

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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Farah Pandith

Farah Pandith has been a political appointee in the George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama administrations. She left government at the end of January 2014 for Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government where she maintains an affiliation. She is writing a book on extremism and driving efforts to counter extremism through new organizations, programs, and initiatives. She was appointed the first-ever special representative to Muslim Communities in June 2009 by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, serving under both Secretaries Clinton and John Kerry. The Office of the Special Representative was responsible for executing a vision for engagement with Muslims around the world based on a people-to-people and organizational level. She reported directly to the secretary of state. Ms. Pandith traveled to more than eighty countries and launched youth-focused initiatives. She is also the main architect of the Women in Public Service Project. In January 2013, she was awarded the Secretary's Distinguished Honor Award. In May 2015, Ms. Pandith was appointed to Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson's Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC).

Prior to this appointment, Ms. Pandith was senior advisor to the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian Affairs. This role was created for her in the context of the Danish Cartoon Crisis, and she built new State Department strategies for how U.S. embassies in Europe understood the Muslim demographic, the increase in foreign ideologies present on the ground, and how the United States could build resilience. From December 2004 to February 2007, Ms. Pandith served as the director for Middle East Regional Initiatives for the National Security Council. Prior to joining the NSC, Ms. Pandith was chief of staff of the Bureau for Asia and the Near East for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In 2004, she spent two months in Afghanistan developing a public outreach strategy. She also served at USAID from 1990–1993 on the administrator's staff and as the special assistant to the director of policy. From 1997 to 2003, Ms. Pandith was Vice President of International Business for ML Strategies in Boston, Massachusetts, and served as a Commissioner on Governor Paul A. Cellucci's bi-partisan Asian Advisory Commission.

She has been a consultant in the public, private, and non-profit sectors and has served in leadership positions on several boards with a focus on international affairs. She currently is a strategic advisor and board member to organizations that focus on extremism, women's empowerment, education and cultural diplomacy.

Ms. Pandith received a Master's degree from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where she specialized in International Security Studies, Islamic Civilizations and Southwest Asia, and International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution. She received an A.B. in Government and Psychology from Smith College, where she was president of the student body. She is currently a member of the Board of Overseers of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and the Smith College President's Council. She was awarded the Smith College Medal in February 2014 and the Distinguished Achievement Award by Tufts University in 2013.

She was born in Srinagar, Kashmir, India, and raised in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.