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## America's election doesn't alter the equation in the Middle East

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Following Donald Trump's surprise victory over Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, Arabic language commentators have begun debating the president-elect's promises against his deeds.

Writing in the pan-Arab London-based daily Al Arab, the columnist Saif Al Shehhi said Donald Trump's victory was not improbable in light of America's need for a leader who would bring hope, improve standards of living and revamp the legislation – namely taxation and immigration laws – that no longer meets national ambitions.

"Add to this Mr Trump's successful business empire that responds to his country's dire need to boost its economy that has been sluggish like other economies," he noted.

Al Shehhi wondered how Donald Trump intends to deal with Saudi Arabia and Iran, which he considers as the cause of the disasters around the Arab world, and how he will handle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The needs of the world are no less important than the needs of American citizens for a policy different from the decades-long policy evident in the United States. President-elect Trump has to steer away from his business style in dealing with peace and development as there is no room for speculation with such issues. Rather, they require credibility with the countries that have already

lost, or are on the verge of losing, their trust in the American government. He also has to let go of the bigotry he used to sway white voters if he wishes to be the guardian of world democracy," he noted.

Al Shehhi saw a similarity between Donald Trump and former president Franklin Roosevelt, and wondered if the former will develop programmes, laws and departments that will boost his country's economy just as the latter had done.

"Franklin Roosevelt led the United States and its allies to victory, will history repeat itself with Trump?" he concluded.

The Lebanese columnist Nadim Koteich talked about the triumph of "Trumpism" in the pan-Arab London-based daily Asharq Al Awsat.

"In brief, it is the fruit of a discourse based on three excesses: an excess of protectionism at the level of the economy, and particularly trade; an excess of isolationism that shows great sensitivity towards linking America's direct interests to those of other countries; and an excess of nationalism that wants the United States to be at the heart of the administration's decision-making."

According to Koteich, Donald Trump has succeeded in managing all three excesses by adopting a three-pronged advertising strategy. It relies on simple facts in a complicated world. It uses aggressive rhetoric fuelled by voters' anger at the present situation more than by clear vision and a desire for specific alternatives, and revives the nostalgia for a near-utopian America born out of global, economic and demographic circumstances in lieu of the present situation.

Nonetheless, the writer continued, Mr Trump has posed serious questions about liberal democracy in the world and has shaken, in his own way, many postulates related to foreign relations that have been firmly established since the end of the cold war.

"He has also posed serious questions on extremism and its relation to us, our Islam, our books, our methods, our policies and our governments," he added.

"Even though he may not have the answers to all the problems he has exposed, just as he may not have a deep understanding of these problems that allows him to frame them, the president-elect possesses such vitality and surprise that will urge everyone to reconsider their constants, beliefs and questions. And as a businessman, he will be ready to conclude deals with whoever offers him interesting deals."

The writer concluded that "Donald Trump will not resolve our problems and he will not aggravate them either, but he will have room for us if we place at his table what attracts his attention."

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