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SETA

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ABSTRACT

Turkish-Arab relations are getting closer on the level of state policies and consolidated by cooperation agreements, strategic alliances, high level exchange of visits and expansion of trade volume. Although a promising future is ahead of Turkish-Arab relations, civil and human dimensions on the level of public perception on each side seem to be lagging behind political developments.

Today, public support is increasingly sought in foreign policies as it provides legitimacy and confidence in pursuing a certain direction. Mobilization of public support in Turkey and the Arab world will boost Turkish-Arab relations on the basis of mutual trust. In order to achieve this goal, both sides should work together to eliminate biased views, stereotypes and negative images held towards each other.

Although this Research Report focuses on Turkey, one can argue that, despite improved relations, there is still work to be done to eliminate prejudices, ill informed images and monolithic perceptions produced and propagated by nation state ideologies of the past. As far as the image of Arabs in Turkey is concerned, several sites emerge as more important sources of image making such as history textbooks, elite discourse, films and the press.

Turkish history textbooks in the formative period of Turkish Republic were written in the spirit of creating a homogenous nation state to inculcate a sense of belonging to a Turkish nation. Description of Arabs in textbooks gradually evolved to be positive especially after 1990s. However modern developments and achievements in the Arab world are largely ignored today. Discourse and rhetoric employed in history books and education should serve to de-construct ill informed images, prejudices and promote respect for diversity when building the "other." In this context, Turkey and Arab countries should establish history commissions to check textbooks if there are biases, prejudices and negative images toward each other. Recent improvements and modern historical developments on both sides should also be included in the curricula.

Turkish cinema and TV soap operas have gained momentum in recent years with many new productions distributed regionally and internationally. Examination of Turkish films with Arab characters indicates that Arabs are negatively represented in general. In the light of these observations Turkish and Arab popular culture industry can bring their forces together to make films, documentaries and soap operas projecting the educational, scientific, cultural, civilizational, technological and environmental progress achieved by the Arab world.

Although the Turkish public is interested in Arabic language and culture, there seems to be insufficient source of information especially on current cultural and literary trends in the Arab world. Therefore more resources should be allocated to the translation of Arabic literary products into Turkish, to the opening of Arabic courses and cultural centers in major cities in Turkey for the purpose of supporting political rapprochement between the two sides with cultural and civilizational elements.

ARAB IMAGE IN TURKEY

1. INTRODUCTION

Myths, stereotypes, prejudices and images increasingly exert their influence in international politics and transnational relations. Socially and politically constructed myths and stereotypes about the "others" are being re-produced and re-circulated by the forces of globalization and used to legitimize policy options more than ever. In this context, increasing role of the public opinion and popular choices are being paid a special attention as "images" become invisible actors in the international environment and in the making of alliances based on social, political and cultural approximation among the nation states. Growing use of myths, stereotypes, prejudices and images, whether historically rooted or recently constructed, in political and popular discourse, which is facilitated by the media and educational material, requires a closer attention. Derived from these considerations, this Policy Report focuses on the image of Arabs in modern Turkey. It explores the roots of prevailing and dominant perceptions, investigates how the media and popular culture contribute to the construction of images pertaining to Arabs and examines the current public opinion drawing upon a nation-wide survey.

2. WHY SHOULD WE STUDY THE IMAGE OF ARABS IN TURKEY?

There are several important reasons for focusing on the perception of Arabs and image of Arab counties and cultures in Turkey. Examination of the Arab image in Turkish popular perception has both historical and current significance when the complexities of the relations between the two sides are taken into account. There are mainly four indispensable considerations which make analysing the Arab image in Turkey timely and essential.

First, despite a long history, cultural contacts and common interests between the two sides there is no comprehensive study of how Arabs are perceived in Turkey, how Turkish public sees Arab societies and their culture, what the roots of current thinking on Arabs are, how close or distant people in the street feel about them, and how they are portrayed

in the media and popular culture. There is a serious lacuna in research on Turkish-Arab relations in general and Turkish public perceptions of Arabs in particular. Based on a large study, this Policy Report examines the background of Arab image in Turkey and provides a current picture of the dominant views in the media, popular culture and among the public regarding the Arab world.

Second, Turkey and the Arab world have much in common as far as their economy, cultural heritage, strategic interests and religion are concerned. Many Arab countries, Saudi Arabia in particular for the Hajj purposes, are indispensable destinations for Turks. Moreover, trade volume between Turkey and the Arab world is constantly growing and the investment of Arab capital in Turkey is steadily increasing. Thousands of Turkish workers are employed in several Arab countries. All of these facts point to multidimensional relations between the two sides.

Third, Turkey and its Arab allies are significant political players in their neighborhoods and their relations on state and public levels have vital importance for the future of a region facing many challenges. With different political, social and economic orientations, the two sides hold the potential to contribute to the march of the Islamic world in an age of globalization and enhancing regional and international issues of mutual concern. Turkish-Arab relations have a particular importance in a volatile region where they face immediate problems such war in Iraq, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, scourge of terrorism, and Iran's nuclear program among others.

Fourth, there is an emerging approach in Turkey towards the Middle Eastern countries in general and the Muslim world in particular as seen in recent policy decisions. Turkey places a high importance on the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab League. Turkey has signed a number of important agreements with Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in recent years. More importantly, Ankara consistently expresses its displeasure over hawkish Israeli policies. In February 2007, Turkey became one of the first non-Arab countries to receive a Hamas delegation to woo it into the diplomatic fold. The same year, about 25 Turkish members of parliament resigned from a Turkish-Israeli friendship committee in protest against the Israeli aggression on Palestine and Lebanon. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan strongly criticized Israel for its attacks in Gaza in 2008 to show Turkey's support for the Palestinians.

2.1. Questions on the Image of Arabs in Turkey

This Policy Report explores five main questions to identify currently held images and perceptions Arabs in Turkey, their roots and origins; cultural and political trends that shape and reinforce those images. Based on the data of a larger research project and its analysis, the Policy Report also makes recommendations to improve and reinforce positive images and to eradiate prejudices, myths and stereotypes about the Arab world and its culture. This Policy Report addresses the following questions:

The first question focuses on the historical background of Turkish-Arab relations in order to provide a context and historical perspective where some early indices of images and

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perceptions could be located. *The second* question investigates the field of educational inculcation as a source of image making and its transmission. In order to understand the trajectory and repertoire of dominant political discourses on the Arabs and their embodiment in the educational setting, history and geography textbooks in secondary schools were examined.

The third question examines the Turkish media as another important source of image creation and stereotyping. A selected group of leading newspapers were analyzed to identify the dominant discourse on the Arabs over the last decades. This exercise helps us understand political and ideological attitudes of the dominant media towards Arab societies and cultures. *The fourth* question concentrates on how the Turkish cinema constructed and reflected the Arab image over the years since films as promoters and transmitters of popular culture are among the important sites where prevalent images are conveyed and the new ones are constructed. *The fifth* question focuses on how an average Turkish person views the Arabs today. Therefore the Policy Report provides a summary of a nation-wide survey which was carried out on 3,040 people to explore widely held views, images and stereotypes about Arabs and their culture.

3.   BACKGROUND OF TURKISH-ARAB RELATIONS

Turkish-Arab relations have a long history and are deeply rooted in their social, political and economic exchanges that evolved throughout the centuries. There is a revival in Turkish-Arab relations and a rediscovery of shared legacy in recent years despite the effects of nation building processes. This Report demonstrates that Turkish-Arab relations with many fluctuations over the centuries have had a determining effect on the formation of the Arab image in Turkish society today. Most notably, events that remain fresh in the historical memory of the Turkish people contribute to building, reinforcing and sustaining the images attributed to Arabs. In this context, it can be argued that the developments that took place during the era of the Ottoman Empire, which governed a good deal of Arab land for more than 400 years, play a significant role in forming the ways in which Arabs are perceived in Turkish society and vice versa. In the period between the Ottoman withdrawal from Arab lands and the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic, Turkish-Arab relations were shaped by mutual cooperation against imperialism under the spiritual authority of the Caliph. Turks and Arabs adopted the tendency to accept each other as two separate political units, and tried to reestablish their relations instead of accepting a total break up in this period.

Founders of the Republic of Turkey, however, evaluated and interpreted nationalist movements in the Arab provinces as the acts that brought about the end of the empire, which inevitably led to the Arabs being 'othered' and labeled as traitors. The "Great Arab Revolt" under the influence of Arab nationalism became a propaganda tool of the official ideology during the formative period of modern Turkey for constructing negative images of Arabs. The Sharif Hussein revolt was interpreted as a widely-supported Arab revolt; the Arabs were accordingly stigmatized as "traitors" who stabbed the Turks in the back in WWI. It can be argued that the Middle East policy of Republican Turkey was influenced

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considerably by this ideology for a long time. The anti-Arab perspective was supported by writers who adopted the westernization approach, and a negative Arab image was drawn in the textbooks in public schools.

In terms of Turkish-Arab relations, the Cold War era is the period during which Turkey's Western ideology revealed itself most clearly. The blocked, static, security-centered foreign policy approach of the Cold War contributed vastly to the reification of the West-oriented foreign policy approach in Turkey. Forced to position itself under the umbrella of NATO and firmly situated in the Western Block due to the Soviet threat, Turkey found an international platform which legitimized its Western-oriented foreign policy. Turkey's Middle East policy during the Cold War era in terms of intra-regional balances looks either indifferent or against the Arabs which further deepened the alienation that had arisen in Turkish-Arab relations in the Republican period. While Turkey formulated its relations with Arab countries within the framework of the policies of the Western Block, the Arab countries found themselves newly recovering from the mandate; Turkey's alignment with the West, in conjunction with strong anti-mandatist feelings among the Arab countries, thus translated into a negative attitude toward Turkey.

The fact that Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize Israel in 1949 deeply wounded its relations with Arab countries. Moreover, starting in the 1950s, a series of other developments occurred that had adverse effects on Turkish-Arab relations, the most significant being Turkey's abstinence from the vote on the proposal of self-determination for Algeria in 1957-1958, after having voted for non-inclusion of the Algerian issue in the UN agenda since 1954. Other telling moments were the Suez Crisis of 1956 and the Syria Crisis of 1957. These developments, starting with Turkey's recognition of Israel, further deteriorated its relations with Arab states. Israel's status as a flashpoint for Turkish-Arab relations became evident first during its founding process. Turkey's recognition of Israel sparked reactions in the Arab world; with the establishment of Israel, the status of Turkish-Arab relations became indexed mostly on Turkish-Israeli relations. Each step drawing Turkey and Israel closer brought with it a reaction from the Arab states, whereas each tension between Turkey and Israel created grounds for drawing closer to Arab countries.

It has been observed that positive changes took place in Turkey's policy toward Arab countries following the 1960s, along with the change in Arab perceptions of Turkey's foreign policy options. For example, Turkey's protest of the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967, and the withdrawal of its embassy back to Turkey had a positive effect on its relations with the Arabs. A second breaking point affecting Turkey's perceptions of the place of Arab nations in its foreign policy occurred during the oil crisis of the 1970s. The crisis reminded Turkey once again of the economic and political significance of developing good relations with Arab countries. From the 1980s onward, Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Persian Gulf countries developed in a positive direction under Turgut Özal.

Since the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) took office in late 2002, a new page was opened in Turkish-Arab relations. Interactions that had once been characterized by old prejudices and politically constructed images were replaced by more constructive ones

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in the light of new socio-political realities. The "unaccustomed" increasing closeness in Turkish-Syrian and Turkish-Saudi relations indicates that Turkey has now largely abandoned a foreign policy based on imaginary prejudices.

Another result of the paradigm shift in Turkish-Arab relations is the visible increase in economic investments by Arab capital – especially Gulf capital – in Turkey. Turkey's active relations with the Arab world and the visits paid at the president, the prime minister and foreign minister levels have also triggered important economic developments in Turkish-Arab relations, transforming Istanbul into one of the most important centers for Arab capital. Visits paid to Turkey by these countries at the kings and heads of states level demonstrate that this endeavor on Turkey's part is neither unreciprocated nor unilateral.

4.   CONSTRUCTION OF ARAB IMAGE IN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Educational institutions and national education curricula are instruments that have been used consistently by states as a means to build a national identity. The Turkish state had effectively inculcated a sense of belonging and national identity through schooling. When searching for an identity, like other modern societies, Turkey has first of all felt the need for a past, and therefore tried to grab hold of history. Turkey's founders gave great importance to historiography, adopting an ideology that contributed to building both the Turkish identity and identity of the Arabs. Turkish-Arab relations are portrayed in various ways in the textbooks; the manner is sometimes friendly, sometimes preferring to not even attribute an identity, and sometimes hostile. These changes in approach are closely related to the historical process and the history-writing ideology governing it.

As far as direct references to Arabs are concerned, it is seen that these books include Arabs under the heading of "History of Islam." The first encounter between Turks and Arabs, the acceptance of Islam by Turks, and the latter's superiority in their role to spread Islam are described. When describing the social lives of Arabs, the history textbooks use the term "Bedouin" which refers to nomadic Arabs, and it is told that Arabs live as nomadic tribes who became civilized through interactions with other tribes – which are generally Turkish tribes.

History textbooks have both positive and negative portrayals of Arabs. Negative attributes and references are underlined by views such as traitorous, dirty, filthy, male-dominant, disrespectful of women's rights, nomadic, Bedouin, prone to blood feuds, plunderers, authoritarian and oppressors. Positive attributes and references are conveyed with descriptions such as combatant, hospitable, generous, true to their word, protective of their relatives and the weak. Textbook writers, in depicting the Arabs, begin to use more neutral expressions in the 1990s instead of emphasizing negative aspects. As years passed, the discourse and expressions grew softer, and the history of Arabs began to be told with a more objective attitude. Although there has been a gradual shift from negative construction of Arab image towards more neutral and positive image making, history textbooks largely ignore modern Arab history.

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5. REPRESENTATION OF ARABS IN FILMS

Since its invention, cinema has always been in conversation with such diverse phenomena as politics, history, economy and religion. Cinematic characters are often used to represent the society in which the films are produced; at other times, they may also be used to represent other nations. Cinema, in this regard, is a medium of communication and an artistic field capable of exerting strong sociological effects. It is also a means of communication and information sharing between various societies and nations, and a vehicle for developing attitudes and behaviors among viewers.

The style of representation of other nations and cultures in the films often run parallel to the perceptions of the relevant people of other countries, nations and cultures. These perceptions may be subject to developments between those nations in certain periods of time. In the first case, the general approach of the society towards the "other" is carried out on the screen as it is, while in other cases a normative attitude may be manipulated and altered. Cinema is thus a very important showcase for studying the perceptions of one nation toward another.

Examination of a broad sample of films from different periods and genres indicate that Turkish cinema has depicted other nations (Arabs, Americans, Greeks, and Germans etc.) in ways that clearly depended on the developments of the time, and on the mentality of the directors. Significant events in Turkish history frequently become identity markers and boundary lines in Turkish films. As far as Arabs are concerned, Turkish films do not portray Arabs as a monolithic nation or people. Neither all cinematic images are negative or positive. Depending on the context, theme and ideological position of the producer or director, representation of Arabs differs in Turkish films. The Arab geography is represented through images of the desert, dancing girls, camels, and the water pipe. Urbanization, modern architecture, urban planning and modern technological developments in the Arab countries are not reflected in the films. Rather, the conventional images of "Arab-Oriental culture" are represented in order to enhance their association with Arab societies and culture in the minds of the audience.

Broadly speaking, there are six types of Arab characters depicted in Turkish cinema in different contexts. *The first* type may be seen in the religious context. Religious films present Arab geography and Arab heroes in telling the story of significant Islamic personalities during the emergence and spread of Islam. The Arab characters are depicted in line with their religious tendencies: The Muslims are good while the pagans are cruel. *The second* type of Arab character includes such traditional characters as Arap Bacı ("Sister"), eunuchs, executioners, tutors and servants. Out of these, the Arap Bacı character connotes a positive Arab image. *The third* type is presented in a historical context, especially in terms of the generalized figure of 'the Arab traitor.' This type of Arab image manifests itself in the context of films on the Ottomans' defeat in Arab geography against the British, and the Arab accomplices of the British cause during WWI, depicting the Arabs as siding with the infidel British. Although it occurs rarely, there are also some representations of those Arabs who fight alongside the Ottomans. *The fourth* Arab character is the oil-rich businessman and arms trader, who appears particularly in films made after the 1960s. These Arabs are depicted as negative people: unmannered, alcoholic, lustful, criminal and fraudulent. *The*

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fifth character involves rich Arab relatives, whose presence in Turkish film is explained by the fact that many Arab lands were once part of the Ottoman territory. Sometimes there are personages combining both the fourth and the fifth types of characters who visit or die in Turkey. *The sixth* type is the oppressed Arab, a character who has become more prevalent in the wake of the American invasion of Iraq. These films focuse on the Arabs as an oppressed people who became the victims following the American invasion of Iraq.

All of these six types of characterizations suggest a historical, cultural, geographical and political construction of the Arab image in cinema. While Arabs are at times depicted negatively, especially in the context of the WWI, they are portrayed as sincere, warm and trustworthy in the roles of Arap Bacı. The Turkish cinema is also affected by the western cinema's portrayal of the Arabs as oil rich and extravagant.

6.   PORTRAYAL OF ARABS IN THE TURKISH PRESS

The mass media is a one of the effective instruments in determining the direction and dimensions of inter-cultural relations. There are around 40 nationally distributed daily newspapers in Turkey with a total circulation of just over five-million. Two of these newspapers are published in English. Content and discourse analysis of the Turkish newspapers with the highest circulation as well as the ways in which they present news reports and comments concerning the Arab world indicates that there are different trajectories of representations.

In the Turkish mass media, the geography of the Middle East has been associated with "wars" and "crises" since the end of the First World War. This process has continued with coverage of the Arab-Israeli Wars, the war between Iraq and Iran that took place during the 1980s, the civil wars in Lebanon, the Gulf War, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and most recently the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Association of this region with wars and crises in the Turkish media stems in part from the structure and regional perspective of Turkish media institutions. Since topical events in the Middle East and the Arab world have low reporting value for editors, the Turkish media employs correspondents in the region only in times of wars and crises. Therefore, the content of the information coming from the region is characterized generally by clashes.

The "Middle East" perception in the minds of the editorial staff, columnists and commentators of the Turkish media is yet another factor in the portrayal of the region as a region of clashes. The dominant view among the Republican political elites portrays the region as an inescapable morass and trap, a totally tattered geography. On the basis of the prevailing image of the Middle East among the major Turkish newspapers with the widest circulation, one can argue that the mainstream media perceives the region as tainted by conflicts, tensions and wars, and it thus sometimes argues against Turkey's engagement in the region. However, while the stereotyped representation of the Arabs in the media presents certain continuity, the media's biases are neither totally permanent nor static. Factors such as shifting ideological and cultural preferences as well as the world views of the Turkish media staff and the course of Turkish-Arab relations allow certain changes to occur over time.

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The Arab image in the Turkish media during the 1970s was shaped largely as a backdrop to developments in Turkey's domestic politics and its relations with the world, particularly the Arab countries. The Turkish media restricted its coverage of the Arab world to foreign policy issues; thus very few or no reports on the Arabs appeared on the culture-arts and economy pages. However there were some exceptions such as more positive coverage on Saudi Arabia 1970s. The tone used in Saudi Arabia-related news pieces was different than the general rhetoric on the Arabs. There were two factors that made Saudi Arabia positive in the minds of the Turkish readers: 1) her constructive role in the oil crisis, and 2) her economic and political cooperation with Turkey.

Many important changes took place in Arab-related news reports in the Turkish media in the 1980s under Turgut Özal's government. During his term in the government many Turkish journalists, intellectuals and businessmen frequently visited Arab countries which had ramifications for journalism as well. Since then not all but at least some media outlets began to use local sources rather than relying on western ones, and reporting the news by dispatching their own correspondents to the Arab world. This trend resulted in a weakening of the negative image of the Arabs in Turkish media.

Turkey's relations with the Middle East and with Arab countries at the beginning of the 1990s entered a troublesome period due to domestic issues and international developments that had impact on Turkey's security policies and national interests. The coalition between the Welfare and True Path parties in 1996 and 1997 had a largely negative impact on the Arab image domestically. While Turkey gave higher importance to her relations with Arab countries and several visits were made by high-level officials, the resultant media attention denigrated the Arab image in Turkey. The media printed news under headlines such as "The Bedouin went too far", "The Arabs turn away from Turkey", heavily criticizing the Arab attitude. Especially criticized was the Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's visit to Libya. During the visit, Muammar al-Gaddafi is reported to have made disturbing comments on Turkey' domestic and foreign policies. The news about this visit was broadcast on national televisions over and over again and the government was accused of letting Bedouin insult Turkey's national honor. Overall, during the 1990s, the media generally presented Arab societies as negative, reactionary, conservative, authoritarian and repressive. The Arabs were perceived as a party to the debates in Turkey although they had no real involvement in the domestic tensions among religion, politics, secularism and the regime. An irrational perception of threat was also created in this period. However, such a representation, so prevalent in the 1990s, began to change positively with the rise to power of the government of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) after 2002.

AK Party followed an active policy to improve relations with the Arab world after taking office in 2002. The Turkish parliament's decision to turn down the U.S.'s demand to allow American troops to use Turkish territory to invade Iraq on 1 March 2003 marked the first major turning point for significant change in Turkish-Arab relations. Many news reports were published on the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and media commentaries underlined the notion that Turks and Arabs were re-uniting on the basis of shared history and Islamic culture.

High level visits were exchanged and various economic and cultural cooperation agreements were signed during those visits. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the

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enhanced cooperation Syria, Iraq, Gulf countries and with Saudi Arabia. King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz visited Turkey twice on 8 August 2006 and 9 November 2007, the first of such visits in 40 years. Enhanced diplomatic relations led to greater cooperation in many other fields. While the trade volume between Turkey and the Arab countries increased, interactions between people also improved, resulting in a wider coverage of the Arab world in the Turkish media.

The Turkish media with some exceptions usually adopts a negative approach toward the treatment of Arab women who are represented as oppressed and suffering under male hegemony. This uniform perspective reduces all women into a single category and ignores the prominent female authors, artists and scientists of the Arab world. On narratives about the Arab women the Turkish media heavily relies heavily on books written by Arab writers and artists living in Europe and the U.S. who talk about the violence, oppression and terror imposed on Arab women.

Two major elements determine the Arab image in Turkish media. *First* is the dominant political discourse based on nation-state ideology, and popular perception of the Arabs. The popular discourse is not independent from the dominant political discourse which exercises othering of the Arabs. The media reflections on the Arabs place the Arabs and their states into certain categories, emphasizing stereotypes and ignoring differences. The Arabs are portrayed through certain clichés and nationalistic expressions. Generally the media discourse concentrates on the anti-democratic structure of Arab states, religious beliefs and traditions of Arab societies, and the status of Arab women. What is common in all these negative statements is the homogenous representation. *Second*, the media ignores this diversity and portrays all Arabs as a homogenous group, all behaving in the same pattern. One of the most important sources of the Arab image in Turkey emerges from media references to the political structures in the Arab world which are portrayed as repressive, ignorant and anti-democratic.

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7.   TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION ON ARABS

Until today, no large scale public survey on the perception of Arabs held by the Turkish people has been carried out in Turkey. In order to find out what Turks of today think about Arabs, Arab culture and societies, a nation-wide survey was conducted in 12 cities representing 12 regions in Turkey. As seen in Table.1 (see Appendix), a total number of 3,040 respondents aged 18 or over in rural and urban areas, participated in the survey which was carried out between January 3, 2008 and January 11, 2008.[1] The following section provides a summary of general trends among the Turkish people as far as perception of Arabs is concerned.

7.1. Turkish People's Views of Arabs and Other Nations

Survey results indicate that (Table.2) about one third of Turkish people (33,2%) have a positive attitude toward the Arabs, a larger portion (39,1%) on the other hand has a

1. The survey on "the Arab Image in Turkey" was conducted by *the Pollmark Research Company* (http://www. pollmark.com.tr).

negative attitude. 20,7% have neutral attitudes whereas 7,0% are undecided. There seems to be a linear relationship between the perceptions and the ages of the respondents. Old generations seem to have a more negative image of Arabs than younger ones (Table.3). Moreover, as the level of education (48,8%), professional and social status (56,1%) increase, the attitude toward the Arabs becomes more negative. Negative attitudes are higher among males (42,1%) than females (36,2 %).

Attitudes toward Arabs
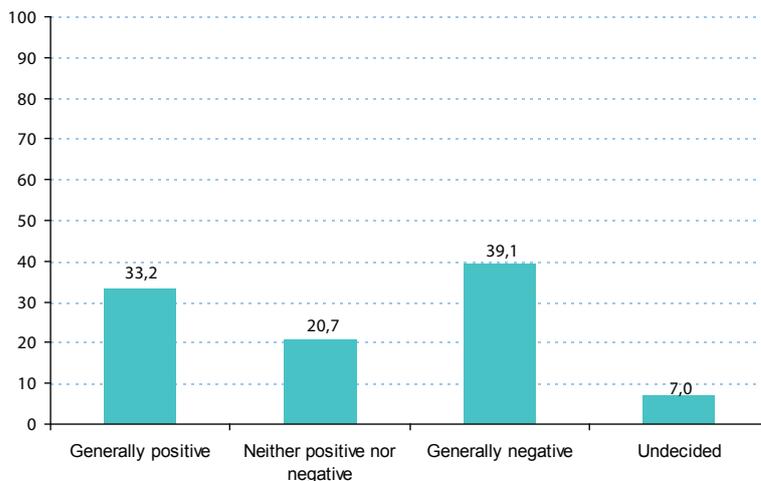
As far as breakdown of survey results on national basis are concerned, the following picture emerges: As Table.4 shows, Egypt enjoys the most positive images among Arab nations with 42,7%. Saudi Arabia comes second with 41,5% of the respondents. Then follow Palestine (38,2%), Yemen (37,9%), Syria (37,1%), Jordan (34,8%), Morocco (31,4%), Kuwait (29,9%), Oman (29,1%), UAE (28,9%), Lebanon (28,7%), Algeria (28,5%), Sudan (28,5%), Libya (28,0%), Somalia (27,7%), Bahrain (22,9), Qatar (22,6), Iraq (22,4%) and Mauritania (15,7%).

Views on if Arabs are better than Europeans or Americans
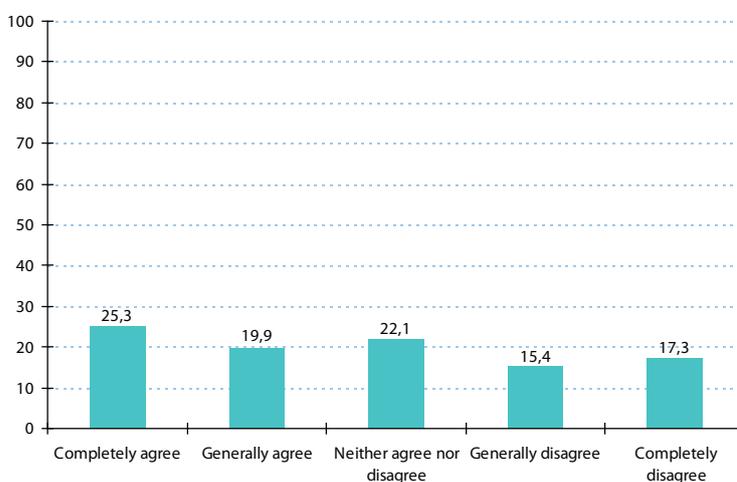
Turkish people believe that Arabs are better than Europeans or Americans as indicated by survey results. 43,4% of Turks have better views of Arabs when compared to their views on Europeans or Americans.

Turkish people believe that Arabs are better than Europeans or Americans as indicated by survey results. 43,4% of Turks have better views of Arabs when compared to their views on Europeans or Americans. As seen in Table.5, 23,5% "completely agree" with the statement "that Arabs are better than Europeans or Americans", whereas 19,9% "generally agree" with the same statement which means that only 37,5% of Turks either completely or generally disagree with the statement. In fact, the majority of people surveyed (64,8%) had a negative attitude toward the Americans. Only a small percentage (13,8%) have a positive view of Americans (Table. 6)

People in Turkey seem to be divided into two groups about the Europeans. As seen in Table.7, while one group (36,6%) has a positive attitude, the other group (35,0%) has negative attitudes toward the Europeans. The attitudes toward the Europeans changes depending on demographic and socio-economic variables. Among the young generation 40,0% have a positive attitude whereas among aged 61 and over, 30,6% have positive attitude towards the Europeans. There is also a gender difference in that 39,0 percent of males have a negative attitude whereas 31,1% of females have a negative attitude towards the Europeans.

The majority of the Turkish people (71,5%) have negative attitude towards the Jews. Table.8 indicates that only 8,6% of respondents have positive view of the Jews. This is a strong indication that the great majority of Turkish people do not approve Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. One can argue that a common history as well as shared religious beliefs and cultural values with Arabs influence Turks' views of Jews. Males (75,1%) seem to have more negative attitudes toward the Jews than women (67,9%). There is a similar picture as far as age is concerned: negative attitudes among young people (72,2%) is higher than among the old ones (68,7%). As the level of education increases, the percentage of people having negative attitude toward the Jews decreases to 62,4%.

Survey results demonstrate that (Table.9) while about one third of Turkish people (31,1%) have positive attitudes toward Iranians, about 40% carry negative attitudes. In comparison to female respondents (23,2%), positive attitudes toward Iranians among males is higher (39,0%). The reverse is also true that 44,0% of females have negative attitudes whereas 35,0% of males have negative attitudes toward Iranians. On the other hand, as the education level increases, the percentage of those expressing negative attitudes (43,4%) related to the Iranians increases.

Majority of people's attitude (73,9%) toward the Armenians is generally negative which is an expected result due to historical hostilities and public diplomacy by the Armenians accusing the Turks for genocide. Only 7,4% have a positive of Armenians (Table.10). And the attitudes do not change in terms of any of the demographic and socio-economic variables. Yet, people with low job status have a more negative perception of the Armenians than people with the better occupations.

7.2. Turkish People's Interest in Arabic Language and Culture

As far as various aspects of Arab culture are concerned, survey results indicate that there is little interest in arts and cultures of Arab countries. For example, as seen in Table Table.11, the percentage of people listening to Arabic music is about 29 per cent. 71,4% of

> The great majority of Turkish people do not approve Israeli policies towards the Palestinians.

the respondents states that they do not listen to Arabic music. As far as Arabic literature is concerned, the Turks have very little interest in Arabic novels, poetry or other literary genres. Only about 7 per cent is familiar with Arabic literature, whereas 92,6% do not read Arabic literature (Table.12). These findings suggest that there is a lack of interest in Arabic culture. This may be attributed to the fact there are only a few translations from Arabic to Turkish and a handful of Arabic albums; bestseller lists are always dominated either by Turkish writers/singers or western writers/singers. This indicates that more books should be translated to Turkish and more albums should be introduced to Turkish audience to compete with other products.

Reading the Arabic literature
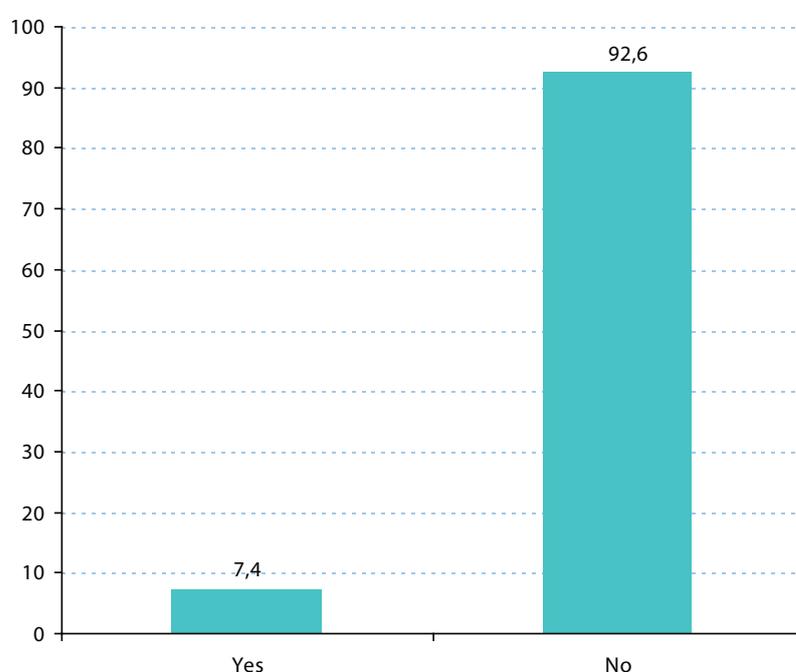
As far as various aspects of Arab culture are concerned, survey results indicate that there is little interest in arts and cultures of Arab countries.

As far as learning Arabic language is concerned, on the other hand, there is a promising picture. As indicated in Table.13, about half of the people in the survey (49,5%) would like to learn Arabic. Yet there are only few courses people can make use of. Cultural centers and department of Arabic language studies should be opened to address such an interest. It should be borne in mind that language is also a medium of cross-cultural exchanges and transmitter of cultural values. Given that 49,5% of respondents expressed interest in learning Arabic, it would be a strategic step to support opening new Arab cultural centers in several sites in Turkey.

A university in which the language of instruction is Arabic seems to be favored by the majority of Turks. Growing economic relations with the Arab world, rational approach to international relations and Turkey's new foreign policy of zero problems with neighboring counties and closer ties with the Muslim world are among the reasons that 52% of Turks support the view that Arabic can be the medium of instruction in a university in Turkey

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(Table.14). Given the fact there is a growing number of foundation universities in Turkey and high demand for university education with a waiting list of almost 1,5 million young people, the Arab investors can be encouraged to establish institutions of higher education in Turkey. A university, where Arabic is the medium of teaching, can enhance cultural, educational and economic relations significantly. Moreover, images can also be improved as cultural and face-to-face contacts increase.

Majority of Turkish people have a positive view on developing closer economic relations with the Arab world.

Interest in learning Arabic
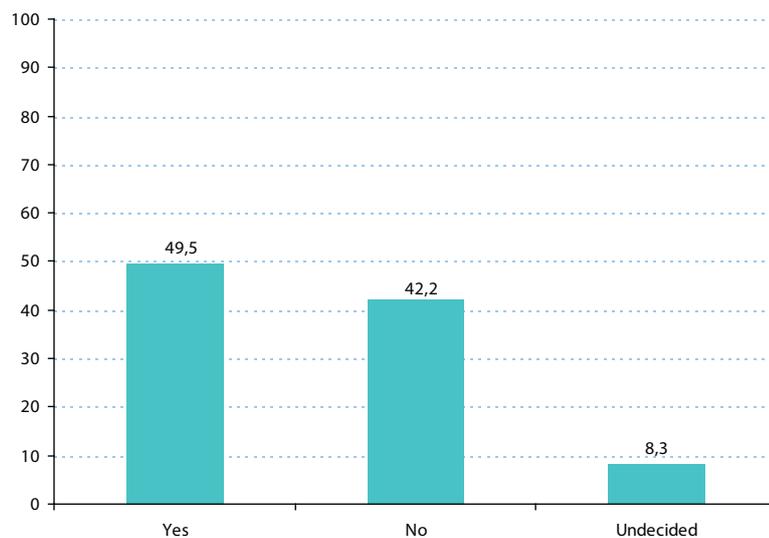
7.3. Turkish-Arab Economic Relations

The commercial ties between Turkey and the Arab countries that had gained momentum during Özal's premiership reached new heights under AK Party government after 2002. The Arabs who had previously spent dollars as tourists in Turkey now began to invest large amounts by establishing many companies. Between 1954 and 1999, the total number of companies of Middle Eastern origin established in Turkey amounted to only 842. After 1999, this number showed a tremendous annual increase: 65 companies were established in 2000, 74 in 2001, 112 in 2002, 270 in 2003, 380 in 2004, 415 in 2005 and 438 in 2006. In the first 4 months of 2007 alone, 159 new companies were established.

In tandem with the growing number of companies, Arab capital investment in Turkey began to grow significantly in the same period. In 2005, 1 billion 675 million dollars were invested by Turkey in the Gulf capital alone. In 2006, incoming Gulf capital reached 1 billion 780 million dollars. The upward trend in capital flow between Turkey and the Arab countries can also be seen in export and import volumes. 11.9 billion dollars of total Turkish exports of 86.1 billion dollars in 2007 were directed to Middle East countries. Gulf countries too are on the top of Turkey's export ranking. In the first nine months of 2007, Turkey exported 1.2 billion dollars worth to Saudi Arabia, and 2.4 billion dollars to the United Arab Emirates. In return, Turkey imported 983,000 dollars from Saudi Arabia and 1.9 billion dollars worth from the United Arab Emirates.

Views on Saudi investments in Turkey
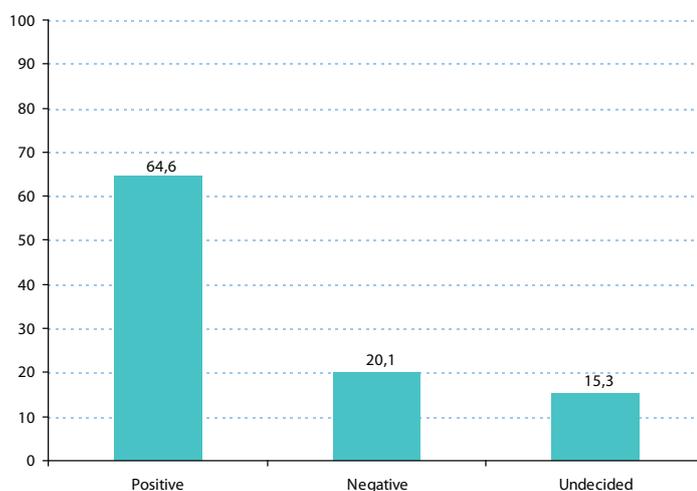
It seems that the majority of Turkish people have a positive view on developing closer economic relations with the Arab world. For example, as Table.15 shows, majority of Turks (64,6%) support closer economic relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Recent rise of Saudi Arabian and other capital and investment of Arab origin in Turkey is largely welcomed despite portrayals of Saudi capital as "green capital" implying that it is an "Islamic capital" with a hidden agenda of promoting Saudi-like regime in Turkey. There is also a huge (72,0 %) support for doing business in Saudi Arabia. Survey findings suggest that Turkish people have rational approach to economic relations with Saudi Arabia. The ideological view has a limited influence that only 20,1% of people have a negative view on Saudi capital and investment in Turkey (Table.16). These findings indicate that although there is mistrust as far as political matters are concerned derived from the past, there is a high level of trust in the field of economic relations. The Arab world and Turkey can use economic relations and incentives to eradicate mistrust and consolidate the trust between the two sides.

The Arab world and Turkey can use economic relations and incentives to eradicate mistrust and consolidate the trust between the two sides.

Views on doing business in Saudi Arabia
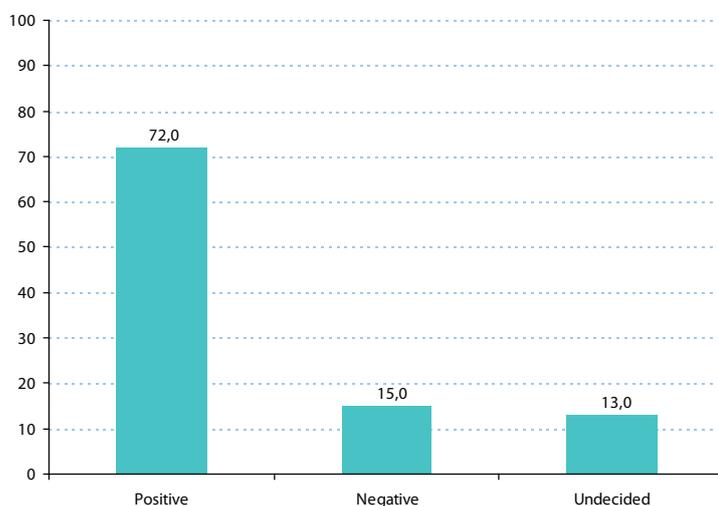
8.   CONCLUSIONS

Turkish-Arab relations have a long history. These relations are marked by political, cultural and economic exchanges between the two sides over the centuries. Turks and Arabs have many common interests that shape their current relations. The future of Turks and Arabs also lies largely in the same region which at the center of global interest.

Turkish-Arab relations are getting closer on the level of state policies and consolidated by cooperation agreements, strategic alliances, high level exchange of visits and expansion of trade volume. Although a promising future is ahead of Turkish-Arab relations, civil and human dimensions on the level of public perception on each side seem to be lagging behind political developments.

Today, public support is increasingly sought in foreign policies as it provides legitimacy and confidence in pursuing a certain direction. Mobilization of public support in Turkey and the Arab world will boost Turkish-Arab relations on the basis of mutual trust. In order to achieve this goal, both sides should work together to eliminate biased views, stereotypes and negative images held towards each other.

Although this Research Report focuses on Turkey, one can argue that, despite improved relations, there is still work to be done to eliminate prejudices, ill informed images and monolithic perceptions produced and propagated by nation state ideologies of the past. As far as the image of Arabs in Turkey is concerned, several sites emerge as more important sources of image making such as history textbooks, elite discourse, films and the press.

Turkish history textbooks in the formative period of Turkish Republic were written in the spirit of creating a homogenous nation state to inculcate a sense of belonging to a Turkish nation. Description of Arabs in textbooks gradually evolved to be positive especially after 1990s. However modern developments and achievements in the Arab world are largely ignored today. Discourse and rhetoric employed in history books and education should serve to de-construct ill informed images, prejudices and promote respect for diversity when building the "other." In this context, Turkey and Arab countries should establish history commissions to check textbooks if there are biases, prejudices and negative images toward each other. Recent improvements and modern historical developments on both sides should also be included in the curricula.

In the context of education, universities can also a play a constructive role in furthering cultural exchanges. Today, there are almost 150 universities in Turkey where students from Arab countries can study. Moreover, student and academic staff exchanges can take please between the two sides to increase human to human interactions.

Turkish cinema and TV soap operas have gained momentum in recent years with many new productions distributed regionally and internationally. Examination of Turkish films with Arab characters indicates that Arabs are negatively represented in general. In the light of these observations Turkish and Arab popular culture industry can bring their forces together to make films, documentaries and soap operas projecting the educational, scientific, cultural, civilizational, technological and environmental progress achieved by the Arab world. By utilizing these opportunities, the Arab image in Turkish society can be

Although a promising future is ahead of Turkish-Arab relations, civil and human dimensions on the level of public perception on each side seem to be lagging behind political developments.

greatly improved, and that in return, this improvement might contribute to eliminating prejudices and developing friendlier relations between the two sides.

Although the Turkish public is interested in Arabic language and culture, there seems to be insufficient source of information especially on current cultural and literary trends in the Arab world. Therefore more resources should be allocated to the translation of Arabic literary products into Turkish, to the opening of Arabic courses and cultural centers in major cities in Turkey for the purpose of supporting political rapprochement between the two sides with cultural and civilizational elements.

Civil society institutions, think-tanks and voluntary associations are important actors in modern societies to bring peoples of different cultures, political preferences and regions closer. It seems that there is not sufficient institutional relations between Turkish and Arabic civil sectors to work together to improve images mutually. In this context, civil sectors in Turkey and the Arab world should be mobilized to launch independent or common initiatives to eliminate biases and prejudices between the peoples of Turkey and the Arab world.

APPENDIX: TABLES

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Frequency	%
GENDER		
Female	1328	43,7
Male	1712	56,3
AGE		
Between 18-25	816	26,8
Between 26-35	923	30,4
Between 36-45	614	20,2
Between 46-60	522	17,2
61 and over	165	5,4
MARITAL STATUS		
Married	1952	64,2
Single	992	32,6
Divorced / Widowed	96	3,2
EDUCATION		
Unschooled	106	3,5
Primary school	853	28,1
Secondary school	453	14,9
High school	1154	38,0
University and higher	474	15,6
TOTAL	3040	100,0

Table 2. Attitudes toward Arabs
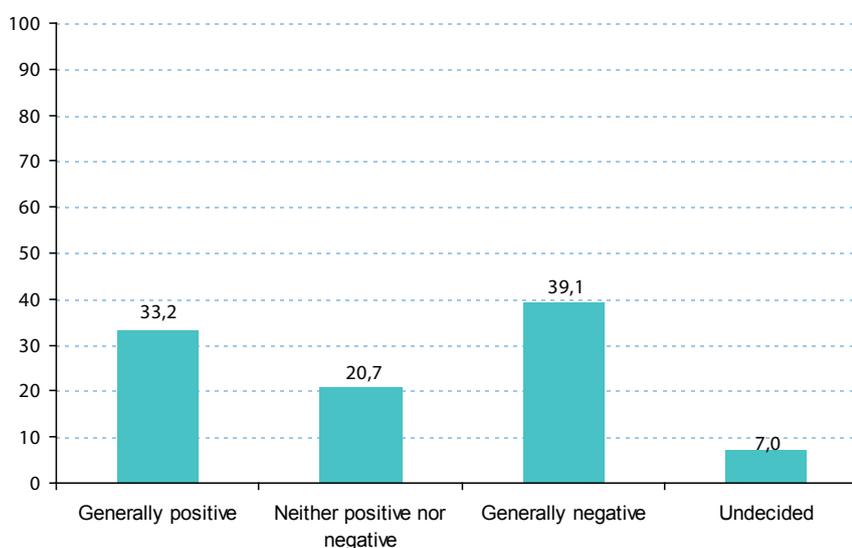
Table 3. Attitudes according to demographic and socio-economic variables

	Generally positive	Neither positive nor negative	Generally negative	Undecided	TOTAL
GENDER					
Female	32,8	22,4	36,2	8,7	100,0
Male	33,6	19,1	42,1	5,3	100,0
AGE					
Between 18-25	35,3	22,8	33,7	8,3	100,0
Between 26-35	33,8	20,4	39,4	6,4	100,0
Between 36-45	35,9	23,4	35,2	5,6	100,0
Between 46-60	30,6	20,8	42,8	5,8	100,0
61 and over	25,9	11,1	52,5	10,4	100,0
MARITAL STATUS					
Married	34,4	19,8	38,9	6,8	100,0
Single	32,6	22,6	37,5	7,3	100,0
Widowed / divorced	19,6	21,0	52,2	7,2	100,0
EDUCATION					
Low	36,8	19,3	36,3	7,7	100,0
Middle	32,7	21,9	39,0	6,4	100,0
High	22,5	22,8	48,8	5,9	100,0
PROFESSIONAL STATUS					
Low	34,4	21,5	36,1	8,0	100,0
Middle	33,5	20,0	40,4	6,1	100,0
High	15,4	22,0	56,1	6,5	100,0
MEAN	33,2	20,7	39,1	7,0	100,0

Table 4. Views on Arab countries

	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

Country	Generally positive	Neither positive nor negative	Generally negative	Undecided
Egypt	42,7	21,0	17,2	19,1
Saudi Arabia	41,5	19,1	24,1	15,3
Palestine	38,2	17,6	25,7	18,5
Yemen	37,9	19,3	16,9	25,9
Syria	37,1	19,7	25,3	17,9
Jordan	34,8	20,3	18,1	26,8
Tunis	34,0	21,2	18,6	26,2
Morocco	31,4	20,8	20,8	27,0
Kuwait	29,9	20,7	23,0	26,4
Oman	29,1	20,3	18,8	31,8

■ Generally positive ■ Neither positive nor negative ■ Generally negative ■ Undecided

Table 5. Views on if Arabs are better than Europeans or Americans

Category	Value
Completely agree	25,3
Generally agree	19,9
Neither agree nor disagree	22,1
Generally disagree	15,4
Completely disagree	17,3
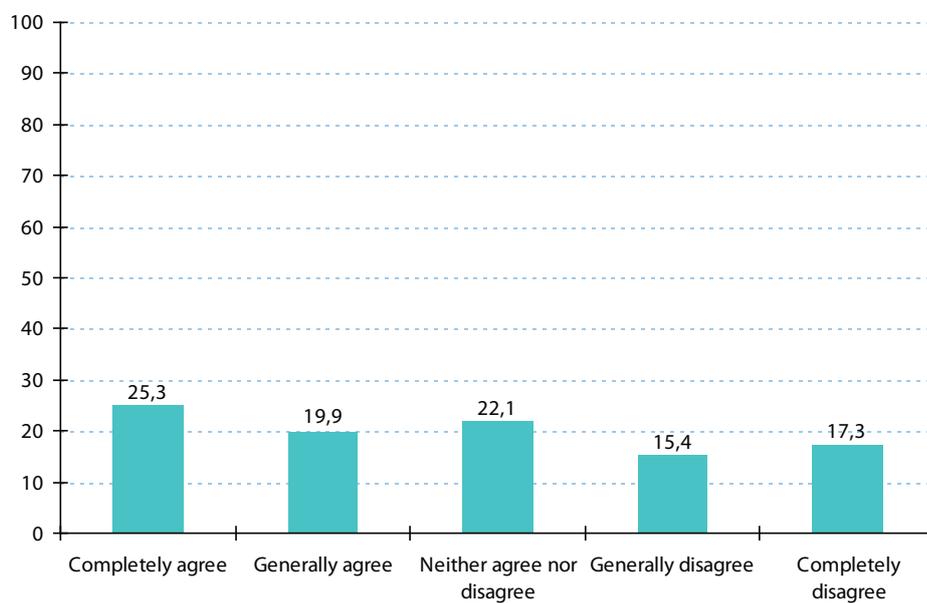
Table 6. Attitudes toward Americans

Category	Value
Generally positive	13,8
Neither positive nor negative	15,5
Generally negative	64,8
Undecided	5,9
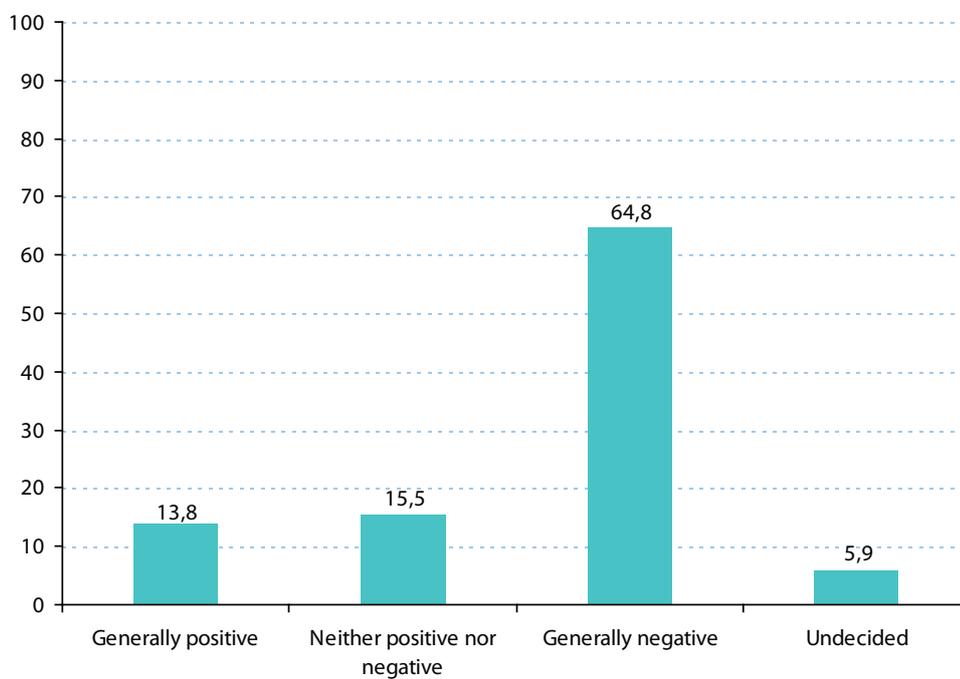
Table 7. Attitudes toward Europeans
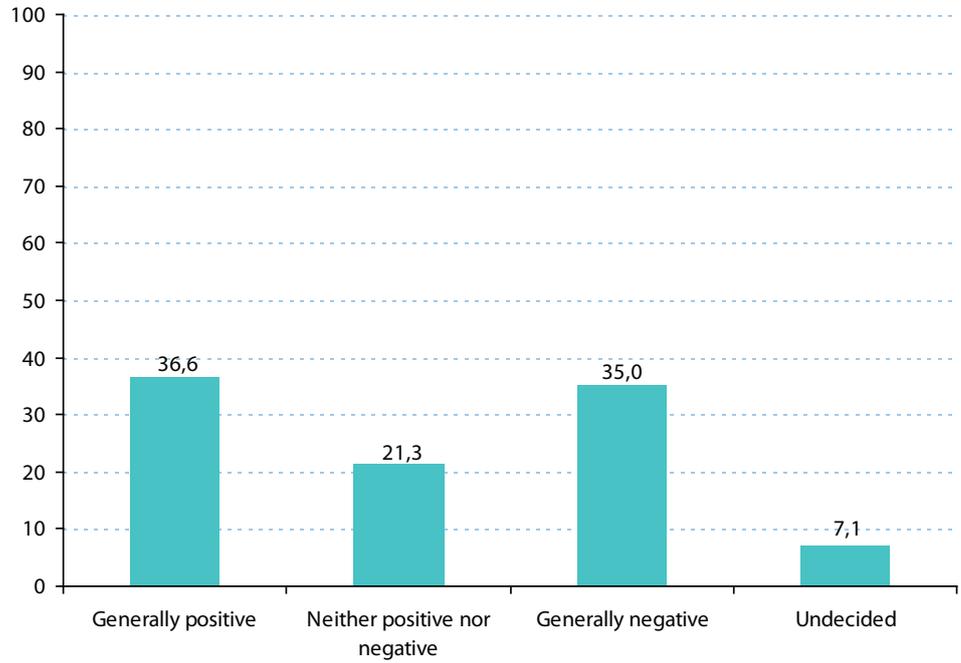
Table 8. Attitudes toward Jews
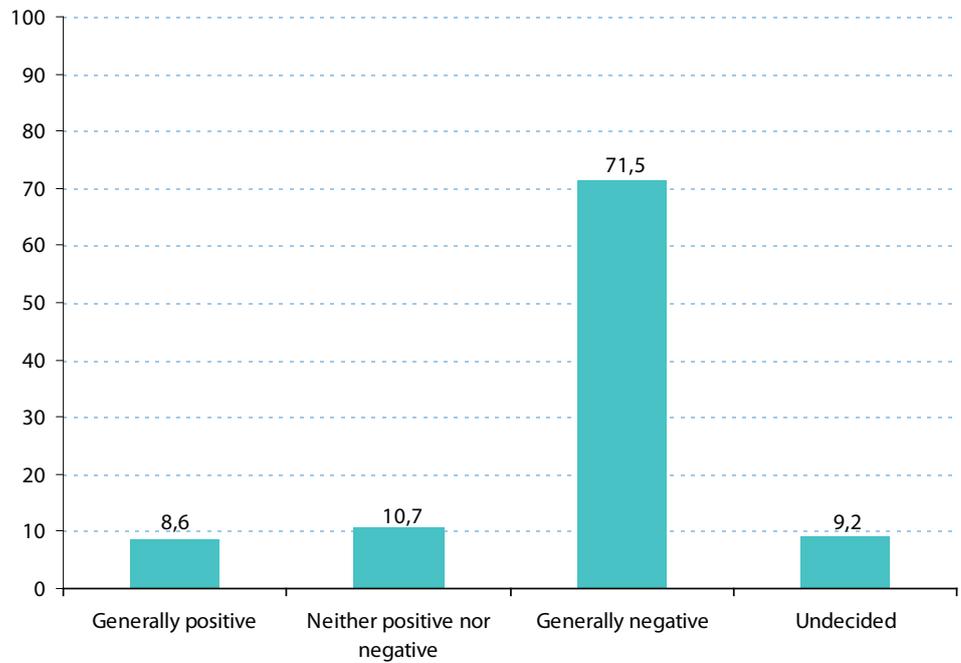
Table 9. Attitudes toward Iranians
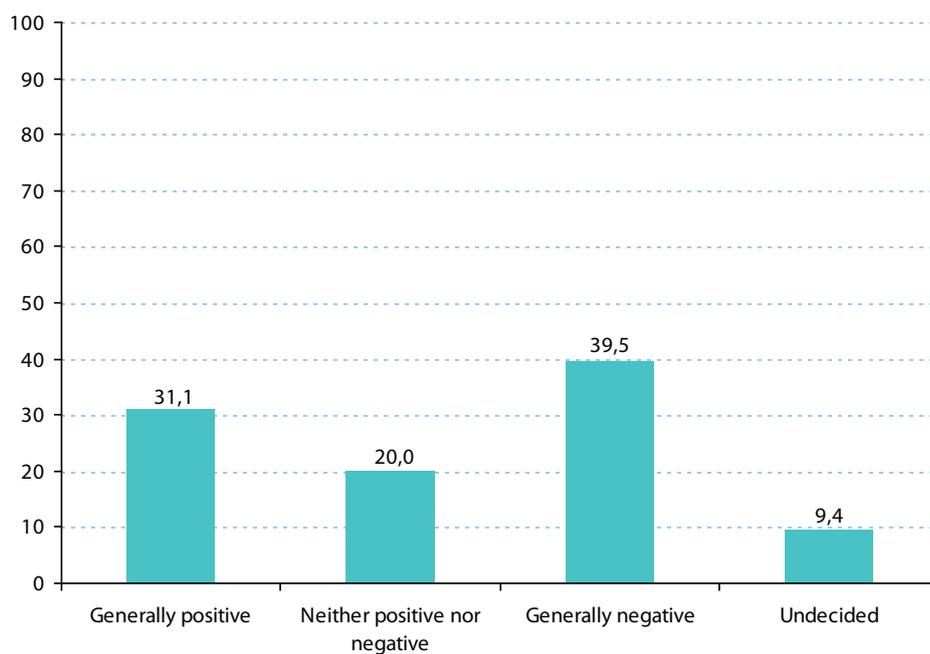
Table 10. Attitudes toward Armenians
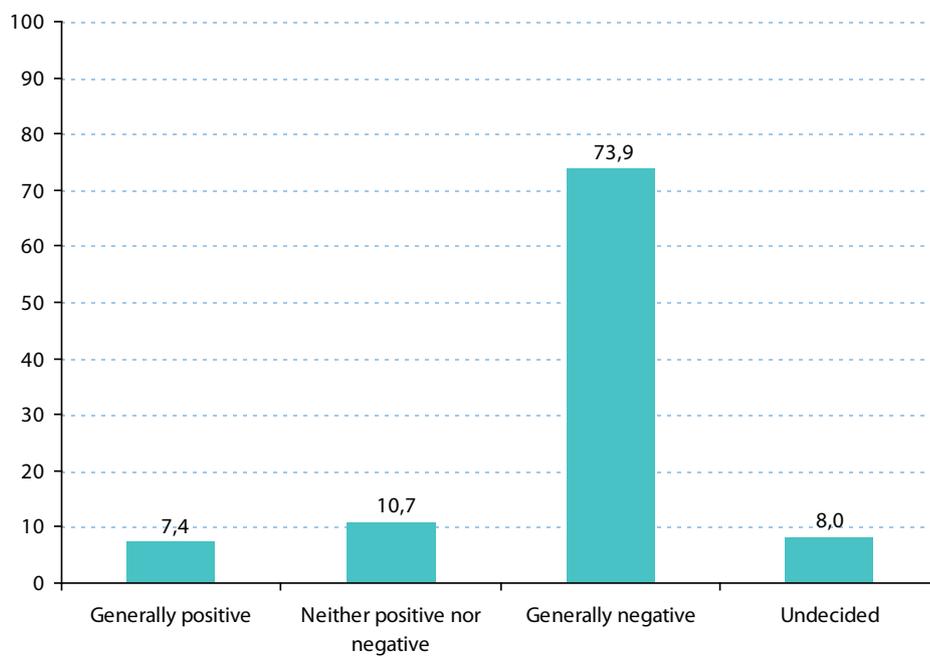
Table 11. Listening to Arabic music
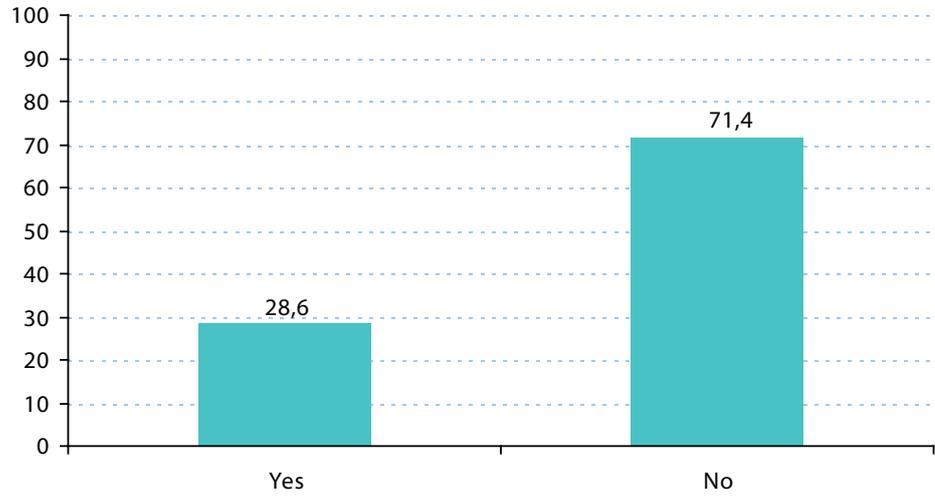
Table 12. Reading the Arabic literature
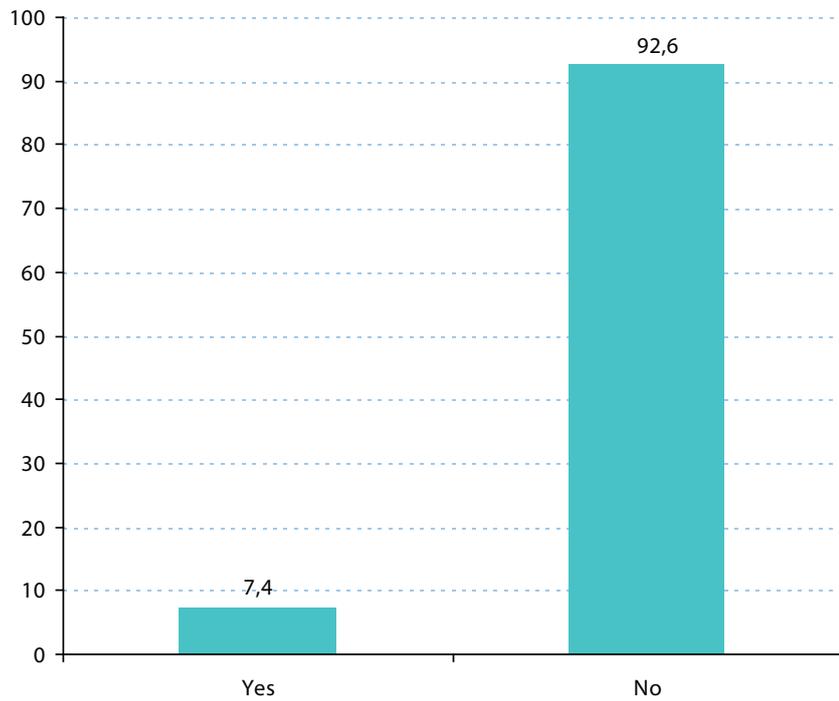
Table 13. Interest in learning Arabic
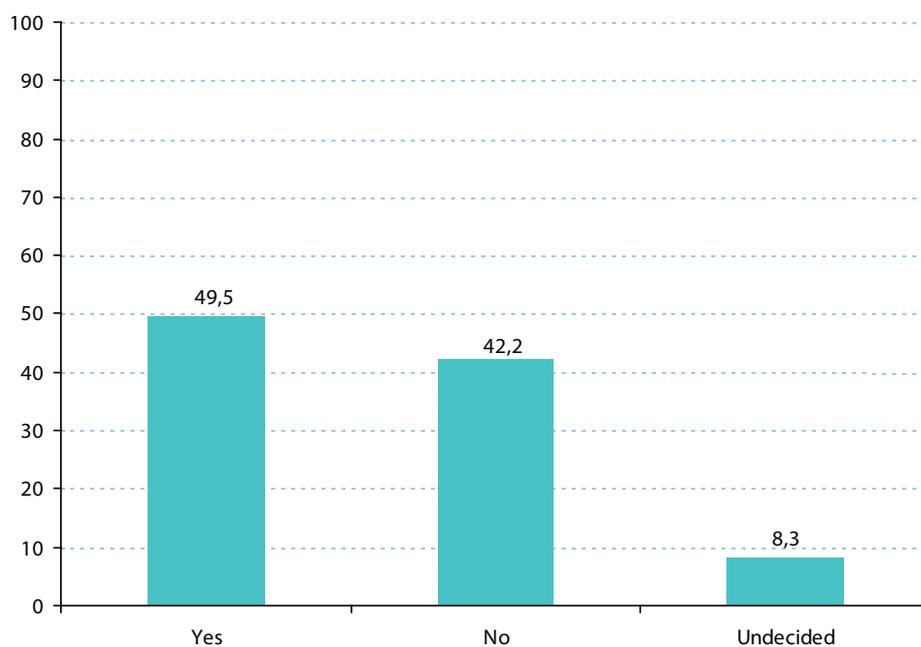
Table 14. Views on Arabic medium university in Turkey
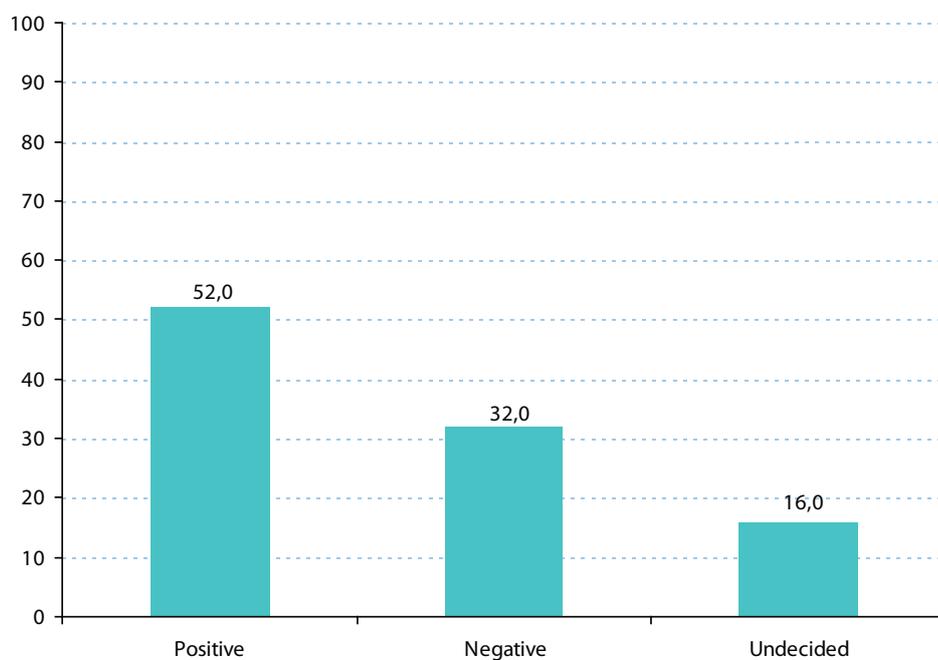
Table 15. Views on Saudi investments in Turkey
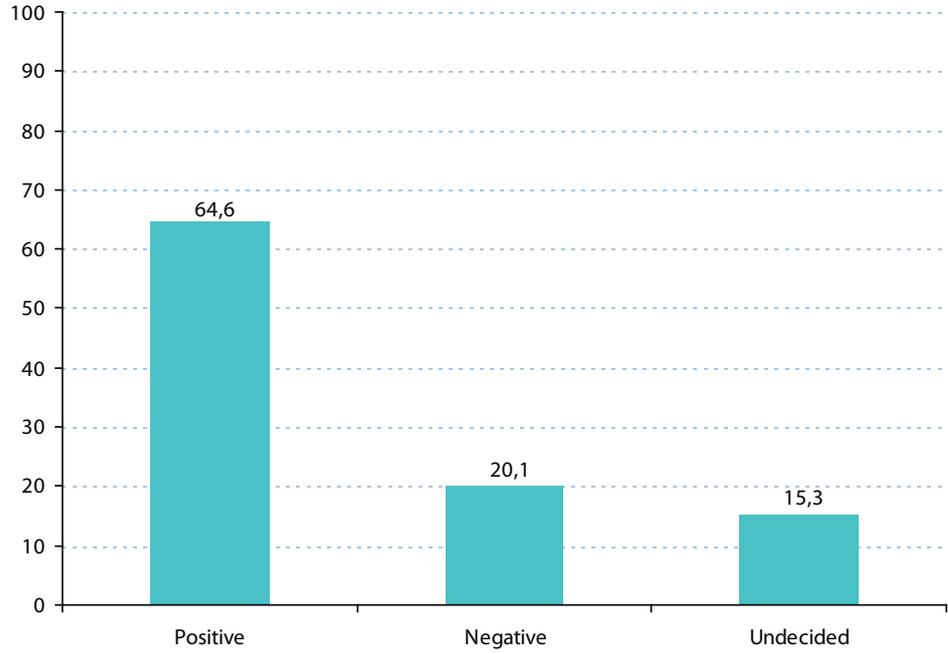
Table 16. Views on doing business in Saudi Arabia
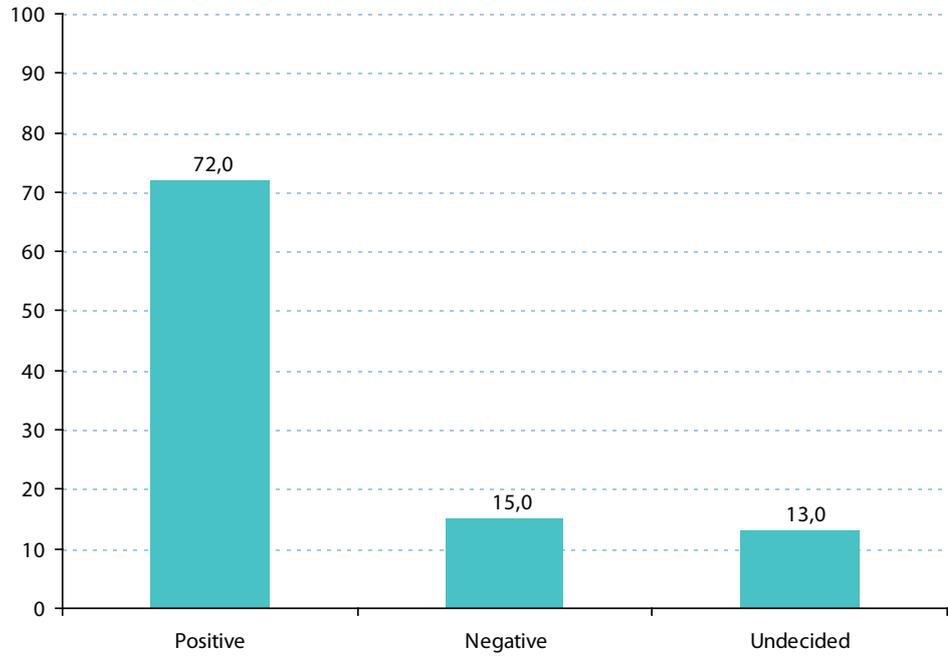
Table 17. Views on Bahrain

Table 18. Views on United Arab Emirates
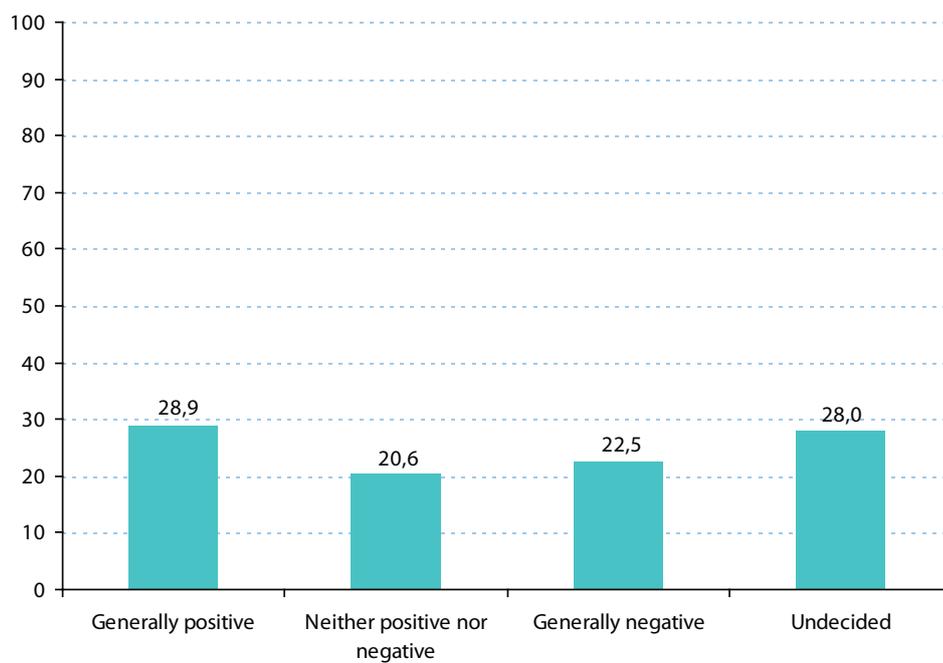
Table 19. Views on Algeria
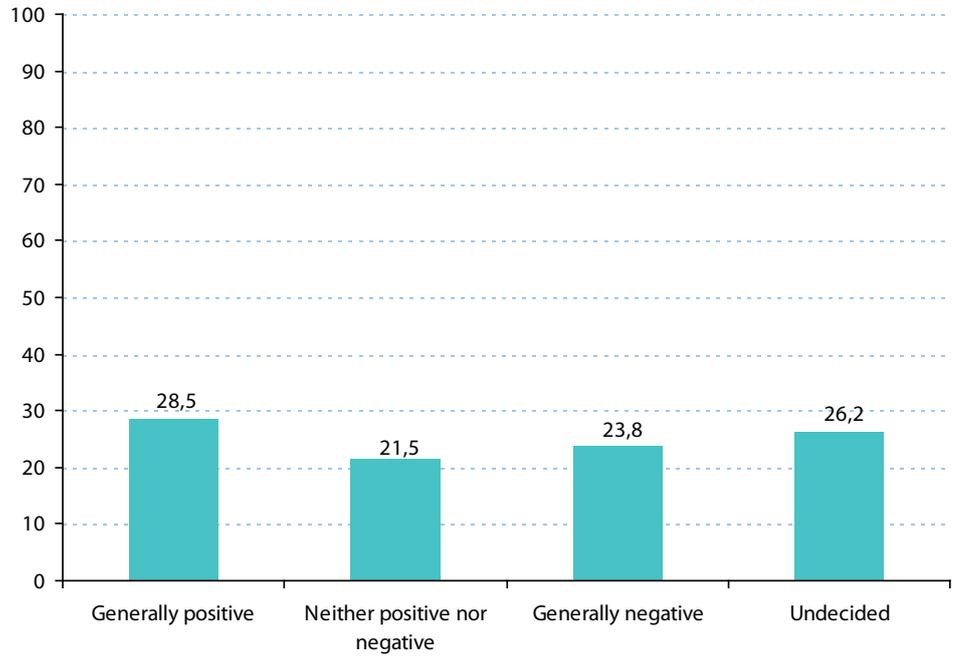
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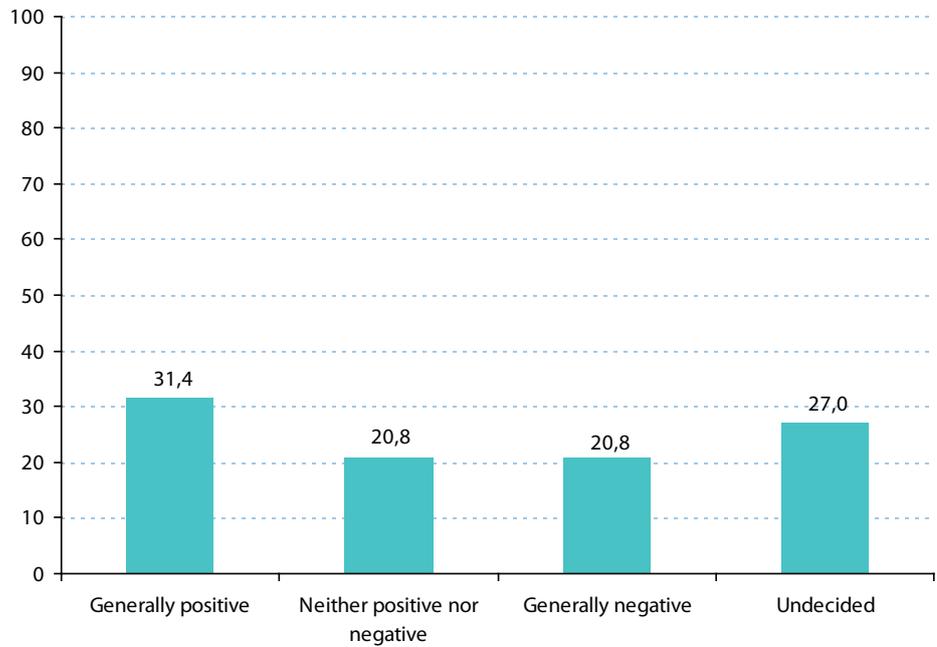
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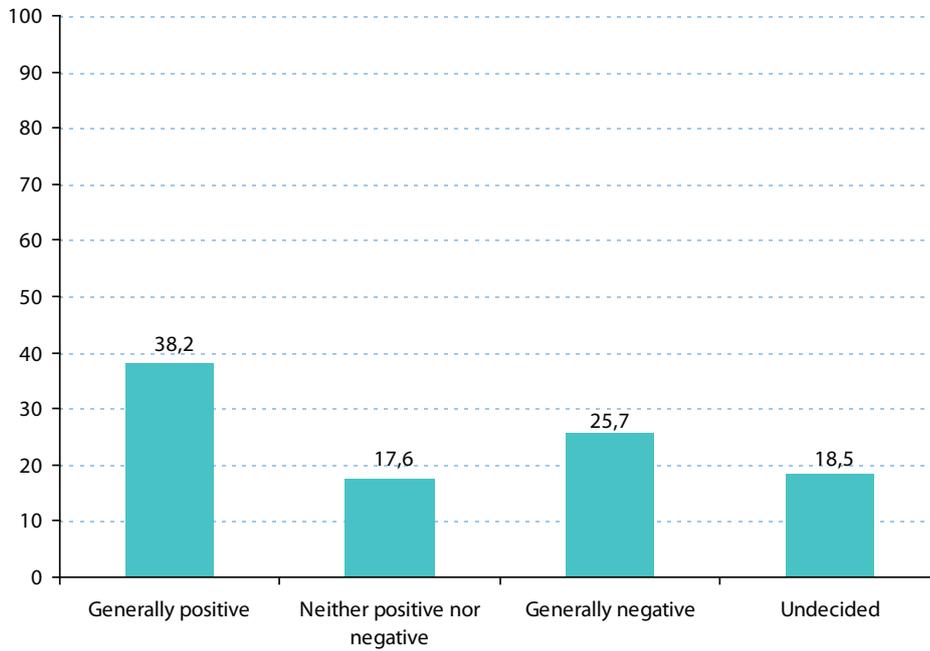
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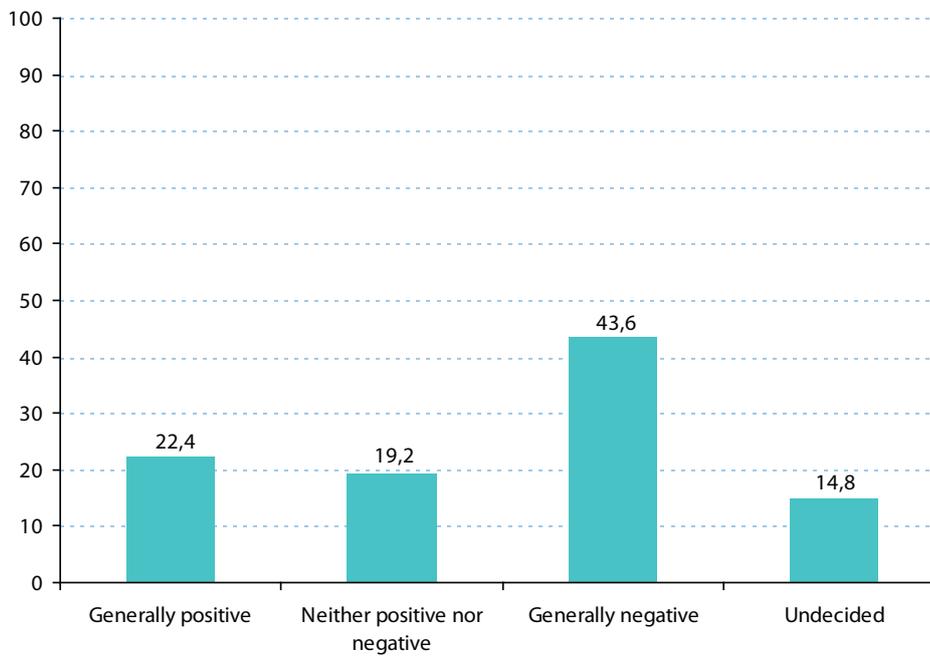
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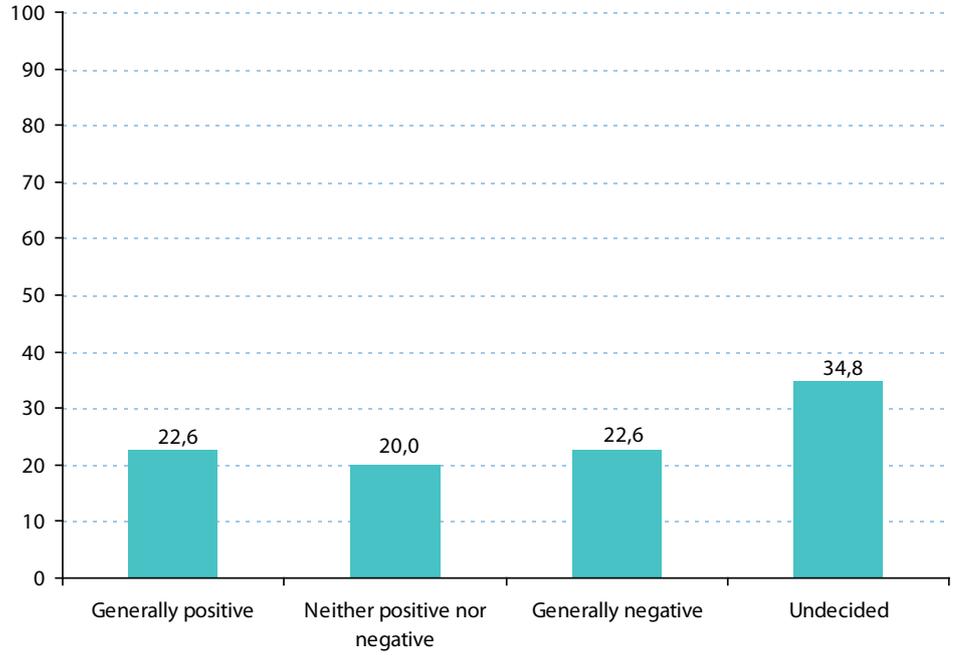
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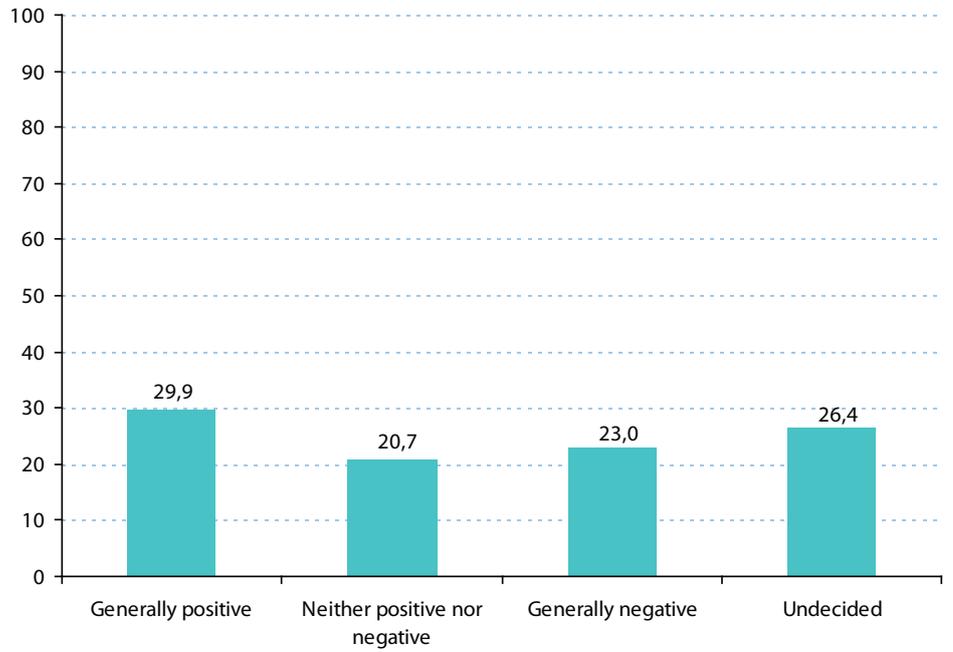
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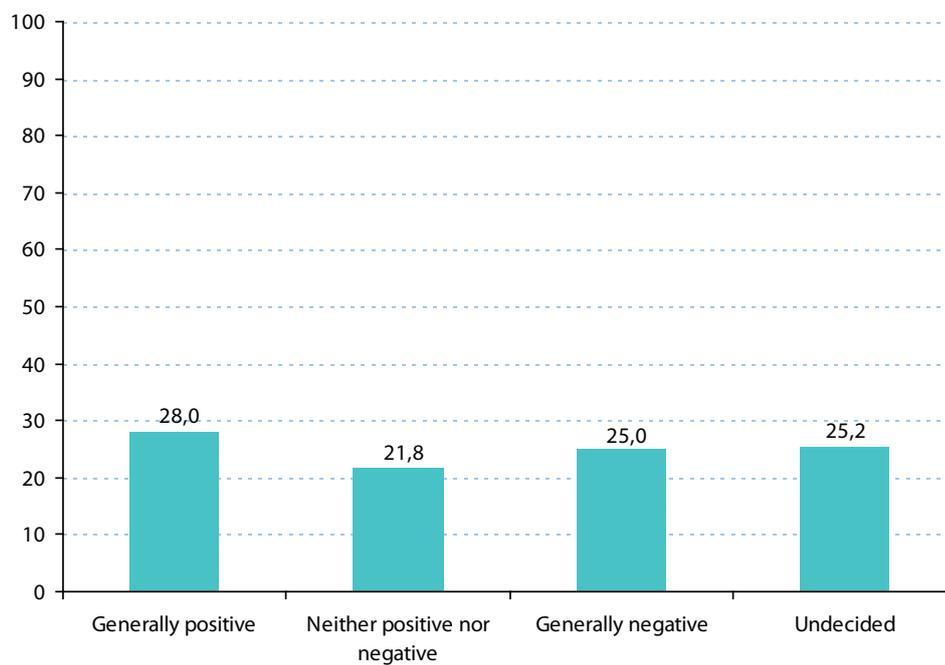
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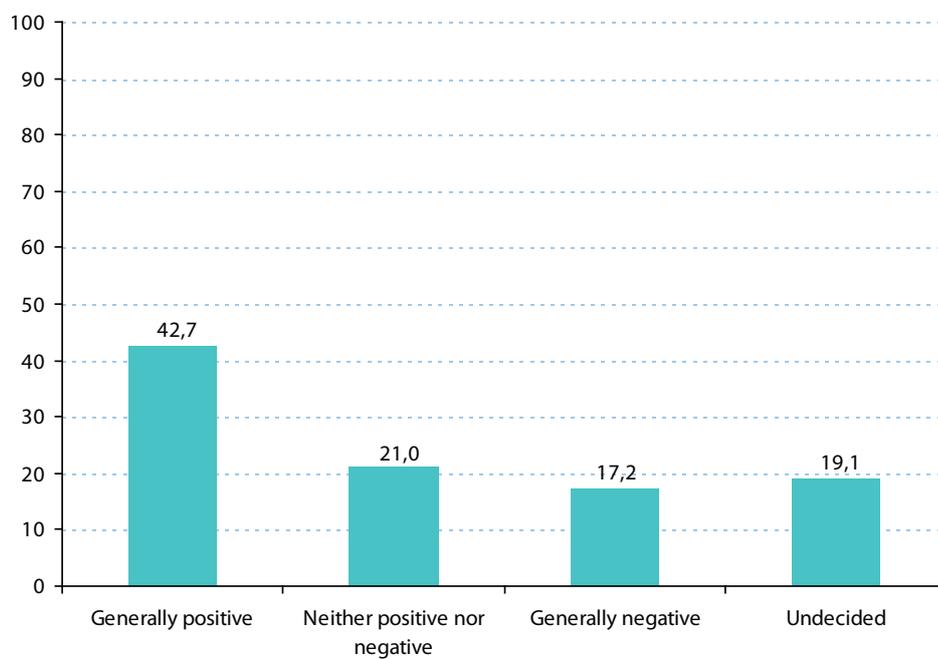
**Table 27. Views on Somalia**
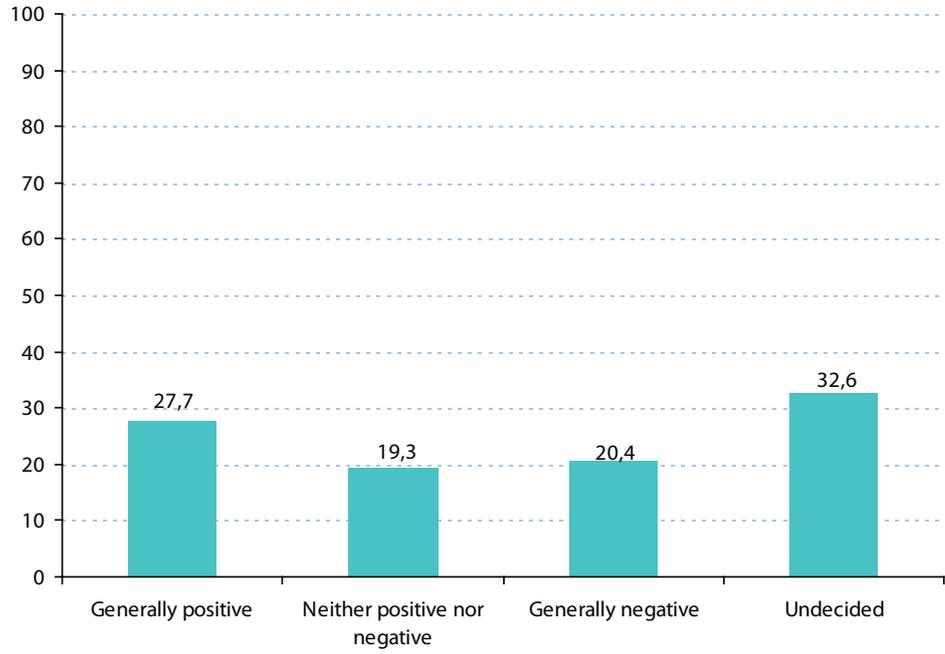

Table 28. Views on Sudan
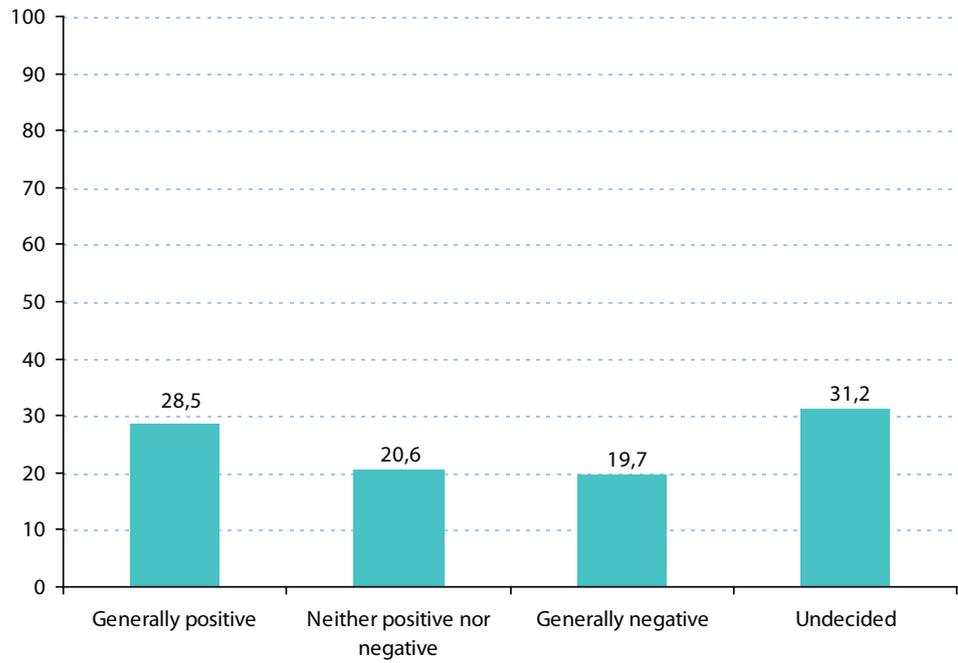
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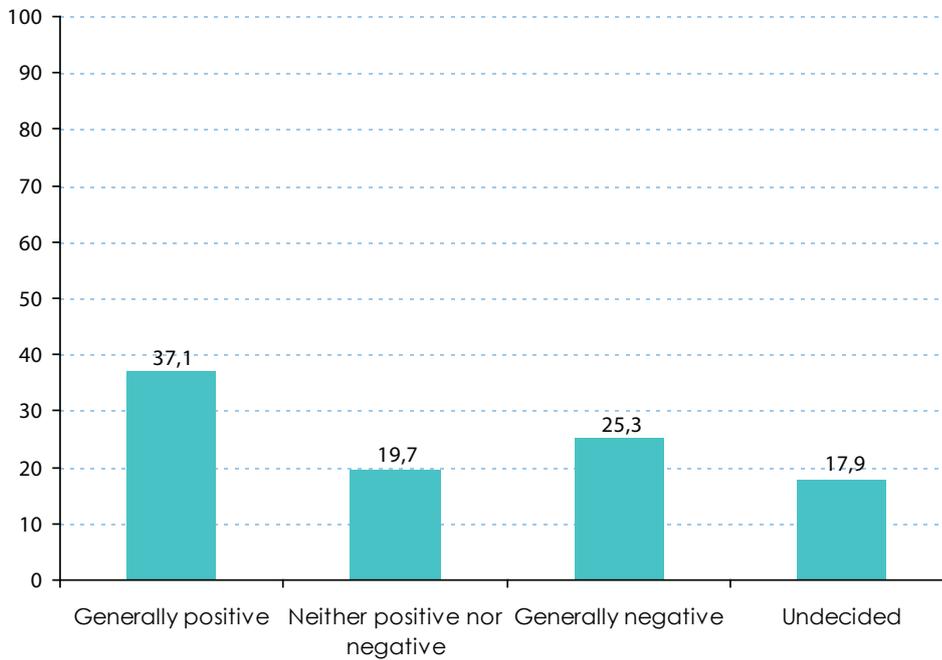
Table 30. Views on Saudi Arabia
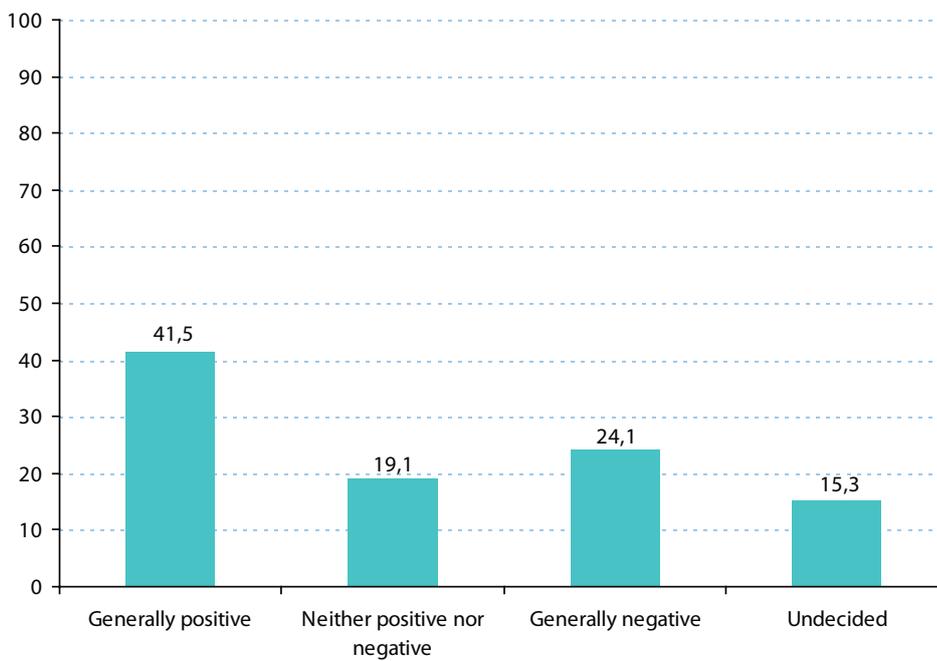
Table 31. Views on Tunis
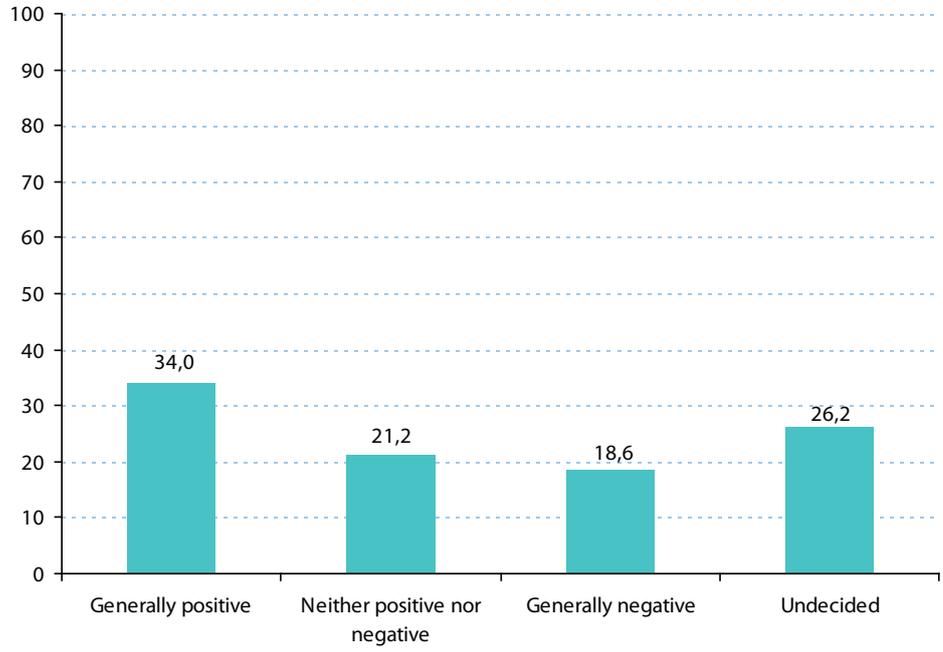
Table 32. Views on Oman
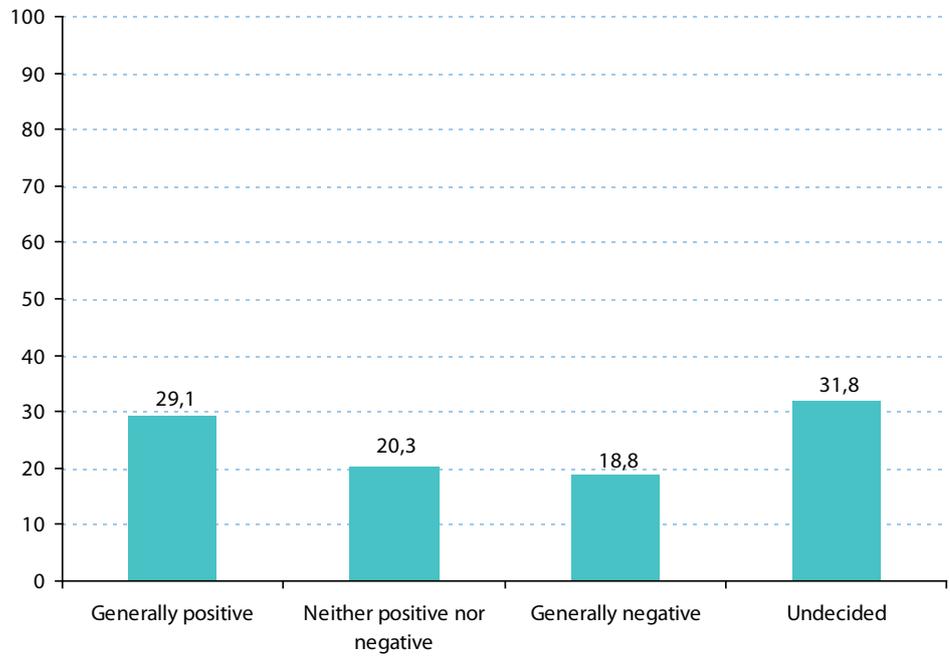
Table 33. Views on Jordan
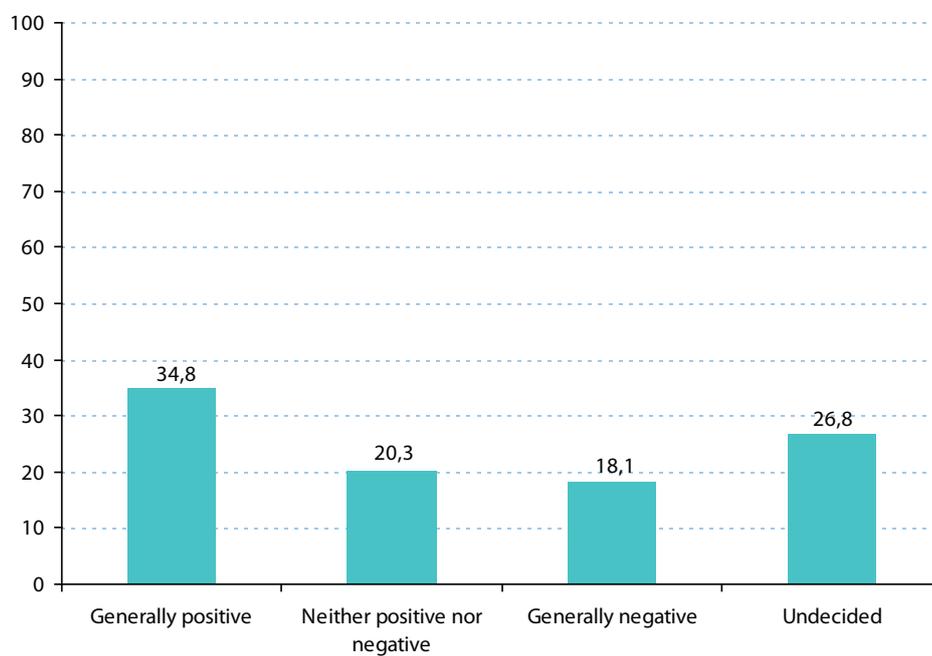
Table 34. Views on Yemen

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