

# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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## Karen Brooks

Karen Brooks is adjunct senior fellow for Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Ms. Brooks is one of the top Southeast Asia experts in the United States, with a long career in the region that includes lecturing at universities, democracy building and conflict resolution work with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), policy-making with the U.S. government, advisory work with Fortune 500 companies, and direct investing with private equity and hedge funds.

During the Clinton and Bush administrations, she was a leading architect of U.S. policy toward Indonesia. As special adviser to the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1998–1999) and as a member of the policy planning staff in charge of Asia (1999–2001) at the U.S. Department of State, she advised Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and other Clinton Administration officials on both Indonesia's historic democratic transformation and East Timor's transition to independence. Her work during this critical period in Indonesian history, which included frequent travel to the region with top diplomats and senior military officials, helped lay the groundwork for the expansion of U.S. ties with the new democratic Indonesia.

As director for Asian affairs on the National Security Council (NSC) staff at the White House (2001–2004), she advised the president of the United States, the national security adviser, the U.S. trade representative, and other cabinet members on U.S. policy toward Southeast Asia; she planned and participated in the president's meetings with the leaders of Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Timor-Leste, and Brunei; negotiated joint statements between the president and Southeast Asian leaders; coordinated and directed Southeast Asian policy among U.S. government agencies; and played a leading role in developing trade and other initiatives for President Bush's participation in Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. Important highlights of her tenure at the NSC included accompanying President Clinton to Timor-Leste's independence ceremonies in 2002; President Bush's six-country trip through Asia in 2003; the signing of the U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement; and the upgrading of U.S. defense partnerships with friends and allies in Asia.

Ms. Brooks now works with a leading global private equity firm making investments in Southeast Asia. Ms. Brooks holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and a master's degree from Cornell University. She has lived and worked throughout Asia and speaks Indonesian, Javanese, Mandarin and Thai. During her tenure in government, Ms. Brooks served as a translator for Presidents Clinton and Bush, as well as for numerous cabinet secretaries in both administrations.