

Statement of Victoria Nuland
Nominee for Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
April 15, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch and Members of this Committee for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I also want to thank my husband, Bob Kagan and my kids, Leni and David, for their love, their wise counsel and the sacrifices they made as a foreign service family.

It is a huge honor to be nominated by President Biden and Secretary Blinken to serve as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. If confirmed, I will rejoin the profession and the Department that I love, determined every day to strengthen America's capacity to protect our freedom, our security and our prosperity. And I will support Secretary Blinken in his vision to reenergize American diplomacy; strengthen our alliances and partnerships; and build the closest possible collaboration with this committee and both houses of Congress.

Over thirty-two years in the Foreign Service, I served five Presidents and nine Secretaries of State from both Republican and Democratic administrations. That experience taught me that America is at its strongest when our foreign policy enjoys broad bipartisan support both in Washington and at kitchen tables across America. President Biden and his team have pledged to lead a foreign policy that represents and benefits the American people. This will require more listening, more consultation with each of you, and with American business, workers, and committed citizens across our country. If confirmed, I look forward to doing as much hard work at home as abroad.

My foreign service career was full of adventures, challenges and historic moments:

- From my first tour in Guangzhou, China in 1985 when our relationship seemed to have so much promise;
- To watching the Soviet flag come down and the Russian flag go up over Red Square in 1991;
- To working on tough arms control problems and conflicts from Rwanda to Haiti to Bosnia and Kosovo;
- Too serving as Deputy Chief of Mission at NATO when our great Alliance invoked Article 5 – an attack on one is an attack on all – in solidarity with the United States the day after the twin towers fell.

And, of course, I had the opportunity to work closely with many of you when I was Ambassador to NATO in the Bush administration and Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs in the Obama administration. Together, we built strong bipartisan approaches to policy, and many members of the Senate contributed with their own travel and diplomacy.

Today, our nation faces a confluence of challenges as daunting as at any time in my professional life. China, under Xi Jinping, does not simply want to compete with us; it wants to dominate the international system and change its rules to benefit autocrats and undercut democracy and freedom around the world. Putin's Russia has deployed its fighters and weapons on almost every continent and accelerated its disinformation, election interference, and snuff campaigns against opponents. Iran is enriching uranium at 20 percent again, while continuing to destabilize its neighborhood from Syria to Yemen to Lebanon and Iraq. ISIS and AQ are weakened but not defeated. And too many of the world's citizens are suffering under corrupt and/or illegitimate leaders with blood on their hands. Add to this the urgent global challenges we share: restoring global health security, tackling climate change, and building our democracies and economies back better, with more equity and justice.

If confirmed as Under Secretary of State, my job will be three-fold:

- First, to take on any negotiations, diplomatic assignments or management issues that the Secretary deems necessary;
- Second, to oversee the work of the regional bureaus and Bureau of International Organization Affairs, ensuring this orchestra of talent plays in harmony, not at cross purposes;
- And third, to maintain close coordination with fellow Political Directors around the world, especially in allied and partner capitals, to build communities of common action to meet today's challenges.

If confirmed, I will also be the senior "lifer" in the State Department. The President and Secretary Blinken have pledged to respect and empower our great workforce, and to have their backs. That is a powerful motivator for me to return to service – to help revitalize and modernize American diplomacy. We must give our Foreign and Civil Service personnel and local employees more professional opportunities, support, training, career flexibility, and better technology while strengthening diversity at all levels of the Department. For years, the State Department scored the highest among government agencies for workforce satisfaction. I believe it can and will again.

I am also animated every day by a firm belief that America is safer and stronger when we lead. As Secretary Blinken has said, the alternatives are far worse: a chaotic vacuum or a global take-over by the enemies of freedom. I share President Biden's conviction that we are at a global "inflection point" – "democracy will and must prevail ... but democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to defend it, fight for it, strengthen it, renew it."

If confirmed, it will be the honor of a lifetime to play my part in that effort. I look forward to your questions.