Japan/South Korea 2002 tournaments can be seen as significant turning points for African football (Darby, 2005). Although Morocco is mainly considered an African country, a large portion of Morocco is Amazigh (Warshel, 2023). Hence their success in World Cup Qatar 2022 may be seen as a string of victories by Amazigh athletes (Warshel, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that there is a significant tie between colonialism and what we call "Arab" or "non-Arab" (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). The reason why Arab nations lagged so far behind in 1970 is the Ottoman Empire and colonization by the British, French, and Italian empires (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009). It was very tense when Morocco played against Spain and French during the World Cup, as players were under so much pressure since they played against their colonizers (Darby, 2005). The game's global governance also discerned the contrast between football's function during colonialism and its immediate aftermath as a bastion of cultural imperialism and a catalyst for African resistance (Darby, 2005). Therefore, understanding colonial history will help us analyze why there is so much debate about Morocco's identity and origin. According to Griffin (2019), the first goal is to challenge the Cultural West's colonial grand narratives, which continue to portray the Arab as the "Other," an inferior being whose social order is diametrically opposed to Western values and ideas. It is important to challenge these narratives and reveal their biases and inaccuracies. By doing so, it is hoped that the portrayal of Arab people in Western media and culture will become more accurate and nuanced (Griffin, 2019). Challenging these narratives is important because they have long been accepted as factual and have perpetuated negative stereotypes about the Arab people. By

challenging them, there is an opportunity to promote greater understanding and acceptance of Arab culture and people and break down the barriers erected between the Western world and the Arab world. It may seem absurd to assume that such colonial epic narratives still exist in the twenty-first century (Griffin, 2019).

In the middle of the debate on the Moroccans' identity, the composition of the Moroccan selection shows a diversity of languages, such as Arabic, Spanish, French, and Dutch (Oonk, 2020). Although no one had been born in an English-speaking country, English was used by the French, Spanish, Belgian, and Dutch Moroccans who did not speak Arabic (Oonk, 2020). Therefore, it is argued that the Moroccan team had no dominant culture or language group, and everyone was a minority (Oonk, 2020). At the same time, the team represented Morocco and the Moroccan diaspora in Europe. According to Oonk (2020), a Western media channel labeled the Moroccan team as the "team of Europeans," although its official nickname was 'the Lions of the Atlas' (Oonk, 2020). The Moroccan diaspora in France and the Netherlands have had better scouting, youth football programs, and training facilities than Morocco. Thus, most Moroccan footballers in 2018 were foreign-born and learned their skills abroad (Oonk, 2020).

Nevertheless, some thought Moroccans were gaining an unfair advantage because they were born abroad. According to Van Campenhout and Van Sterkenburg (2019), in 2010, the Moroccan football federation actively tapped into the Moroccan diaspora because their citizenship policy is based on descent, and the national team has a lot of foreign-born players (Van Campenhout & Van Sterkenburg, 2019). Others argue that the Moroccan identity is unique, although it comprises different components, where the Amazigie occupies a central place (Srhir, 2011). The Amazigian speakers, in sociopolitical terms, are considered an ethnic group, although it is not the majority, and in sociolinguistic terms, it is considered a huge linguistic group (Srhir,

2011). Apart from the historical factor, when the religious factor interferes, people are confused about whether the identification of Moroccans as Arab is linked to religion (Sarnelli & Lomazzi, 2018). In Morocco, national identification has always been the most important factor, followed by religious identity (Sarnelli & Lomazzi, 2018). According to Raab et al. (2016), Morocco was the first post-independence African team to qualify for the modern World Cup in 1970. African identity was based on geography, not culture or race (Raab et al., 2016). However, the bond that has been created by the Arab presence in North Africa with the Arab Koiné and Islam led to the creation of an identification process that was mainly based on Arabic as a language and Islam as a religion (Srhir, 2011). It is believed that religion caused Moroccans to start identifying themselves as Arabs however, according to Sarnelli and Lomazzi (2018), only 38.8% of Moroccans identify as Muslims, which makes us understand that there is a political factor that interfered. Another majority of Moroccans speak French and might identify as French, although it is a colonial language linked to a strong colonial history (Srhir, 2011).

This paper explores the role of media in shaping the Moroccans' identity and the difference between Western and Arab media's coverage of the Moroccan games in the FIFA World Cup 2022 by answering the following questions:

RQ1) How was Moroccan national identity portrayed in the Arab and Western media during the World Cup Qatar 2022? Did they call it Arab, African, Amazigh, or all?

RQ2) Which media, Western or Arab, used the colonial factor in their coverage of the Moroccan games in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar?

Methodology

The sources that will be used to analyze this representation will include Western and Arabic news articles, as well as some posts from both Western and Arabic media from Twitter.

One of the sources I will focus on will be the articles written after Morocco's victory over Spain, as well as those published following its loss against France. By comparing the representation of Morocco in Western and Arab media during these two events, the research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the media's perceptions of the country's identity and its cultural and historical context. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the ongoing discussions about national identity, media representation, and the media view of Morocco during the World Cup Qatar 2022.

Design

The design of this study will be a content analysis of Western media vs. Arab media news articles released during World Cup Qatar 2022. The methodology will be based on analyzing traditional media products, which in this research will be 10 news articles from social media; 20 posts from Twitter will be collected and analyzed to understand the way media labeled Morocco when it was called "African," "Arab," and "Amazigh."

The first step in this research is to collect the data for analysis. The data will be collected by scraping 20 tweets from Twitter and ten media articles from various media channels. For social media, I will use Twitter's API to retrieve tweets that contain the keywords: Moroccan National Team, Morocco, African, Arab, Amazigh, and World Cup Qatar 2022. For the news articles, I will analyze 10 in total, but I will pick 5 Western articles from Western news channels and 5 Arab articles from Arab news channels. The data will be collected within a span of a week.

The next step is to clean and preprocess the data to remove irrelevant or redundant information, and also remove any retweets, as they are not original tweets and may skew the data; remove any foreign language tweets other than Arabic and English, remove any hyperlinks or special characters that may affect the analysis. After this, I will do a content analysis of all the tweets and news articles by finding similarities and differences, quotes, and keywords.

Time frame

To have a comparative analysis of the different news outlets' coverage of the games, I will only need to analyze the content developed during the World Cup. The data collection will cover the tweets and news articles published from 20 November to 18 December 2022.

Sample

The sample for this study will consist of social media posts from Twitter, 20 posts in total during the World Cup 2022 period from both Western and Arab sources, 10 tweets each. The other sample will be news articles, I will analyze both Arabic and Western news articles, 5 articles each.

Variables

The main variables examined in this study include whether the content is published in Arabic or Western media news channels. The second variable is whether Morocco was called Arab, African, Amazigh, or all. This research's third and final variable is whether the colonial factor was mentioned or recognized in both Western and Arabic media, especially when Morocco won against Spain and when it lost against France.

Findings and Discussion

Previous research has shown that Moroccans have a deep colonial history but still preserve their own Amazigh culture. According to Srhir (2011), the Amazigh alternative discourse was based and continues to be based on the Amazigh identity in claiming its linguistic-cultural rights and in the argumentation of the sociolinguistic model and linguistic policy that it proposes for the state. Previous literature has also shown that Western media more use the colonial factor than Arab media and that Western media tend to count Morocco as an African, Amazigh country rather than Arab (Darby, 2005). In contrast, Arab media call Morocco

an Arab Islamic country rather than an African or Amazigh. Indeed, the research I have conducted showed similar results.

To answer our first research question, I have tested the first variable, which is the origin of the media (Western or Arab), with the second one, which is what they portray Morocco as (Arab, African, Amazigh, or all).

RQ1: How was Moroccan national identity portrayed in the Arab and Western media during the World Cup Qatar 2022? Did they call it Arab, African, Amazigh, or all?

A chi-square test was used to conduct the statistics for this research using the variables mentioned in the RQs (see Appendix C).

Moroccan national identity portrayed in the Arab media during the World Cup Qatar 2022

Results have shown that 40% of the Arab media identified Morocco as Arab. Equally, the other 40 % consider Morocco a mix of all; Arab, African, and Amazigh. However, only 20% of the Arab news channels described Morocco as an African country, and none mentioned that Morocco was Amazigh.

Moroccan national identity portrayed in the Western media during the World Cup Qatar 2022

Results have shown that only 13% of the Western media view Morocco as an Arab country, and 13.3 % call Morocco an Amazigh country. However, 33.3% portray Morocco as a mix of Arab, African, and Amazigh countries, and 40% of news channels see Morocco as an African country (see Table D1). The chi-square test results indicate a significant difference between how the Western and Arab media portray the identity of Moroccans, $\chi^2(8, N=45) = 52.636, p < 0.05$.

The Western media mostly see Morocco as an African and Amazigh country, whereas the Arab

media mostly see Morocco as an Arab country (see Table D2). Nevertheless, both Arab and Western media believe that Morocco can be a mix of all (Arab, African, and Amazigh).

The chart below gives a visual idea of the percentages (see Table D3)

Moreover, to answer our second research question, I have tested the first variable, which is the origin of the media (Western or Arab), with the third one, which is whether the colonial factor was used in those media.

RQ2: Which media, Western or Arab, used the colonial factor in their coverage of the Moroccan games in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar?

Results had shown that 53.3% of the Arab media mention Morocco's colonial history, especially when Morocco played against their primary colonizers, Spain and France, during the World Cup. Nevertheless, 45.7 % of other Arab news did not mention colonialism (see Table D4). On the other hand, 60% of the Western media emphasized the history of colonialism in Morocco in their news articles during the world cup. Especially the French news channels, they mentioned that Morocco was playing against their colonizers. And only 40 % of the Western articles were neutral about it and did not mention it.

The chi-square test represented in (see Table D5) results indicates a significant difference between how the Western and Arab media portray the identity of Moroccans, $\chi^2(1, N=30) = 0.136, p > 0.05$. The Western media are the ones to mention Morocco's colonial history. More than half of the Western news that was analyzed mentioned the colonial history of Morocco. Whereas the Arab media doesn't mention it as much, the percentage of the Arab media channels that mentioned the colonial factor is almost similar to the number of those who did not mention it. The chart gives a visual idea of the percentages (see Table D6).

Conclusion

The study has found that the portrayal of Moroccan national identity in the Arab and Western media during the World Cup Qatar 2022 differs significantly. The Arab media mostly identified Morocco as an Arab country or a mix of Arab, African, and Amazigh, while the Western media portrayed Morocco primarily as an African or Amazigh country and rarely as a mix of all. Both media types recognize Morocco's diverse identity, including all the elements. While both recognize the country's diverse identity, the Western media emphasizes colonial history more than the Arab media. The Western media portrayed Morocco mainly as an African country, whereas Arab media described it as an Arab Muslim country that made the Arab World proud. Nevertheless, Arab and Western media agree that Morocco combines Arab, African, and Amazigh cultures and languages.

Furthermore, the study revealed that colonialism played a significant role in portraying Moroccan identity during the World Cup. The colonial factor was used a lot by Western media and way lesser by Arab media. The Western media, especially French news channels, emphasized Morocco's colonial history and highlighted that Morocco was playing against its colonizers. In contrast, the Arab media mentioned colonialism less frequently, with only 47% of channels acknowledging it, as Arabs only focused on Morocco being the first Arab, African, and Muslim country to make it to the semi-finals by making the Arab world very proud. These findings highlight the importance of media representation in shaping national identity and the need for a balanced and nuanced portrayal of Moroccan identity. Last but not least, I can see an opportunity for further research that can be done to discover what Moroccans themselves identify as and which culture makes them proud of their country the most.

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Appendix A

Sample News Articles for Content Analysis

Western media: 5 articles

1. <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2022/12/13/moroccos-world-cup-success-sparks-a-debate-about-arab-identity>
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64022940>
3. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/soccer/article-morocco-world-cup-semi-finals-africa/>
4. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/12/14/world-cup-qatar-morocco-france/>
5. <https://www.foxnews.com/sports/france-ends-moroccos-historic-run-aims-finals-repeat-vs-argentina>

Arab media: 5 articles

1. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/world-cup-morocco-success-amazigh-arab-identity>
2. <https://themarkaz.org/the-afro-amazigh-world-cup-debate-revisited/>
3. https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/moroccos-world-cup-fairy-tale-a-ray-of-hope-for-underdeveloped?gallery_image=undefined#big
4. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/12/9/why-moroccos-win-over-spain-means-so-much-to-me>
5. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/10/how-the-arab-world-celebrated-moroccos-win>

Appendix B

Sample Tweets for Content Analysis

North African Legacy @NorthAfricanL · Dec 11, 2022
Morocco is qualified for the semi-finals of the **World Cup** 🏆

African Victory, Arab Victory...

If you want. Everyone can identify with **Morocco**. But in reality it is above all a typical Moroccan Berber (**Amazigh**) Victory and here is why 🙌

(Unroll 📄)


#FIFAWorldCup #Qatar2022



9 145 513 1,433

Utifi Finance @utifi_finance · Dec 16, 2022
Qatar 2022 World Cup is gradually coming to an end and what a memorable roll of event we witnessed.

As Africans we are proud of what **Morocco** achieved on reaching the Semis but importantly the 3rd place match against Croatia is also very important.



1 48 45 1,433

Show this thread

DOAM @doamuslims · Dec 15, 2022
Moroccan fans chanted the Shahadah (There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger) in presence of French President Emmanuel Macron today during #Morocco's World Cup semi-final match against #France.

#MoroccoVsFrance #Qatar #Qatar2022

NowMyNews @NowMyNews · Dec 16, 2022
France - Morocco: World Cup Qatar 2022, live | The Africans face Mbappé's team with three central defenders
spamchronicles.com/france-morocco...

#LatestNews



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Appendix C**Variables & Codebook**

| V 1 | V 2 | V 3 | Codebook: |
|-------|--------|--------|-------------|
| Ar= 1 | Ar= 1 | Yes= 1 | Ar= Arab |
| W= 2 | Af= 2 | No=2 | W= Western |
| | Am= 3 | | Af= African |
| | All= 4 | | Am- Amazigh |

Appendix D

Crosstabs & Chi-Square

Table D1

RQ 1_Crosstabs

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Valid | | Cases Missing | | Total | |
|---|-------|---------|---------------|---------|-------|---------|
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Media Origin: Arab or Western * Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | 45 | 100.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 45 | 100.0% |

Media Origin: Arab or Western * Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all Crosstabulation

| | | Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | | | | | Total |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | |
| Media Origin: Arab or Western | Count | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 100.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| | % within Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | 100.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 33.3% |
| | % of Total | 33.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 33.3% |
| 1 | Count | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 15 |
| | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 0.0% | 40.0% | 20.0% | 0.0% | 40.0% | 100.0% |
| | % within Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | 0.0% | 75.0% | 33.3% | 0.0% | 54.5% | 33.3% |
| | % of Total | 0.0% | 13.3% | 6.7% | 0.0% | 13.3% | 33.3% |
| 2 | Count | 0 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 15 |
| | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 0.0% | 13.3% | 40.0% | 13.3% | 33.3% | 100.0% |
| | % within Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | 0.0% | 25.0% | 66.7% | 100.0% | 45.5% | 33.3% |
| | % of Total | 0.0% | 4.4% | 13.3% | 4.4% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| Total | Count | 15 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 11 | 45 |
| | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 33.3% | 17.8% | 20.0% | 4.4% | 24.4% | 100.0% |
| | % within Is MNT called: Arab, African, Amazigh, or all | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| | % of Total | 33.3% | 17.8% | 20.0% | 4.4% | 24.4% | 100.0% |

Table D2

RQ 1_Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 52.636 ^a | 8 | <.001 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 63.262 | 8 | <.001 |
| N of Valid Cases | 45 | | |

a. 12 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5.
The minimum expected count is .67.

Symmetric Measures

| | | Value | Approximate Significance |
|--------------------|------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi | 1.082 | <.001 |
| | Cramer's V | .765 | <.001 |
| N of Valid Cases | | 45 | |

Table D3

RQ 1_Bar Chart

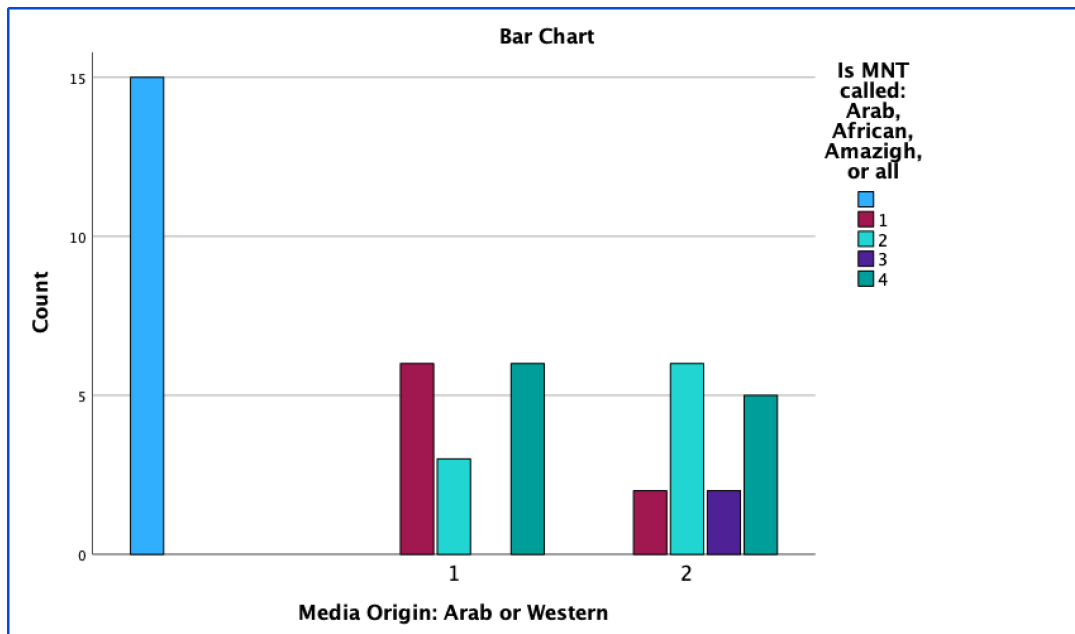


Table D4

RQ 2_Crosstabs

Crosstabs

Case Processing Summary

| | Valid | | Cases Missing | | Total | |
|--|-------|---------|---------------|---------|-------|---------|
| | N | Percent | N | Percent | N | Percent |
| Media Origin: Arab or Western * Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? | 30 | 66.7% | 15 | 33.3% | 45 | 100.0% |

Media Origin: Arab or Western * Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? Crosstabulation

| | | | Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? | | Total |
|-------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | |
| Media Origin: Arab or Western | 1 | Count | 8 | 7 | 15 |
| | | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 53.3% | 46.7% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? | 47.1% | 53.8% | 50.0% |
| | | % of Total | 26.7% | 23.3% | 50.0% |
| | 2 | Count | 9 | 6 | 15 |
| | | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 60.0% | 40.0% | 100.0% |
| | | % within Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? | 52.9% | 46.2% | 50.0% |
| | | % of Total | 30.0% | 20.0% | 50.0% |
| Total | Count | 17 | 13 | 30 | |
| | % within Media Origin: Arab or Western | 56.7% | 43.3% | 100.0% | |
| | % within Colonials: Is it mentioned or not? | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | |
| | % of Total | 56.7% | 43.3% | 100.0% | |

Table D5

RQ 2_Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | .136 ^a | 1 | .713 | | |
| Continuity Correction ^b | .000 | 1 | 1.000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | .136 | 1 | .712 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | 1.000 | .500 |
| N of Valid Cases | 30 | | | | |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.50.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Symmetric Measures

| | | Value | Approximate Significance |
|--------------------|------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Nominal by Nominal | Phi | -.067 | .713 |
| | Cramer's V | .067 | .713 |
| N of Valid Cases | | 30 | |

Table D6

RQ 2_Bar Chart

