Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Is Kamala Harris' age enough for her victory over Trump?

Donald Trump, literally overnight, has lost an important trump card in the race for a new presidential mandate. Joe Biden's withdrawal from the campaign on Sunday night shattered all strategies in Trump's headquarters regarding the current president's age and his (in)ability to lead the country for another four years. The Trump campaign held high expectations for these bold strategies.

In an attempt to counter Trump in the race for the Republican nomination, Nikki Haley brought up Trump's age (78) and his unfitness for office.

She did this during the to-be-or-not-to-be stage of the primaries, when it was clear that the only way to make up the huge deficit was to take off the gloves, confront Trump openly, and use the heaviest weapon she had shied away from until then—Trump's years.

After Super Tuesday in March, it was too late for that manoeuvre, even though its logic was sound. "The first party to retire its 80-year-old candidate is going to be the party that wins this election," said Ms Haley at the end of her campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.

Will her assessment prove prophetic in a completely different constellation—Trump and Kamala Harris? It is possible, but only if the Republican headquarters immediately abandons the "Sleepy Joe" strategies and slogans, regardless of the fact that their opponent from yesterday is still in the White House.

Exploitation of assassination attempt in Pennsylvania

However, Republicans' inevitable abandonment of ability- and age-related strategies also implies relinquishing some of Trump's advantages that were indirectly associated with this aspect of the plan.

One of them had a direct connection with the assassination attempt on Trump and focused on his swift and aggressive response shortly after the shooting, when he shouted "fight, fight, fight" with his fist held high, demonstrating to his supporters that he was still alive and ready to fight.

Exploiting epic photos with this scene and creating a narrative around Trump's indestructibility became the mainstream of his campaign; of course, no one in the world would do otherwise, just over 100 days before the election.

> The exploitation of the assassination attempt on Trump and his lightning-fast return to the election campaign were calculated as proof of his biological superiority over Joe Biden

Steve Hilton, adviser to former UK PM David Cameron, called all subsequent comments from the opposing camp about Trump's late age and his questionable ability to run for office "ludicrous."

"Yesterday, we saw President Trump spend two hours at a rally, a week after he's been shot, standing up, entertaining the crowd making arguments," said Mr Hilton for Fox News on Sunday.

However, it cannot be overlooked that the exploitation of the assassination attempt on Trump in Pennsylvania and his lightning-fast return to the election campaign were calculated precisely as proof of his biological superiority over Joe Biden.

Useless resource

After the assassination attempt, the question of Biden's ability to perform presidential duties remained a major issue in Trump's election campaign. The drama in Butler, Pennsylvania, provided it with fresh impetus.

However, this resource has remained useless

since Biden's withdrawal. It also became a counter-weapon for the Democrats and their likely presidential candidate, Kamala Harris.

> 58% of Americans believe both Biden and Trump are too old for another term as president

A recent ABC News/Washington Post/Ipsos poll found that two-thirds of Americans think Biden should withdraw from the race. Since this happened in the interim, the same poll presents a significant, if secondary, finding: 58% of Americans believe both Biden and Trump are "too old for another term as president."

The burden of this very convincing warning is now borne only by Trump and no longer by Biden, who has left the candidacy to Mrs Harris, who is 18 years younger than the Republican candidate.

Trump's headquarters are already demonstrating a shift, as they are now focusing on attacking Mrs Harris, particularly her political legacy on migration, despite the economy being the primary issue for Republican voters.

However, this will not prevent Mrs Harris, an almost certain Democratic presidential nominee, from keeping yesterday's Republican trump card as her own.

Both sides in a race against time

How much success she will have with this depends largely on how much time the Democratic camp has to reorganise its campaign. According to political scientist Ian Bremmer, the remaining 100 days until elections are "an eternity in a campaign, and longer than most Democratic elections run."

However, the Democrats and Kamala Harris will only have time if Joe Biden's withdrawal and Kamala Harris's entry into the race are not represented as a significant shift or discontinuity.

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In the short term, the only successful direction for Ms Harris' campaign is the framework—the continuity of Biden's campaign minus his age and minus his questionable ability to perform presidential duties.

Regardless of the fact that Biden's constant lag behind Trump is due to other important factors besides age, it was the Republicans who pushed the issue of ability to hold the presidency as the most important issue.

In this respect, the remaining campaign time poses a significant challenge for Trump's candidacy, particularly in terms of its ability to swiftly remove the issue of age and suitability for the presidency from the mainstream.