



מרכז עזרי לחקר איראן והמפרץ הפרסי  
مركز عزري برای مطالعات ایران و خلیج پارس  
The Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies

# *The Persian Gulf Observer*

*Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf*



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**Statements and Dealings of American Presidential  
Candidates Clinton and Trump with Persian Gulf State**

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## Statements and Dealings of American Presidential Candidates Clinton and Trump with Persian Gulf States

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It is not possible to characterize the American Presidential elections as being solely an affair of, for and by American citizens. Every four years the world must face the results and consequences of who takes office in the White House. In the lead into this year's American Presidential elections in November both the Democratic and Republican Party candidates have expressed opinions about the Persian Gulf and have also had financial dealings with it. This paper will look at both candidates' statements and dealings and the views from Persian Gulf leaders and media.

The Republican Party's candidate to become the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the USA, Donald Trump, has been controversial in his statements that include calls to stop allowing foreign Muslims into the USA and to monitor or shut down mosques.<sup>1</sup> To him this may seem prudent election rhetoric given the small number of Muslim on the electoral registry and the larger number of those with feelings after 9/11. He has also made no distinction in verbally attacking both Saudi Arabia and Iran even threatening military force when elected. He has spoken against the former about not helping against Sunni militants, for the 9/11 attacks and for not taking in Syrian refugees;<sup>2</sup> and against the latter about the nuclear deal being a bad deal, and over confrontations with US Navy ships.<sup>3</sup> In the same voice he has also been pro-Israel over the Iran nuclear deal and Israel-Palestinian relations.<sup>4</sup>

However such political statements are dichotomous with his lifelong business interests and dealings. He has had an extensive record of successful financial dealings with an emphasis on the hotel, leisure and construction industry with many Persian Gulf States, except Iran.<sup>5</sup> These business deals are now suffering with large scale cancellations for products from his home and hotel brands. No comprehensive surveys of the area have been conducted though there is a view that Trump is racist and not suited for a political position such as presidency considering small polls in Egypt and Saudi Arabia<sup>6</sup>, editorials of newspapers (*Al Rai* Jordan, *Al Sharq Al Awsat* pan-Arab, *Al Nahar* Lebanon, *Akhbar al-Youm* Algeria, *Gulf News* (UAE))<sup>7</sup> and leaders' statements in Saudi Arabia<sup>8</sup> and Iran.<sup>9</sup>

The statements of the Democratic Party's candidate to become the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the USA, Hillary Clinton tend to be the opposite of those of Donald Trump for example "Muslims are peaceful and tolerant people and have nothing whatsoever to do with terrorism."<sup>10</sup> Such views relate solely to Muslims for as a former Secretary of State her actions can also be taken into consideration having expressed harsh words and in favouring sanctions against Iran.<sup>11</sup> She has also expressed disfavour and pursued action against Iranian proxies Hamas and Hizbollah, while in the same voice expressing support for Israel's security needs in this matter.<sup>12</sup>

While her stance against Iran is fierce this is not so with Saudi Arabia. Her financial dealings with Persian Gulf states especially Saudi Arabia and lesser so the UAE relate in main to The Clinton Foundation set up by her husband former President Bill Clinton and herself.<sup>13</sup> Saudi Arabia appears to have been a substantial donor to this foundation while rumours also proliferate that as much as 20% of her presidential election campaign is being funded by Saudi Arabia.<sup>14</sup>

This portrays closeness between the Clintons and the Saudi Royal Family not too dissimilar from that which might have existed between the Bush family and the Saudi Royal Family.<sup>15</sup>

That leads to a view that economics has supremacy over that of politics in world affairs confirmed by Editorials in *Al Watan* (Saudi Arabia) newspaper. Although not expressing a preference for either candidate they have placed the Republican Party above that of the Democrats because "the notion of democratic elections is based first and foremost on economic interests, not on the corridors of politics where the Democrats see in the principles of socialism a way to shrink the giants."<sup>16</sup>

Given such an appreciation then perhaps the bottom line is not hard to state that it is no secret that prior to the November elections leaders from both sides of the Persian Gulf, be they Sunni or Shia, are all rooting for Hillary Clinton to become the next American president. However the real answer lies in a reading of the history of electoral festivities. All of it is fiery speech for consumption, which soon melts and evaporates after the first month of the president entering the White House. So if Donald Trump were to become the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the USA and refrain from rhetoric after the first month; then his business acumen and the historical economic and world affairs policy of the Republican Party would place him in close ties with the Sunni world and maybe result in a serious conflict with Iran.

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