

For U.N., a Daughter of Immigrants But a Neophyte in Foreign Affairs

Unlike the president-elect, a backer of free trade.

By RICHARD FAUSSET
and SOMINI SENGUPTA

ATLANTA — Gov. Nikki R. Haley of South Carolina is the daughter of immigrants, favors free markets and global trade, and earned international attention for speaking out against the Confederate battle flag in the aftermath of the 2015 massacre at a black church in Charleston. During Donald J. Trump's presidential campaign, she sharply criticized his demeanor and warned what it might mean for American diplomacy — even suggesting that his tendency to lash out at critics could cause a world war.

But on Wednesday, Mr. Trump named Ms. Haley as his choice for ambassador to the United Nations, a move that will probably serve to both assuage and confound the president-elect's critics, raising questions about the tone and direction of his foreign policy. She would also add ethnic and gender diversity to the appointments, so far of predominantly white men, he has made to other top posts in the administration.

In a statement, Ms. Haley said she had accepted Mr. Trump's offer because she felt good about South Carolina's economic standing. She added that this month's elections had brought "exciting changes to America."

"When the president believes you have a major contribution to make to the welfare of our nation, and to our nation's standing in the world, that is a calling that is important to heed," the statement said.

Little is known about how Ms. Haley views America's role in the world. But an equally important mystery is what her clout might be in the Trump administration.

Has Mr. Trump placed her in a post he considers marginal? Or will Ms. Haley — along with a still-to-be-named secretary of state — be able to temper the more radical views of Mr. Trump's other aides?

Despite the unknowns, many diplomats, scholars and rights advocates who have been anxiously awaiting Mr. Trump's choices were relieved at the announcement. They saw in Ms. Haley, a daughter of Indian immigrants, someone unafraid to express her beliefs even if they differ from Mr. Trump's.

"If confirmed, we hope she will raise that voice on behalf of the world's most vulnerable people who suffer from hunger, violence and injustice around the world," the advocacy group Oxfam said in a statement.

Many diplomats said they saw Ms. Haley as something of an enigma, whose views on the world have not yet been publicized.

But her stance is public on a few issues — including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, refugees, and reproductive rights — and they offer a window into how she may carry out her role.

She signed state legislation to thwart a pro-Palestinian disinvestment campaign against Israel, known as Boycott, Divest, and Sanction, or B.D.S. — which made Israel one of the first to welcome her nomination for the post.

Ms. Haley has expressed concern about the security checks in place for Syrian refugees resettled in her state, but she is not among those Republican governors who have sued the Obama administration to block resettlement.

She describes herself as "pro-life" and has supported legislation in her state to restrict abortion rights. That position raises questions about whether the United States would reimpose a funding ban on groups that promote family planning overseas, and to what extent the United States would undermine a key United Nations goal to advance sexual and reproductive rights.

The reaction from Republicans in South Carolina's congressional delegation on Wednesday demonstrated the broad appeal Ms. Haley has earned among conservatives statewide and in Washington. Senator Lindsey Graham, one of Mr. Trump's harshest critics in the past, praised the nomination, writing on Twitter that Ms. Haley would be a "strong voice for UN reform and stand for American in-

terests throughout the world."

But others tempered their admiration for Ms. Haley with concern about whether her public service credentials, which are limited to South Carolina government, would translate to the world stage.

"My very practical reaction is that she'd be the least experienced U.N. ambassador in the history of the country," said Bakari Sellers, a CNN commentator and a Democrat who befriended Ms. Haley when they served together in the State House of Representatives. "You go from Samantha Power" — the current United Nations ambassador — "who was very well versed in foreign policy and our geopolitical relationships, to Nikki Haley, who hasn't been in that depth ever."

Ms. Haley's admirers note that she repeatedly traveled abroad as governor to promote the state as a desirable place for investment. Her highest-profile trip, perhaps, was a 2014 visit to India, the birthplace of her parents. Her husband, Michael, has served in Afghanistan as an officer in the South Carolina National Guard.

More generally, Ms. Haley has overcome concerns that she would be a one-dimensional insurgent outsider, similar to worries that dog Mr. Trump. Her 2010 campaign was given a major lift by an endorsement from former Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska, the polarizing darling of the Tea Party movement. But Ms. Haley has forged a middle path that embraces the conciliatory racial attitudes favored by the left and the business-friendly ethos of the right.

This balancing act faced perhaps its greatest test in June 2015,

Per l'ONU, una figlia di immigrati, ma una neofita in politica estera



after nine African-Americans were shot and killed at the historically black Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. The white supremacist charged in the massacre, Dylan S. Roof, had posed with the Confederate battle flag in pictures. And for years, blacks and liberals in South Carolina had pleaded with the conservatives who dominate the state government to take the flag down from a prominent spot it occupied in front of the State Capitol.

Ms. Haley, the first ethnic minority and first woman to be elected as the state's governor, had previously sided with fellow Republicans, who argued that the flag was not a racist symbol.

But the Charleston massacre hit home personally. She had been a friend of State Senator Clementa C. Pinckney, a Democrat and pastor of the church, who was one of the dead. Ms. Haley had a change of heart.

"I couldn't look my son or daughter in the face and justify that flag flying anymore," Ms. Haley told The New York Times in June 2015.

At her urging, and after much passionate debate, the State Legislature agreed to remove the flag.

Ms. Haley was born in the small city of Bamberg, S.C., to immigrants from Punjab State in India. She has said the locals in South Carolina were often unsure of her place in what is often a Southern binary of black versus white. When Ms. Haley was about 5, she and her sister entered a Little Miss Bamberg pageant where, traditionally, a black queen and a white queen were crowned.

The judges decided the sisters fit neither category, so they were disqualified.

From a young age, Ms. Haley worked for her family's clothing business, and she eventually received an accounting degree from Clemson University. She was elected to the State House in 2004.

In 2009, she declared she was running for governor and pre-

vailed despite lingering biases. A Republican state senator at the time called her a "raghead" on a radio show. A Democratic state representative said that voters did not consider her a minority, but more of a "nice conservative with a tan."

Ms. Haley, a nimble campaigner who is equally at home among C.E.O.s and denim-clad bikers, easily won re-election in 2014, arguing that her maintenance of South Carolina's anti-union, low-regulation atmosphere had been the key to an economic comeback. Under her leadership, the state continued looking beyond its boundaries, very often abroad, to attract new industries to replace a fading textile industry.

It is a record that might seem at odds with Mr. Trump's skepticism of global trade deals and his promise to subject imports from Mexico and China to steep tariffs.

But there are other areas of agreement. In 2014, Ms. Haley criticized federal plans that would force power plants to cut carbon emissions.

Also like Mr. Trump, Ms. Haley has weathered accusations of sexual impropriety without suffering at the polls. In her first run for governor, two Republican operatives made separate and unproven accusations that they had sexual encounters with her. She strongly denied the assertions.

A few years later, Ms. Haley was among those rumored as a potential running mate for Mitt Romney, then a Republican presidential candidate.

She said she could not do it because there was too much to be done at home in South Carolina. But she acknowledged that opportunities sometimes arose. "I've never been a planner," she said. "I don't know what's next, and I love not thinking about it because the doors open at a certain time."

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