

Farah Pandith Biography  
Submitted to Committee on Foreign Affairs  
September 2014

**Farah Pandith** has been a political appointee in the George H.W. Bush, George W. Bush and Barack H. Obama administrations. Over the last decade she has served in various senior capacities focused on issues of countering violent extremism, democracy and Muslim youth. She left government at the end of January 2014 for Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Most recently Ms. Pandith was appointed the first-ever Special Representative to Muslim Communities in June 2009 by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. 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 80 countries and launched youth-focused initiatives including Generation Change, Viral Peace, the Transatlantic Leadership Network, and Hours Against Hate (a campaign that was a partner with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.) She is also a key architect of the Women in Public Service Project. In January 2013 she was awarded the Secretary's Distinguished Honor Award for "exceptionally outstanding service to the agencies of the US Government resulting in achievements of marked national or international significance." Her one of a kind programs in countering violent extremism have been singled out by organizations as diverse as the Bi-Partisan Policy Center and *Wired* Magazine.

Prior to this appointment, Ms. Pandith was Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. In this role she focused on Muslim communities in Europe where she was responsible for policy oversight for integration, democracy, and Islam in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. She also worked on issues relating to countering violent extremism. This role was created for her in the context of the Danish Cartoon Crisis, and she built State Department strategies for how our embassies in Europe understood the Muslim demographic, the increase in foreign ideologies present on the ground, and how we could build resilience, arguing as early as 2007 (when many in our government and within Europe did not see this as a priority) that Europe was a critical region for America's national security due to the foreign ideologies changing the landscape, the free borders and identity crisis of the new generations. Initiatives launched include The Cedar Network, a first of its kind pan-European network of Muslim professionals committed to providing positive role models and narratives for youth, and Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE), a grassroots effort modeled after Mothers Against Drunk Driving, that built a worldwide network of women to push back against extremist ideologies.

Ms. Pandith served as the Director for Middle East Regional Initiatives for the National Security Council from December 2004 to February 2007, where she was responsible for coordinating U.S. policy on "Muslim World" Outreach and the Broader Middle East North Africa initiative. She reported directly to the Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Global Democracy Strategy. 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). She worked directly for the Assistant Administrator for the bureau responsible for more than \$4 billion in programs throughout the Middle

East, South Asia, and Asia -- including Iraq, Afghanistan and Gaza/West Bank. 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. Ms. Pandith is a Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a Member of the Leadership Council of Women and Girls Lead, on the Board of We Are Family Foundation, and is the recipient of various global honors for her work in public service. She was recently named by *Boston Magazine* as "one of 75 Bold Thinkers Shaping Our City" and was named one of the 100 Most Powerful Women by *Washingtonian Magazine*. She is part of the Smithsonian's *The Network* by artist Lincoln Schatz, a permanent exhibit at The National Portrait Gallery, and has appeared in print, radio, television and film from The New York Times to a documentary for the 9/11 Museum. Ms. Pandith has appeared at TED, Google Zeitgeist, and other idea forums.

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 concentrated on the insurgency in Kashmir. She received an A.B. in Government and Psychology from Smith College, where she was president of the student body. She has served as a Trustee of Smith College and Milton Academy, and 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.

Ms. Pandith is currently at Senior Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government Future of Diplomacy Project. She just completed her Fellowship at the Institute of Politics at the Kennedy School of Government.

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