

Strong and Proud, Not Weak and Woke: Enemies and Issues in Nikki Haley's 2024 Presidential Campaign Rhetoric

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In February 2023, Nikki Haley, former governor of South Carolina and former Trump ambassador to the United Nations, rescinded her vow not to challenge Trump for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination and announced her candidacy. She made the announcement from Charleston and then promptly held campaign events in New Hampshire and Iowa, the traditional first primary/caucus states. In her campaign rhetoric, Haley has, to date, sidestepped questions about Trump, declaring that she is running against Joe Biden. This essay examines Haley's early primary campaign rhetoric as she constructs Biden and the liberal left as her, and our, enemy, and identifies the important issues in contemporary national politics. Haley has discussed her jobs and education record as South Carolina's governor and focused internationally on immigration, China, Iran, and Russia, drawing upon her experience in the UN. Haley has declared it is time for a new (presumably younger) generation of leadership, while also articulating traditionally conservative policy positions.

Keywords: Nikki Haley, presidential campaigns, political communication, political rhetoric

On February 15, 2023, former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley became the first challenger to Donald Trump for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination. She released an announcement video the previous day and then launched her campaign with a speech from Charleston, South Carolina.¹ While challenging Trump for the Republican nomination, Haley has refrained from attacking the former president and has focused her campaign discourse on reversing the policies of the Biden-Harris administration. This essay is derived from a spotlight panel at the 2023 Southern States Communication Association Convention on "Politics and the Future: Communicating about Issues, Enemies, and Images in National Politics." Contributors discussed the political communication of several potential 2024 presidential candidates. I reviewed and analyzed Haley's campaign rhetoric, noting her positioning of Biden-Harris as her political opponent and her omission of Trump or other Republican candidates, and noting her emphasis on national security, immigration and border control, election reform, and liberal wokeness as the major issues of the day. In the first several months following the February 2023 launch of her bid for the 2024 Republican nomination, Haley has focused on Biden, Harris, the woke left, China, North Korea, Iran, and Russia as the enemy, and has focused on national security, immigration and border control, and the purging of woke ideas of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility from education and public policy.

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¹ Nikki Haley, "2024 Campaign Announcement Speech at Charleston, South Carolina," February 15, 2023, <https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/former-south-carolina-gop-governor-nikki-haley-rally-transcript>.

Haley's Road to Presidential Candidacy

Before discussing Haley's presidential campaign rhetoric, I want to discuss how she became a potential candidate. Nimarata Randhawa Haley's political career began when she was elected to the South Carolina State House in 2004. She became the Republican candidate for the Lexington County House seat after defeating a 30-year incumbent in the primary.² Haley was then elected governor of South Carolina in 2010 and "decisively reelected" in 2014.³ At the time of her inauguration, she was the first female governor and the first minority governor of South Carolina.⁴

As South Carolina's governor, Haley began to rise to prominence nationally and within the Republican Party. In April 2012, *Vogue* featured Haley, noting that she had become a potential vice-presidential candidate for Mitt Romney's 2012 White House bid.⁵ Five months later, Haley was among the featured speakers at the Republican National Convention.⁶ Haley's national status was further elevated in June 2015 after the shooting of Walter Scott and after the mass shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church. Haley used the events to remove the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House grounds.⁷ Those events and Haley's response led to her invitation to speak on "Lessons from the New South" at the National Press Club on September 2, 2015. Following that speech, Elaina Plott of the *National Review* declared Haley to be a viable and valuable vice-presidential candidate for 2016.⁸ Similarly, Caroline Heldman of Reuters called Haley's delivery of the Republican response to President Obama's 2016 State of the Union "a powerful veep audition."⁹ In April 2016, *Time* named Haley as one of the 100 most influential people in the world.¹⁰

In the 2016 primaries, Haley first endorsed Marco Rubio, and then, after Rubio's withdrawal, endorsed Ted Cruz. These endorsements perhaps spurred Donald Trump's tweet, on the day of the South Carolina primary, that "the people of South Carolina are embarrassed by Nikki Haley." Haley simply responded with "Bless your heart."¹¹ Despite this exchange, Haley later endorsed Trump as the Republican nominee and spoke at the Republican National Convention. Once elected, Trump nominated Haley to become the United States Ambassador to the United Nations. Haley was confirmed as UN Ambassador on January 24, 2017.¹²

² Nikki Haley for President, "About Nikki," accessed June 12, 2023, <https://nikkihaley.com/about/>.

³ Haley, "About Nikki.;" Haley won reelection with 56% of the vote. "South Carolina Election Results," *New York Times*, December 17, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2014/south-carolina-elections>

⁴ Haley, "About Nikki."

⁵ Christopher Cox, "Governor Nikki Haley: New Horizons," *Vogue*, April 18, 2012, <https://www.vogue.com/article/governor-nikki-haley-new-horizons>.

⁶ "Nikki Haley RNC speech," *Politico*, August 29, 2012, <http://www.olitico.com/news/stories/0812/80376.html>.

⁷ "Gov. Nikki Haley of South Carolina on removing the Confederate Flag," *New York Times*, June 22, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/06/22/us/Transcript-Gov-Nikki-R-Haley-of-South-Carolina-Addresses-Removing-the-Confederate-Battle-Flag.html>.

⁸ Elaina Plott, "Amid Growing VP Buzz, Nikki Haley Charms Crown in D.C. Speech," September 2, 2015, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2015/09/nikki-haley-vp-buzz-dc-speech/>.

⁹ Caroline Heldman, "A powerful veep audition for GOP Governor Nikki Haley," Reuters, January 13, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idIN324298135920160113>.

¹⁰ Lindsey Graham, "The 100 Most Influential People: Nikki Haley," *Time*, April 21, 2016, <https://time.com/collection-post/4302106/nikki-haley-2016-time-100/>

¹¹ Nick Gass, "Nikki Haley to Trump: 'Bless your heart,'" *Politico*, March 1, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/blogs/2016-gop-primary-live-updates-and-results/2016/03/nikki-haley-donald-trump-twitter-220048>.

¹² Nikki Haley, *With All Due Respect: Defending America with Grit and Grace* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2019), 87.

Haley served two years as the UN Ambassador, while also serving as a Cabinet member and as a member of the National Security Council. In resigning her UN position, Haley announced that she had no intention of running for president in 2020 and that she planned to campaign for Trump's reelection.¹³ In 2019, Haley founded Stand For America, a political action committee, and embarked on a career as a political speaker.¹⁴ For the next three years, Haley repeatedly refused to be critical of Donald Trump, even after his election loss in 2020. In early 2021, Haley declared she "would not run if President Trump ran" and confirmed that "she would support Trump if he decides to run again."¹⁵ When she launched her presidential bid, Haley told David Brody of CBN News that her decision not to run was before two years of failed Biden policies and before the Republicans lost the 2022 midterm elections. She explained that her decision to run was because "we have to go in a different direction. It is time for a new generation, and I told him [Trump] that. And we had a great conversation. He knows that I have always said the truth. . . . It is time."¹⁶ Haley hopes to position herself as the next generation of Republican leadership, and as the voice of the new generation capable of countering the woke left and succeeding where current Republican leaders have failed.

Haley's Pre-Primary Presidential Campaign Rhetoric

"I'm Nikki Haley and I'm running for president." Those were the final words of the three-and-a-half-minute video that Haley released in advance of her official campaign kickoff rally in Charleston.¹⁷ In that video, Haley briefly discussed growing up as the daughter of immigrants in rural South Carolina, attacked "the socialist left," attacked Joe Biden and "the Washington establishment," and called for "a new generation of leadership, to . . . strengthen our country, our pride, and our purpose." She used images of Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, Nancy Pelosi, Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden, and Kamala Harris as she criticized those who "think our ideas are not just wrong, but racist, and evil" and who "see an opportunity to rewrite history."¹⁸ Thus, Haley launched her bid for the 2024 Republican nomination. Since that launch, Haley has focused on defeating Biden-Harris in the 2024 general election and focused on issues including national security, China, Iran, North Korea, Russia, immigration and border control, educational freedom, women's rights, and the Second Amendment.

Haley's Rhetorical Construction of the Enemy

In her campaign rhetoric since announcing her presidential bid in February 2023, Haley has focused on two sets of enemies: the socialist, woke left led by Biden and Harris; and the foreign

¹³ Maggie Haberman, Mark Landler, and Edward Wong, "Nikki Haley to Resign as Trump's Ambassador to the U.N.," *New York Times*, October 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/09/us/politics/nikki-haley-united-nations.html>.

¹⁴ Stand For America, "About," accessed June 10, 2023, <https://nikkihaley.com/about/>; Washington Speakers Bureau, "Nikki Haley," accessed March 18, 2022, <https://www.wsb.com/speakers/nikki-haley/>.

¹⁵ Jamie Lovegrove, "Nikki Haley says she won't run against Trump if he seeks presidency again in 2024," *The Post and Courier*, April 12, 2021, https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/nikki-haley-says-she-wont-run-against-trump-if-he-seeks-presidency-again-in-2024/article_60c1b020-9bcf-11eb-b77b-13c277453d9d.html.

¹⁶ CBN News, "Exclusive with 2024 Presidential Candidate Nikki Haley," February 15, 2023, 13:33-13:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0I18meuN7k>.

¹⁷ Nikki Haley, "Strong and Proud," February 14, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dK9Kq5JQ8Qc>.

¹⁸ Haley, "Strong and Proud."

nations of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. To date, Haley avoids attacks on fellow Republicans. Haley, in her folksy, southern way, has often noted: “I wear heels. It’s not for a fashion statement. It’s because if I see something wrong, we’re going to kick them every single time.”¹⁹ In her campaign announcement video, she stated: “I don’t put up with bullies. And when you kick back, it hurts them more if you’re wearing heels.”²⁰ Following her Charleston speech, when asked by David Brody of CN News about running against Trump, Haley declared: “I’m running against Joe Biden, not Trump. I don’t kick to the side; I kick forward. Joe Biden is the biggest problem we have in this country.”²¹ While others have been critical of Trump’s legal troubles, Haley avoids being critical of her former boss by asserting the investigations are politically motivated: “This is more about revenge than it is about justice.”²² From the start of her campaign, Haley has repeatedly spoken well of Trump as president and has refused to “kick to the side” and criticize her former boss. Even in the wake of the 37-count indictment for allegedly mishandling classified documents, Haley suggested that “if the indictment is true, President Trump was incredibly reckless,” while she also attacked the investigations as “prosecutorial overreach, double standards and vendetta politics.”²³ Rather than join some of the Republican candidates such as Mike Pence and Chris Christie in attacking Trump’s alleged illegal acts, Haley merely categorizes his actions as reckless and questions the motivations of the investigations.

Perhaps the decision not to attack Trump is because Haley sees the Biden-led left as the real enemy, and she is looking beyond the Republican primaries and positioning herself as the more viable opponent in the general election. In not attacking Trump and fellow Republicans, Haley appeals to conservative voters’ dislike of Biden and the “Washington elite.” In her campaign announcement video, Haley mentioned the socialist left while showing a collage of Biden, Harris, Pelosi, and Sanders. The next day, she mentioned Biden and Harris five times, while never mentioning Trump.²⁴ Two weeks later, speaking at the CPAC Conference, Haley asserted that “Joe Biden and the Democrats are giving us oppression, poverty, and lawlessness . . . The Democrat party is now a socialist party.” She further claimed that “on Biden and Harris’ watch, this woke self-loathing has swept our country.”²⁵ More recently, she spoke of Biden’s “war on American energy and jobs” and she questioned Biden’s mental fitness. In sharing a story from *The Hill* that 7 in 10 independents are concerned about Biden’s mental acuity, Haley remarked “they should be concerned.” In an earlier post, Haley opined that “there are real questions about Joe Biden’s mental

¹⁹ American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Policy Conference 2017: Many Voices, One Mission, “Nikki Haley,” video, Facebook, March 31, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/watch?v=10154482079853543>.

²⁰ Haley, “Strong and Proud.”

²¹ CBN News, 14:01-14:08.

²² Nikki Haley, “This is more about revenge than it is about justice,” Facebook, March 30, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

²³ Phillip M. Bailey, “Nikki Haley shifts to a more critical tone on Trump over classified documents allegations,” *USA Today*, June 12, 2023, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2023/06/12/haley-pivots-on-trump-post-indictment/70315150007/>.

²⁴ Haley, “Strong and Proud;” Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

²⁵ “Nikki Haley Remarks at Conservative Political Action Conference,” C-SPAN, March 3, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?526454-1/nikki-haley-appeals-conservatives-cpac-turn-generation-leaders-win-elections>.

competence.”²⁶ Overall, Haley sees Biden, Harris, and the woke left, rather than fellow Republicans such as Trump, as the political enemy. Thus, she kicks forward (at Biden) and not to the side (at Trump, or fellow Republicans).

Beyond the political opponents, Haley has focused on threats from international enemies such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. As UN Ambassador, Haley often spoke of threats to our national security from these countries and she has continued her criticisms in her early campaign discourse. In her February 15, 2023 campaign kickoff speech, Haley clamed Biden and identified our international challenges:

Joe Biden isn't leading from behind, he's not leading at all. On his watch, a terrorist mob conquered Afghanistan and killed our troops. Iran is on the brink of getting the bomb. North Korea is launching more missiles than ever. Russia started the biggest war in Europe in 75 years. And in communist China, we faced the strongest and most disciplined enemy in history. . . . China's dictators want to cover the world in communist tyranny, and we're the only ones who can stop them.²⁷

In her 2019 memoir *With All Due Respect*, Haley recalled that as ambassador to the UN she urged President Trump to stop foreign aid to countries that did not support the United States. She has repeatedly emphasized that we should not send money to our enemies in her campaign rhetoric. In sharing a link to a Fox News story on U.S. aid sent to China and Russia, Haley declared “Stop. Sending. Money. To. Countries. That. Hate. America.”²⁸ Haley has accused China of being the real source of fentanyl, of spying on us with a balloon and TikTok, and being aggressive militarily.²⁹ In criticizing Biden's failure to deter America's foreign enemies, Haley cites her record as UN ambassador. She claims she is the “Iran whisperer” responsible for the Trump administration decision to repeal Obama's Iran nuclear deal and she cites her record of “turn[ing] up the heat on China, “push[ing] a tough stance on North Korea,” and “denouncing Russia.”³⁰ If Haley takes on Ron DeSantis in the coming months, she will certainly tout her foreign policy experience as the UN ambassador and a member of the National Security Council—experience that she has touted repeatedly since the launch of her campaign, but experience that DeSantis lacks, having never served in a presidential administration.

Haley's Framing of the Issues

Beyond defeating Biden and the woke left and keeping international threats at bay, Haley must offer potential voters a discussion of issues. Although she has discussed more issues than identified here, Haley has most frequently discussed national security, immigration and border control, election reforms, and wokeness and self-loathing.

²⁶ Nikki Haley, “Joe Biden has declared war on American energy and jobs,” Facebook, June 8, 2023; Nikki Haley, “They should be concerned,” Facebook, May 25, 2023; Nikki Haley, “There are real questions,” Facebook, May 3, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

²⁷ Nikki Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

²⁸ Nikki Haley, “Stop. Sending. Money. To. Countries. That. Hate. America,” Facebook, May 31, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>

²⁹ “Nikki Haley Holds Town Hall in New Hampshire,” C-SPAN, February 17, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?526003-1/nikki-haley-holds-town-hall-hampshire>; Nikki Haley, “China is using TikTok to spy on you,” Facebook, March 23, 2023; Nikki Haley, “This month alone, China has harassed & threatened a U.S. fighter jet & naval ship,” Facebook, June 8, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>

³⁰ Nikki Haley for President, “Record of Results,” accessed June 12, 2023, <https://nikkihaley.com/record-of-results/>

Haley maintains that national security is threatened by aggressive enemies abroad; she has spoken about North Korean missile tests, Iran’s potential development of nuclear weapons, Russia’s war with Ukraine, and China’s spying and military aggression. She contends that these nations are interconnected in their opposition to America. She called Iran “Russia’s junior partner” and claimed that a Russian victory in the Ukraine is also a win for China because “China is Russia’s best friend and biggest backer.”³¹ With the dangers posed by foreign enemies such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, Haley contends that current policies fail to make us secure. Under the Biden administration, “America is on a path . . . of fading patriotism and weakening power.”³² In March, Haley claimed Biden was asleep at the wheel and “China and Russia are taking advantage of it.” One instance of Biden’s failure was the prisoner exchange with Russia to release WNBA star Brittney Griner: “Putin won’t stop taking advantage of Biden’s weakness.”³³ As UN ambassador, Haley claimed she took the kick me sign of our nation’s back. As president, she will remove the sign again.³⁴ In her campaign announcement video, she pledges that in her America we will:

Defeat our enemies. . . . the Armed Forces will be stronger and more capable than ever. A strong military doesn’t start wars, a strong military prevents wars. . . . We’ll stand up to our enemies in Iran and Russia, and . . . communist China. . . . Like the Soviet Union before it, communist China will end up on the ash heap of history.³⁵

Rest assured, a Haley administration would counter these international enemies and make America secure.

Related to national security is the need for immigration control and protection of America’s borders. Haley has declared that “our southern border crisis is a massive national security risk.”³⁶ Haley has been critical of what she perceives as Biden’s rollback of Trump’s efforts to secure the border and control illegal immigration. In April, Haley visited Eagle Pass, Texas with Tony Gonzalez, the Congressman from Texas. Speaking at the Texas border, Haley called Biden’s failure to call it a border crisis “a dereliction of duty.” She proposed that to fix the crisis we must pass:

a mandatory e-verify program which makes sure no business can hire any illegal immigrant hire at least 25,000 Border Patrol and ICE agents. . . . Make sure that we are defunding sanctuary cities. . . . keep Title 42. . . . then one thing that can make the biggest difference, stop catch and release, and go to catch and deport. When you start deporting these illegal immigrants, they will stop coming.³⁷

³¹ Nikki Haley, “The Russian invasion of Ukraine is not a territorial dispute,” Facebook, March 20, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

³² Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

³³ Nikki Haley, “President Biden is asleep at the wheel and China and Russia are taking advantage of it,” Facebook, March 20, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>; Nikki Haley, “This is what happens when you free the Merchant of Death,” Facebook, March 30, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

³⁴ Nikki Haley, “5 years ago today, America opened our embassy in Jerusalem,” Facebook, May 14, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>; Nikki Haley, “President Biden’s weak leadership has undermined confidence in America,” Facebook, March 25, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

³⁵ Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

³⁶ Nikki Haley, “Our southern border crisis is a massive national security risk. Fire Biden’s new IRS agents and hire 25,000 new Border Patrol and ICE workers,” Facebook, March 28, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

³⁷ “Nikki Haley Visits the Southern Border,” C-SPAN, April 3, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?527129-1/nikki-haley-visits-southern-border>.

Securing the borders will also counter China who is sending fentanyl to the cartels who are trafficking drugs via illegal immigrants.³⁸

A third major issue for Haley has been election reform and new leadership. Haley has called for: securing elections by instituting a national voter ID law; establishing term limits for elected officials; requiring competency testing for all officials over the age of 75; and electing a new, younger generation of leaders. On her campaign website, Haley touts “protecting our elections” as part of her “record of results,” noting that she advocated for a voter ID law and won the legal battle when the Obama administration tried to block the law.³⁹ In her presidential campaign, she has frequently proposed making voter ID national. In her campaign announcement speech, she predicted “in the America I see, everyone has full confidence in our elections. Voter ID will be the law of the land just like we did in South Carolina.”⁴⁰ Two weeks later at the CPAC Convention, she again publicized her effort to establish voter ID in South Carolina during her first year as governor and promised to “restore faith in our elections” by championing a national Voter ID law.⁴¹ Haley may be relying on claims that the 2020 election was unsecure and that Biden stole the election via voter fraud, a belief that seems to be common among Trump supporters. Her promise to secure the elections is perhaps her attempt to persuade those voters.

In addition to securing the elections, Haley has called for term limits and competency tests. In her campaign kickoff speech, Haley forecast that “the permanent politician will finally retire. We’ll have term limits for Congress.”⁴² With or without term limits, Haley has also advocated for mental competency tests for all government officials over the age of 75. On social media, Haley has often suggested the need for such tests, claiming that “Americans deserve to know whether the people we send to DC are at the top of their game.”⁴³ As previously noted, Haley has questioned Biden’s mental competency. On several occasions she has questioned Biden’s mental competency. Again, on social media, she stated “Americans deserve to know if Joe Biden is up for the job or if a vote for Biden is really a vote for Kamala Harris.”⁴⁴ More recently, she shared a soundbite of an interview in which she again raised the question of Biden’s mental competency and her claim that the real Democratic opponent is Harris:

Let’s be very clear. A vote for President Biden is actually a vote for President Harris. We are running against Kamala Harris. Make no bones about it. The New York Times knows it. Every liberal knows it. It’s Kamala Harris who ends up being president if Joe Biden wins this election.⁴⁵

Haley suggests that Democrats know that Biden’s mental competence is compromised and that a re-elected Biden would resign, thus elevating Harris to the presidency. But rather than directly attack Biden’s mental acuity, Haley indirectly attacks him by calling for mental competency tests for all candidates of Biden’s age.

³⁸ “Nikki Haley Visits the Southern Border,” C-SPAN; Nikki Haley, “When every state is a border state, the cartels win and Americans lose,” Facebook, May 19, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

³⁹ Nikki Haley for President, “Record of Results.”

⁴⁰ Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

⁴¹ “Nikki Haley Remarks at Conservative Political Action Conference,” C-SPAN.

⁴² Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”

⁴³ Nikki Haley, “Americans deserve to know whether the people we send to DC are at the top of their game. This is about transparency,” Facebook, May 2, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

⁴⁴ Nikki Haley, “Sorry Nancy Pelosi,” Facebook, May 1, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

⁴⁵ Nikki Haley, “A vote for President Biden is actually a vote for President Harris,” Facebook, June 7, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

Related to her advocacy of term limits and competency tests is Haley's call for a new generation of leadership. In perhaps a veiled attack on Trump and other older Republican leaders, Haley has repeated the charge that Republicans have "lost the popular vote in seven of the last eight presidential elections. . . . that ends today. If you're tired of losing, put your trust in a new generation." She called on voters "to move past the status quo" by "sending a tough-as-nails woman to the White House someone who can shake up Washington and the political class."⁴⁶ Haley promises that by "sending a conservative outsider" and a new generational leader like her to Washington "we can make America strong and proud."⁴⁷ While Haley does not mention Trump, Pence, and other more established Republican leaders—the old generation that has lost seven of the last eight times—she offers herself as the representative of the new generation whose time has come.

Finally, inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) measures have been lumped together in conservative rhetoric as "wokeness" in recent years. Backlash against such measures claim that its proponents hate America and want others to hate America and themselves. Haley, like many conservative politicians, has used and likely will continue to use the wokeness backlash to garner votes. Haley titled her February 14, 2023 announcement video "Strong and Proud." Since that time, she has expanded that catch phrase to "Strong and Proud, not Weak and Woke."⁴⁸ Evidence of the "woke self-loathing [that] has swept our country" can be seen in our classrooms.⁴⁹ On several occasions, Haley has claimed that her son, an undergraduate student at Clemson University has to write woke papers "for a professor to get an A, instead of writing what he thinks."⁵⁰ On social media, she shared a story about a college professor who allegedly failed a student for using the term "biological women" and touted the case as an "example of the woke mob trying to push dangerous ideology on our kids."⁵¹ At Regent University's commencement, Haley asserted that "ninety percent of students today are being taught to hate America."⁵² Haley proposes that "when it comes to education, we have to get back to basics we need to stop with the woke agenda."⁵³ Haley has aligned herself with Moms for Liberty, a conservative nonprofit that advocates against critical race theory and the mention of LGBTQIA+ in school curriculums and library books. Recently, when the group was called a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Haley noted that she is a scheduled speaker at Moms for Liberty's Joyful Warrior Summit in July 2023. Haley declared that "moms aren't extremists and they know what's best for their kids. . . we are parents that want transparency in the classroom."⁵⁴ Haley contends that keeping wokeness out of the classroom is not extremism but is responsible parenting. By attacking the supposed self-loathing wokeness in our schools, Haley opposes the IDEA agenda.

⁴⁶ Haley, "2024 Campaign Announcement Speech."

⁴⁷ Nikki Haley, "We can make America strong and proud by sending a conservative outsider to DC," Facebook, April 26, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

⁴⁸ Haley, "2024 Campaign Announcement Speech;" "Nikki Haley Remarks at Conservative Political Action Conference," C-SPAN.

⁴⁹ Nikki Haley Remarks at Conservative Political Action Conference," C-SPAN.

⁵⁰ "Nikki Haley Holds Town Hall in New Hampshire," C-SPAN.

⁵¹ Nikki Haley, "To all the liberals who think our girls are doing just fine," Facebook, June 6, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

⁵² Nikki Haley, "Commencement Address," Regent University, May 6, 2023, https://www.regent.edu/about-regent/regent-university-commencement-information/?fbclid=IwAR2FW_qUAh_PWR-84l2mpvz8dUvyJA9qHTqXmD2k56awhaO_XDt65nx72jU.

⁵³ "Nikki Haley Holds Town Hall in New Hampshire," C-SPAN.

⁵⁴ Nikki Haley, "If Moms for Liberty is a 'hate group,' add me to the list," Facebook, June 8, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

Related to the wokeness in the classroom, is the wokeness that is undermining women's rights by permitting transgender females to compete in scholastic and professional sports. Excluding transgender athletes from competing in women's sports is a key part of the Republican education agenda.⁵⁵ In appealing to Republican primary voters on this issue, Haley has posted on social media at least a dozen times in the past two months. In March, commenting on a story about a transgendered cyclist, Haley called it "an assault on women's rights." In April she said biological men competing in women's sports is "one of the most important women's rights issues of our time."⁵⁶ In June, Haley reposted a news story about college teammates of a transgendered woman who feared speaking out against her inclusion. She proclaimed that "female athletes are being silenced and bullied. We will have their backs."⁵⁷ Much like opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment saw the ERA as an attack on real womanhood, Haley frames the transgender inclusion in athletics as an attack on real women.

Conclusion

Haley swung into full campaign mode following her February 2023 announcement that she was running for president. She was the second Republican to enter a race that is now very crowded. If Haley is to win the Republican nomination, she has an uphill battle ahead. As the Associated Press' Steve Peoples observed that although there are nine "high profile challengers . . . This is Trump's race to lose."⁵⁸ *Real Clear Politics* and *FiveThirtyEight* compiled and weighted numerous polls. As of mid-June, they each indicate Trump leads DeSantis by 30 percent, Pence is third around 5 percent, and Haley is fourth around 4 percent.⁵⁹ To gain ground on her Republican rivals, Haley will likely need to communicate how she differs from her opponents. But to date her unwillingness to "kick to the side" and her focus on Biden and Democrats as the enemy has not done that. Additionally, her stance on most of the issues falls in line with the agenda of Trump's first presidential term and with the current agenda of conservative voters and the Republican Party. Given her standing in the polls about Republican voters, Haley's refusal to "kick to the side" and her persistent focus on Biden and the liberal left as her opponent may also be a rhetorical strategy designed not to win the nomination but to secure a vice presidential slot on the Republican ticket.

But if Haley can break through the clutter and secure the 2024 Republican nomination, expect her to continue to attack Biden and Harris as leaders of the socialist, woke left and expect her to continue to emphasize national security, immigration and border control, and the purging of woke ideas of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility from education and public policy. And if

⁵⁵ Bianca Quilantan, "House Republicans pass bill restricting transgender athletes from women's sports," *Politico*, April 20, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/04/20/house-gop-bill-transgender-athletes-00093044>.

⁵⁶ Nikki Haley, "An assault on women's rights," Facebook, March 23, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>. Nikki Haley, "One of the most important women's rights issues of our time," Facebook, April 22, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>.

⁵⁷ Nikki Haley, "The liberals who attacked us for standing up for our girls probably won't read this story," Facebook, June 7, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/NikkiHaley>

⁵⁸ Steve Peoples, "The GOP presidential field is largely set for 2024," *PBS News Hour*, June 8, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/the-gop-presidential-field-is-largely-set-for-2024-heres-where-the-contenders-stand>.

⁵⁹ "Polls: 2024 Republican presidential nomination," *Real Clear Politics*, June 13, 2023, https://realclearpolitics/epolls/2024/president/us/2024_republican_nomination-7548.html; "Latest polls," *FiveThirtyEight*, June 14, 2023, <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/polls/>.

she were elected president she will declare “It’s a great day in America,” a variation of her gubernatorial slogan “It’s a great day in South Carolina.”⁶⁰ It will be a great day because Nikki Haley promises that an America with President Haley will be and America that is strong and proud, not weak and woke.

⁶⁰ Haley, “Strong and Proud;” Haley, “2024 Campaign Announcement Speech.”