



By: *The Editorial Board*

Nikki Haley 2028 (2)



Nikki Haley's **statement** that she will vote for Donald Trump in November is her political investment in the 2028 elections, in which she believes she has a new chance of becoming the first female US president.

This investment is risky and will bring almost nothing but losses in the early days. However, there were no plans to profit in the first few days, not even in the following few years. The target is 2028.

Many angry words have been directed at Trump's most serious contender for the Republican presidential nomination since she shockingly announced that she would still vote for him.

"Disgrace", "spineless coward", and "she sold her soul to a clown" are the words that Trump's former close associate and later most convincing opponent has to endure these days if she follows the reactions on social media at all.

Her **withdrawal** from the nomination race in March, after her defeat on Super Tuesday, was honourable and left a significant legacy that she can count on for the next four years, with 2028 as her target.

Her resistance to Trump, and not the non-confrontational pandering of other candidates during the primaries, seemed to be her biggest asset for the next race in four years.

But her plan has clearly changed in the last three months, which she has spent quietly and off the campaign trail.

Political capital

The political capital left behind by Nikki Haley during the primaries within the Republican Party turned out to be not so small.

In the primaries following her withdrawal, she **averaged** more than 15% of the vote. In Indiana, she received more than 21% in early May, and a little earlier in Pennsylvania and Arizona, she received about 17% each.

Of course, these were protest votes from Republicans demonstrating their rejection of Trump's new presidential candidacy on their behalf. However, these were also the votes in favour of Nikki Haley if she had stayed in the race, or at least a smaller proportion of them.

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Joe Biden's campaign has been actively engaging with groups of Haley's supporters due to their strong animosity towards Trump, seeing them as a stable and non-negligible resource that they could transfer to the opposing Democratic camp.

Nikki Haley had (or still has) a very broad spectrum of supporters, ranging from those close to the left to Republicans in the suburbs of big cities to conservatives.

What could be the reasons behind Nikki Haley's decision in the last three months to change the strategy for her political future and make a 180-degree turn?

Time factor

One of them is undoubtedly the amount of time during which Haley would have fallen out of the political mainstream if she had stuck to her initial position of not supporting Trump's candidacy.

One of the important advantages she has highlighted during the fight for the Republican nomination is her and Trump's age.

During the campaign, she proposed a mental competency test for politicians over 75, primarily to disqualify not only Trump but also Joe Biden.

But even for Nikki Haley's relatively young political age, four years outside the main arena pose a risk to her ambitions of re-entering the

race for the presidential nomination in 2028.

In her decision to support Trump, the time factor is directly connected with her ambitions to secure a high position in the administration if he wins.



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Despite the harsh words they exchanged during the campaign, Trump would be wise to offer Nikki Haley a senior post in his administration. She could serve as his running mate or, eventually, secretary of state.

Should he decide to do so, Trump himself would be trampling on his earlier statement when he said he did not need the votes of Nikki Haley's supporters or last week's assurance that Mrs Haley's candidacy for vice president "was not under consideration." But it would not be a problem for him; it would be a pragmatic move.

"Trump is a demagogue. But if Nikki Haley were on the ticket? I'd have to strongly consider voting for Mr Trump," **said one** Republican voter who recently voted for the "ghost" of Nikki Haley in Pennsylvania.

The strength of Nikki Haley

The number of such voters among Republicans is a tall order for Trump's staff, because whether he will win in November may depend directly on that margin of wavering voters and supporters of Nikki Haley.

If he decides to invite Nikki Haley to work with him despite the conflicts so far, he can only expect to have a greater impact if he announces this move earlier, before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee from July 15–18.

It could serve as a means to alleviate Nikki Haley's supporters' decline, which is undoubtedly occurring because of their shock after she embraced Trump's candidacy.

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Nikki Haley took a risky step and disappointed her many supporters when she announced that she would vote in favour of her latest opponent. However, it could be acceptable even if Trump loses the election in November.

In that case, Haley will have plenty of time to rebuild her reputation with GOP voters because her announcement that she would vote for Trump was not an expression of enthusiasm but still full of reservations.

"I will be voting for Trump. Having said that, I stand by what I said in my suspension speech", Ms Haley said on Wednesday, only emphasising her plan to keep supporters together even in the event of Trump's defeat in November.

Such an outcome and the final exit of Donald Trump from the stage would leave Mrs Haley with an open field for a new candidacy, although this time with a somewhat tarnished reputation due to her breaking her word.

However, it is possible that she garnered additional votes from the steadfast Trump supporters, demonstrating her willingness to follow the majority's decision within the GOP, even if they had previously defeated her.