

Speaker 1: [00:09](#) [inaudible]. All right. I'm going to call us. I think it's on. Can you guys turn it on the microphone on? Yeah, it's good. It should be good. [inaudible] okay,

Susan Glasser: [00:23](#) we're on, it looks like. Good morning. I'm Susan Glasser from the New Yorker and this is the lightning round version of the Aspen security forum. I'm delighted in fact to be here for a special conversation about her new book and many other things besides with Fara [inaudible] who, uh, has the advantage of having served as a political appointee for both, uh, President Bush and President Obama at the State Department. And we're gonna talk a little bit this morning about her new book, which I highly recommend to you, how we win, how cutting edge entrepreneurs, political visionaries, enlightened business leaders, not the unenlightened kind of thing. And Social Media Mavens can defeat the extremist threat. Fara, thank you so much for joining us this morning. So I have to say, we had a little preview of this in our dinner table conversation last night and I think we have to start out not with the book, but really with the sea change that has sort of occurred since you started writing this book, which was meant to be an account. And it is a fascinating account of your experiences in trying to think about how the United States could act globally to challenge the rising threat of extremism. There's sort of an elephant in the room, right? Isn't there in terms of what's, what's happened since then? You were telling me about what it's like to be a woman of color traveling around the United States in 2019 talking about this book. Ugh.

Farah Pandith: [01:51](#) Well, first of all, you know, I can't imagine, I couldn't have imagined as I began this book that I would even have to be talking about the far right and the rise of white nationalists. It didn't even enter my mind. What I was thinking about are the next armies of Isis, the next armies of al Qaeda. This port book tour has been really enlightening for me. Uh, I grew up outside of Boston. Uh, I'm obviously, I'm an American. I'm obviously somebody who understands our country, but in the last few jobs that I've had, my job has been to serve our nation overseas. So I wasn't ready to be in rooms where people were saying things to me, like, you speak English really well. I said, thank you. Um, you know, or how did they let you serve in the White House and at the Department of State when you're not an American?

Farah Pandith: [02:36](#) And you know, it's stunning. Um, it's stunning. Uh, for so many reasons. For all of us, this isn't about being Muslim or being somebody who hasn't had white skin or doesn't have the purest blood, whatever that might mean. This is about what's

happened to our country and what's happened to the world. So yes, there has been a rise of extremism and we have to talk about it. But while we pay attention and we must pay attention to the rise of the far right and the white nationalists and the Neo Nazis and the, and the sovereign citizens, Isis is still recruiting. And that's the message here. You know, we have been lazy on all of this. America has been, uh, asleep at the wheel looking at this issue. Like it's something that we have defeated and it's gone. Meanwhile, Isis is still recruiting at pace. They are entrepreneurial and we are not, they are focused on a demographic that is a billion Muslims strong. And that frightens me.

Susan Glasser:

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Well, so, you know, there's so much to unpack here, right? Cause we're really talking about, uh, the, not parallel but intersecting national security conversations. It's not that the old post nine 11 conversation about, uh, rising extremism around the world or the threat from global jihadism. It's not that that conversation is ended, it's that it has been intersected with a whole new conversation here inside the United States. One, which we're not really equipped to have in terms of national security. So let's, let's talk about your original intent, uh, in trying to share your own experiences of what it was like to be at the State Department and trying and not always succeeding, uh, in addressing this. Uh, what is the effect right now of the United States looking inward and not paying attention

Farah Pandith:

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to Isis? The lack of American leadership on this threat is very dangerous and it's going to make a difference for us in the long term. It's going to cost us more in the long term because the bottom line for how people recruit, uh, is that they're, these young people are dealing with a crisis of identity. And that crisis of identity appears in a lot of different ways. And some of you will feel that even in the way our nation feels right now, asking ourselves questions about who we are as Americans aren't we and what it feels like and, and what, what, uh, you know, what we really stand for those young Muslims are asking those very same questions in a post nine, 11 world. But the numbers are huge and it isn't. America has looked at this issue from a regional perspective. You know, what's happening in the Middle East, what's happening in Pakistan, what might be happening in northern Africa.

Farah Pandith:

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I'm here to say to you in what I saw traveling to nearly a hundred countries around the world, it was shocking for me to see that a Muslim living in a Muslim majority country as well as a Muslim living as a minority in that demographic of millennials were all having a crisis of identity. That has to be part of our

strategy. So when America isn't looking at the real threat that we aren't understanding the system that is underlying extremism and only sort of playing whack-a-mole, we have the problem that we have today, which is the bad guys are continuing to recruit. We are continuing to see an, uh, an interest in the US versus them ideology. And this scary thing to Susan is that the, we have lost our imagination of what could come. So when we were thinking about a queue, we could not possibly have thought there would be an isis today, you might say, well Fara, you might be looking at Isis 2.0 I'm looking at the next dimension of who they're going to recruit. Not just millennials, but with generation Z. And by the way, obviously not just men, but the all women armies that are to come. So for me, how America leads, how it thinks about things is critical to all of this.

Susan Glasser:

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The, the all women armies to come by. It seems like the topic of a panel in its own right, which uh, ambassador Burns I'm hoping you put on for next year. Ah, I can't wait to have that conversation, but, but let me ask you, you talked about recruiting. What, when you see something like, uh, thousands of people in, in a, a North Carolina, uh, arena saying send her back, send her back, uh, to, uh, an American Muslim woman. What, what is the effect of that in the world of the Internet and in the world of social media today? Does that exist outside of a domestic American political context? What does the national security implications? Yes.

Farah Pandith:

[07:01](#)

So I, my argument is that there is no domestic and international with millennials. I mean, obviously with the switch of their finger, they're connected around the world. What's happening in Newark shop Meritain yeah. Matters to what's happening in Milan. What happens in another part of the world. If you segment the offline, you are missing the point. What we see is the rise of us versus them and whatever form it comes, the bad guys, the kinds of bad guys that I've been working on will take anything that we do in our country and utilize it to say, we told you all along that being Muslim means that you can't be American or that the West is against Islam or there's only one way to be a Muslim and we're going to show you how to do it. And so our conversations here matter. I remember, I tell this story in this book about being in the jungles of Cambodia.

Farah Pandith:

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I'm sitting on the floor of a very modest mosque talking to two women and, and, and young people about being Muslim in Cambodia. And somebody raised their hand and, and through the translator asked me whether or not, and I'm not gonna say his name, but this person blank represented America. And I'm

going to ask you if you can remember the name of the pastor in Gainesville, Florida. Do you remember him? The Guy who was going to burn a Quran, you forgotten him because he doesn't represent America. But that person in the jungles of Cambodia named him buying name Terry Jones. And, and, and so what we see here, what we, we see her happening in America about sending her home. You don't belong. You'll never be you. You can't be a Jew or a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Muslim in this country. And that you can't go to your houses of worship because you're afraid to go pray that, that every house in America of worship has police around them because we're afraid of what might happen. Those messages get sent around the world, Susan. And it's dangerous for us. Let me flip it around cause

Susan Glasser: [08:56](#) I, we don't have that much time. What about the stories that we're not paying attention to? Because in fact, we are so inward looking in our politics at the moment. Uh, you know, we didn't necessarily expect a civil war in Syria before it broke out. We didn't expect an Isis, uh, to be the successor to Al-qaida. So what is it that you're tracking right now that, uh, is forced out of our conversation by the tweets and the distractions?

Farah Pandith: [09:23](#) Well, the larger Trans America has been really bad at understanding the cultural listening component of what, what is happening in the world. Corporate, let's do this really well. They can explain to you, they have people in their companies that are edge dwellers. They can look forward and see the trends that are happening with millennials. There's nobody in government that does that. We don't adapt ourselves in that way. And that's dangerous for us because you, the, the cultural component are the canaries in the coal mine. You see what's happening. You don't want the crisis when it's already exploded. You want to see the change of sentiment of these young kids as they progress through their adolescence. The human brain doesn't develop until the age of 24 and for a young person, that identity exploration is important for us to get our hands around. And so what we're missing are the the little, the little changes that that Americans in the policy world tend to think, oh, you know, that's happening over here or yeah, that might be happening over there, but we're not connecting the dots.

Farah Pandith: [10:18](#) What do I mean on the crisis of identity, they are changing the way Muslim youth are changing, the way they speak. They eat, they talk, they dress and you may say as the u s government, what does that, it's not our problem but it is a problem because if you only adopt Islam as a monolith, we have a problem. The bad guys want you to believe that there's only one way of being

Muslim and we haven't been watching that. And let me just say one other thing. I talked about the identity being a really important part of the system that is underlying extremism. The other plank that goes right by it is the role of Saudi Arabia. They have been a bully. They continue to be a bully. They've gotten literally gotten away with a murder. But what you're not watching in the policy circles and what we're not doing today is understanding that for, for three to four decades, that soft stuff that that panel just before us was talking about the soft infiltration that that is happening in communities to make them feel differently, to make them feel like the heritage that they've had for 800 years means nothing and that they need to Arrow buys and Saudi eyes how they are, that's going to come back to bite us and it's going to cost us in treasure and in life.

Susan Glasser:

[11:29](#)

You know, you make so many interesting points, but I have to say looking at your book the other day, I, it almost had this feeling of being a cry from a different moment in time. You know, I'm one that we remember, I mean it's a recent moment in time, uh, when we were immersed in, you know, what was then called the global war on terror. Uh, but it does feel like a different era. Uh, and you have a lot of specific policy prescriptions and recommendations. But

Farah Pandith:

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I have to ask you, is any of this in the least bit realistic? Uh, and even the, the short to medium term here in the United States, given where we are, I mean we're not going to be doing any of these things. Not only are we not going to be dealing with Saudi Arabia, we seem to have doubled down in our alliance. Yeah. Well look, I, I'm very clear and I've been very clear about a couple of things. Um, since nine 11, the government has worked really hard to defend ourselves and we've have a really a lot to be proud of obviously, but in the soft power space, we have not, um, we have not matched our effort in the, in the kinetic war with the efforts in the non-kinetic war. I don't see president Trump and this administration changing that soft power is not something that they have, um, have explored.

Farah Pandith:

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But I, I said when I started writing this book and the answer here, the book is called how we win, not because I think we're never going to win, but because I'm a realist and I'm a practical, practical person, the all in effort isn't just about government. Government isn't the only solution. Corporates have to take a role in understanding the rise of hate, the rise of US versus them. And we are beginning to see a shift in that. So when you asked that question, I'd say co correct. I agree with you. In the short term, the Trump administration has pulled the money from all the ideological, uh, efforts there. There's not a, an

organized effort domestically or internationally on making sure that the appeal of us versus them is not going forward. We're doing barely anything in terms of scaling, uh, all of the things that we have, markets that we have solutions at our fingertips that this administration could do right now and, and just scale it without creating anything new that we haven't.

Farah Pandith: [13:30](#) So where I'm looking not just for the next administration, we're not going to sit back and watch while Isis continues to recruit and al Qaeda, Hamza bin Laden, by the way, is a millennial. He's a digital native. He's out there. He's a credible face for his generation. So AICCU Isis and whatever comes next. I'm looking to civil society and I'm looking to the corporates to say, you have a role to play here in fighting hate. Well, it's interesting and just to underscore your point, these solutions that you talk about, and it's because we're in a moment where you don't talk a lot about solutions. These were essentially not particularly partisan or controversial in the past, right? These were things that both the Bush administration and the Obama Administration agreed upon. Absolutely. So why have they fallen by the wayside? Well, president Trump didn't come in here saying, we want to defeat the ideology of us versus them.

Farah Pandith: [14:19](#) And in fact, he's added a spark to it. Uh, in the very first days of him becoming president, the Muslim ban, all of the stuff that comes after it. So it isn't as if there is a cognition, uh, you know, that in fact there's a role that we can play and we can actually turn the dial down. In fact, that the dial has been turned up and it is going to require, because there is no US leadership in soft power in stopping the appeal of this ideology. I will look to our partners and allies in other parts of the world to say, what can you be doing while we are not leading, while we

Susan Glasser: [14:51](#) are sitting back and, and are asleep at the wheel.

Speaker 1: [14:55](#) Okay.

Susan Glasser: [14:55](#) Thank you for letting us be a stop on your book tour. Thanks. Thank all of you for listening. It's hard to go before lunch, but I think that's what we're up.

Speaker 1: [15:04](#) [inaudible] [inaudible].