



By: The Editorial Board

Nikki Haley's endorsement – will the GOP's shift from Trump succeed?



The candidacy of Nikki Haley, the former governor of South Carolina, for the Republican presidential nomination received strong support when the influential network of the billionaire Charles Koch **decided to endorse her**. Will that be enough to bring about a shift in the race for the Republican nominee?

The Americans for Prosperity Action (AFP) decision was made carefully, based on extensive research, and definitely represents the position of the GOP establishment.

In some earlier cases, this would have meant an almost definite victory in the nomination race. However, in the battle with the still high approval rating of Donald Trump, Nikki Haley could only cautiously take the title of favourite.

“The moment we face requires a tested leader with the governing judgment and policy experience to pull our nation back from the brink. Nikki Haley is that leader”, was the position of Koch's network, announced by Emily Seidel, senior adviser to AFP.

Is the support timely?

Powerful allies of Nikki Haley's candidacy are confident that the support is not late but coming at the right time, as voters in the 3 early voting states are just starting to form their final positions.

There are less than 2 months left until the declaration of the Republican candidates in the 3 early states - Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina.

During that period, the US ambassador to the UN during Donald Trump's term will have the support of the AFP and millions of grassroots activists who will increase Mrs Haley's chances while meeting voters face-to-face.

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The support of the extensive network stems from the belief that the US needs a new era of leadership without Donald Trump. They had their chance, and as they reasoned, “they can't fix what's broken”.

Based on estimates, her candidacy has the best chance of defeating Donald Trump among all her rivals in the GOP.

A shift away from populism

Nikki Haley's political profile reflects the expectation of the GOP establishment that a shift away from the populist and confrontational image that Trump built 7 years ago and continues to maintain today is necessary.

Her political qualities meet such expectations. She has significant experience in leading the administration, as the former governor of South Carolina, a foreign policy experience as an ambassador to the UN, and a member of the closest foreign policy team at The White House.

Additionally, she is a woman and a member of a minority community, which increases the playing field for votes, perhaps even outside the GOP. A significant factor is that she is 25-30 years younger than the 2 previous candidates in the presidential race, so her possible election represents the leadership of a new generation.

“Our internal polling consistently shows that Nikki Haley is by far the strongest candidate Republicans could put up against Joe Biden in a general election - winning every key battleground state and up nationally by nearly 10 points. While our polling shows Donald Trump loses to Joe Biden, Nikki Haley outperforms Trump by 8 to 14 points in the key presidential battleground states”, AFP explained.

The news that the AFP network will support their rival triggered nervousness and anger among Trump's staff. The furious reaction was sparked, in part, by Mrs Haley's personality,

even though they gave her an ugly nickname of their own making.



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The nervousness in Trump's headquarters stems from the fact that the entire populist concept of his policy is under threat and rejected as presenting a danger for the GOP, for the US, and even globally.

The anger in the Trump campaign also stems from the fact that donors have perceived the legal proceedings he has been facing as one of his biggest burdens, even though they have not explicitly communicated this.

In contrast to them, the former US president finds it difficult to accept criticism of his strategy being an unacceptable political risk and views the procedures that led to his accusations as his principal tool for dealing with the establishment.

Attracting moderate voters

The GOP finds the moderation it lost in the Trump era in Nikki Haley. It has already cost them one presidential race and the reputation of causing anti-constitutional action due to the intrusion of hooligans into the US Congress on January 6, 2021.

Haley's candidacy could attract moderate and undecided voters, which Trump, with his limited reservoir of conservative and populist votes, could not.

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The biggest handicap of the candidacy of the former governor of South Carolina is the inability to separate a large part of Trump's voting body, which still convincingly dominates the GOP.

Nikki Haley first announced the possibility of entering the race for the presidential nomination one year ago during a speech at the Republican Jewish Coalition Annual Leadership Meeting.

"When people underestimate me, it's always fun. But I've never lost an election. And I'm not going to start now", **she said** at a meeting in Las Vegas at the time.

A year later, no one underestimates her anymore after AFP decided to stand behind her in the race for the Republican presidential nomination. Only Donald Trump still underestimates her, but perhaps that is a sign of his anxiety.