

Welcome Remarks by Mr Sunjoy Joshi, Director, ORF

Honourable Foreign Minister of Iran, His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Shri Salman Khurshidji, our Trustee Shri Lalit Bhasinji, distinguished guests, excellencies assembled in this room today. On behalf of the Observer Research Foundation I would like to invite you to the 5th RK Mishra Memorial Lecture. The RK Mishra Memorial Lecture Series was initiated not just to commemorate the memory of the founder Chairman of Observer Research Foundation, it was also to underline his vision of creating an independent, global, Indian think-tank – a think-tank that by fostering serious and timely international engagement could help in promoting global cooperation and regional understanding. So, I feel specially honoured that on this occasion Mrs Renuka Mishra is here to join us as part of t Observer Research Foundation family. I welcome Mrs. Mishra.

Excellency, ORF owes its beginnings to India's financial crisis of 1991. That was a period of economic turmoil when ORF began as an independent platform that could bring together the many disparate and diverse voices that seem to be pulling the country in different directions. It began at a time when from amongst the many many fractious voices, the many discordant notes with diverse and often contradictory messages, what had to emerge was a consensus, a consensus that could get the country back on its feet and on the way forward. So, ORF was born at that time as an institution that could work to bring the country's finest minds to create this consensus around a national agenda and help steer us into the 21st century. Over the years, building upon the work initiated by Shri RK Mishra, we are today recognised as an institution that works with ideas, not with ideologies. That, Excellency, has continued to define the role and spirit of the organisation. We are a policy think tank which has remained multi-partisan, an organisation that can even today engage across different political hues, different ideologies, an organisation that does not see itself as an advocacy group tasked with promoting any particular agenda, but which has the ability to bring the widest possible diversity of opinion into one room, across one table and help through healthy debate to clean up the discursive space around key domestic and international policy issues. In this manner, Sir, we do our modest bit to provide policy inputs for an India that can be at peace with itself and with the world.

As a think tank recognised amongst the world's leading institutions, we draw our funding from the private sector, the government and a whole host of international organisations and through our partners, fellows and our alumni have a footprint in all continents across the world and I must forewarn you Sir, this footprint extends also to Iran.

With your permission Excellency, let me just allow me a few more words about Mr Mishra. Born in 1932 in Kolkata, Mr Mishra went on to become the editor of the Patriot and the Link, both highly influential papers in the milieu. But far beyond his role as an editor, Shri RK Mishra was a natural mediator, a reconciler of differences. He went to the Rajya Sabha as a Member of Parliament and served on the National Integration Council under the then Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao in 1990s. He was also deputed to undertake several critical roles during the Vajpayee administration which followed, including building crucial Track II and back channel links with Pakistan. For, his was that very very rare ability to straddle the divisions of politics, to straddle the divisions of the here and now and look beyond them as a keen thinker and mentor that he was. Passionate about scriptures and Indian philosophy, his last works deal almost exclusively with that domain.

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His love of India's tradition and culture obviously extended to Iran with whom we have deep cultural linkages. He was a keen observer of West Asia and was always confident of the region's ability to overcome its recent history. Dr Zarif Sir, ORF is indeed fortunate to have you here today to deliver the 5th RK Mishra memorial lecture and that is more so because you are well known as an international diplomat and a scholar who has written and lectured extensively on disarmament, human rights, international law and regional conflicts. In you we recognise and honour not just the Foreign Minister of Iran but an international statesman, who has been a significant voice on the world diplomatic stage today. I would particularly like to thank you for acceding to our request and coming to New Delhi one day earlier so that you could deliver this lecture. All in India know and admire Iran as a strong civilizational culture and we look forward to your vision for a future Iran, a country that is a leader amongst nations in a strong and stable West Asia.

I must thank His Excellency the Ambassador of Iran, Mr Ansari. It was pleasure working with you Sir. You helped to put this whole thing together. ORF has always welcomed experts from Iran and we are constantly engaged in building deeper institutional links with that country. I am very grateful that Mr Salman Khurshid has been able to be with us today. Sir, we have always enjoyed your support and it is befitting that you should be presiding over this lecture this evening. But before I hand the floor over to Minister Khurshid to conduct the proceedings, may I request our Trustee Mr Lalit Bhasin to honour our two distinguished dignitaries with the traditional Indian shawl.

Opening Remarks by Mr Salman Khurshid, External Affairs Minister, India

Good evening to all you distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour to have His Excellency, the Foreign Minister Dr Zarif, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Shri Sunjoy Joshi, Director of ORF, my very good friend Mr Lalit Bhasin, the eminent lawyer who I wonder often whether he has had himself cloned, he is in every important institution and he manages to get there all the time as the head of Board of Directors of ORF. We have some very distinguished ambassadors here, members of the academic community, scholars and Excellency the best we can offer in one gathering in this country are all present here. I take this as a very personal privilege and a great honour indeed that I can be here in association with the memorial lecture for none other than late RK Mishra who many of us grew up seeing as a person to admire, as a role model for somebody who I think really reflected truly the theme of EM Foster's book, Only Connect, just bringing the best minds together, the best people together, joining in a special energy. I think that it is a tremendous thing which our friends have done to institute this very important lecture in his memory. It is really good to have Mrs. Renuka Mishra here because it adds a very important personal note to this evening.

Of course, it is both a privilege and honour to have you Excellency here. India and Iran share a very important civilizational relationship. The histories of our two countries and our civilisations are closely intertwined. For modern India, India of our times, Iran is an important neighbour in our extended neighbourhood and a country that we see as being an integral part of our economic and security space. There is a strong desire on our part to nurture a special relationship that you have often spoken of between ourselves and of course to significantly expand on the scope of our present interface and interaction. Strong political and economic relations between India and Iran will contribute positively to security and stability of our region but I do believe also add another dimension to the way we will all together work towards peace in the world in the coming times.

Iran has an important role to play in fostering peace, stability, socio-economic development in the entire West Asia region and India has always said that Iran is too important a country to be isolated, ignored or to be sidestepped by the international community. We have always advocated that the primacy be given to diplomacy and peaceful conversations and negotiations to resolve all topics including the nuclear question rather than a path of confrontation and brinkmanship. I consider myself privileged at having said for the first time on behalf of India to the European Union that I truly that Iran's intentions were pure, that what you wanted was simply to be taken as equals in a world, to be treated with dignity and to be treated with respect and I think that is not something that you can hold against any country, any person, or any group of people.

We live in difficult and challenging times for the world and indeed for West Asia in particular. We continue to hear reverberations of the Arab Spring, something that Arabs sometimes do not like being described as Arab Spring and of course this is analysed, this is felt, this is observed, this is assumed in many different ways. But even as we look at that, I think all of us have no words to capture the enormity and tragedy of the humanitarian crisis that affects Syria, instability in Syria and unwholesome outcomes in Syria have the potential to undermine stability of the entire region. We have a very special stake beyond our historic relationship with the Arab world and that is that we have a stake of 6 million of our expatriates living and earning their livelihoods in that part of the world. President Rouhani, who I had a great privilege to meet during the Heart of Asia Conference, and you Foreign Minister have been very successful in clearing doubts expressed by Iran's detractors about Iran's desire to foster creative solutions to resolve various problems in the West Asia region and I congratulate you for it.

The Foreign Minister Dr Zarif as you all know who has had a very distinguished diplomatic career and his equally remarkable academic stint in many prestigious universities in Western world is the right man to manage foreign affairs of the new government of President Rouhani. Foreign Minister with the kind of academic scholarship that he brings and his long experience of dealing with multilateral institutions like the UN and in-depth knowledge of the nuclear and other complex issues can contribute significantly to enhance Iran's foreign policy initiatives and priorities. I do understand that the foreign minister has travelled extensively in the last few months to visit major world capitals, to explain Iran's foreign policy perspectives and also in his capacity as Iran's chief negotiator for the nuclear talks. I look forward to listening to his erudite insights into the problems being faced by the West Asian region, his government's foreign policy and possibly glean as a professional take away the wisdom that has untangled the nuclear knot. Thank you very much and welcome.

Lecture by Dr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister, Iran

Good evening. Your Excellency Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid, Mrs Mishra, Mr Joshi, Mr Bhasin, Excellencies, dignitaries, friends. It is such a great honour and privilege to be here with you and to deliver on this important occasion, the 5th RK Mishra Memorial Lecture. I feel honoured to have this opportunity and I am grateful to you Mrs Mishra for being here with us tonight.

India and Iran enjoy millennia of relations. That is how we look at history. Our historical background goes into not decades or centuries, that is how we have formed strong bonds of affinity through centuries of interaction. I see and I have seen many in my diplomatic career.

For my Indian friends and colleagues reciting the poems of famous Iran poets like Hafiz and Sa'di times embarrassing me in knowing more than I did. The extent of relations between our two cultures, the way we have interacted with each other and have achieved synergy, have been able to augment one another's outlook, perspective and understanding of our environment, in fact, gives us the ability to deal with the changing international environment in a way that would enable us to see that empires are temporary periods in human history. That what we need is to look at the international environment from a totally different perspective, not of submission and imposition but of dialogue and cooperation. Dialogue is a necessity and I think you need to have a historical perspective like that enjoyed by India and a cultural harmony like that possessed by India in order to be able to understand that it is possible in our today's international environment, not just possible but necessary in today's international environment to engage in serious understanding and dialogue and to move away from the old paradigm that has produced nothing but hardship, nothing but war, nothing but conflict and bloodshed and poverty and deprivation throughout the last many centuries. We need a new paradigm.

Many have found it difficult to look at the international environment from a non-zero sum perspective. This zero-sum mentality was so prevalent in the Cold War era that it has unfortunately shaped our outlook to the international environment. But the context of international relations have changed, the players have changed. Today those of us who represent nation states can no longer claim monopoly on being subjects of international affairs and subjects of international law. The whole concept of nation state as being the cornerstone of international relations and international law is undergoing a fundamental transformation of unprecedented magnitude. So, if we as states can no longer claim monopoly in the conduct of international affairs, if individuals have entered the international scene as important players and stakeholders that have a tremendous impact on the future of our society then we need to look at this new environment in which we operate from a different perspective, we need to change our glasses. According to a well-known contemporary Iranian poets, we need to wash our eyes and look anew at the international system because the older process has not produced much and we see it is not producing much for most of us.

We have understood or at least claim to have understood that we have a wave of globalisation. We have a globalised international environment. It is easy to understand and to proclaim that we know it when it comes to environment. You laugh at anybody who claims to be able to protect its own environment at the expense of others. You will even laugh at somebody who claims to be able to protect its environment without the help and cooperation and assistance of others. That has become an unacceptable and even ridiculous claim. We have come to understand that we cannot prosper in a globalised world, in a world dominated by poverty and deprivation. At least in our declarations we claim to understand that. But we still continue to believe that we can possess security at the expense of insecurity of others. That is the prevalent mentality in international relations which needs to be changed if we want to be able to have a better, more peaceful future at the international scene. I believe India and may I claim Iran have been in the forefront of fighting for that different outlook.

Let us go a little bit back, when the father of India, Mahatma Gandhi presented his outlook that was the beginning of a new paradigm of international relations. When our former President Khatami suggested that we need dialogue as a new paradigm, a dialogue of inclusion rather than exclusion, a paradigm that is founded on cooperation rather than

allocation of blame on the enemies, either perceived, manufactured or real, that was an attempt to define international relations in a different way. I believe we need to look at it that way because it does not make sense. If security at the expense of insecurity of others made any sense then we should never have had 9/11. I thought 9/11 was enough to prove to everybody that security is a globalized common commodity. You cannot own it. You need to share it. You cannot have security alliances, you need to have security networking. In today's environment networking has become the catchwords of the day. Why don't we apply it to security, why we create insecurity for others in order to gain security. It is imperative. Sometimes it may sound like a bit idealistic but I don't believe that facts on the ground, looking at realities on the ground, is being idealistic. It is very realistic in the true sense of the word. To come to the realization that wars, all options on the table as some of our new negotiating partners like to call them, are no longer options. In empirical studies, in 85% of the cases of the use of force in the 20th century, those who used force either failed totally in achieving their objectives or in fact failed miserably even in preserving their own continued livelihood. That is why when in 1928, that is not recent, in the Pact of Paris nations decided to dismiss and reject war as an option, as an instrument of national security, as an instrument of foreign policy. That is how the first sentence or the first article of the Pact of Paris reads, "We the signatories decide to reject the use of force as an instrument of national policy." It was not because they were a bunch of lawyers engulfed in altruism and idealism but because they were a bunch of politicians who had come to the realisation that war had lost its utility. It was futile since then and has been proven time and again that it is futile to resort to force in order to achieve foreign policy objectives. It did not work in Vietnam, did not work in Iraq, did not work in Afghanistan, and it will not work anywhere else. That realisation is paramount and fundamental if we want to look at this new international environment from a different perspective, a perspective that if we look at any situation from a zero-sum perspective, if we try to win at the expense of others, we will all end up losers. In other words, zero-sum games no longer exist. We could either have positive sum games. Attempts to have a zero sum game will get to negative sum outcomes.

The amount of loss will be different. Somebody will lose more than you. The adversary, the competitor may lose a bit more but at the end of the day all of us have lost. Apply it to any given case, apply it to our nuclear issue. Iran, as my good friend and brother Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid pointed out, wanted a nuclear weapons programme not to gain weapons but to stand on its feet. People thought based on an illusion that through pressure, through intimidation, through imposition, they could bring Iran to its knees and stop Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. We could have defined a different goal 10 years ago. I can claim that I tried when as a person doing the negotiations with the EU-3, we did not have political directors, we tried to give a common outlook, a joint objective but in a scene so occupied with winning and losing, you remember at that time was war on terror, that was the concept. The concept was winning a war. You remember the banner on the warship, victory achieved. That was the objective and we see 11 years after that what we see in Iraq and Syria. At that time there was an illusion that the Iranian nuclear programme, there was a perception that this was nothing but a façade for a weapons programme and an illusion that it could be brought to an end through pressure and intimidation. The misperception that our nuclear energy programme was a weapons programme emanated from the enemy paradigm that you looked at the behaviour of somebody who was not in line with your thinking and mentality always from a negative perspective that you never tried to examine your assumptions because if you want to engage in dialogue you need to examine your assumptions, you cannot go into a dialogue with assumptions because if you go into any session and I have attended many multilateral sessions like so many of you, when we go to an

international session unprepared to listen, we just try to get a word from the adversary's mouth in order to respond to it rather than to understand where they are coming from. So, there was no attempt to understand Iranian position but simply to assume based on certain predispositions where Iran was coming from. But that cognitive problem which is a major part of our problem and major part of our global problem in understanding and dealing with another was augmented by the fact that they thought that they could bring this programme to an end through pressure. We obviously thought that people should not impose upon us. The end result was that after 10 years we look back and see what each side has achieved in this zero-sum outlook.

The west has achieved 18,800 centrifuges because when this whole process of hurting one another started Iran had less than 200 centrifuges. The illusion of zero-enrichment option and the illusion of the possibility to win at the expense of others through the might of the Security Council and its permanent members and its ability to use Chapter 7 and sanctions and the whole works that they can do to hurt you, has produced today 19 centrifuges that are spinning in Tehran. So, in my calculation that would be utter failure for sanctions. Hasn't produced much for us, from an economy that was growing at 5%, now we are facing a negative growth. But we have a population who resents the west for imposing the sanctions and preventing its right to have a peaceful programme. So, at the end of the day if we look at it, nobody has won. We can try to measure our losses and tally who has lost most than the other. I claim the West has lost more because not only it has now to deal with a fact on the ground of 19000 centrifuges, it has to deal with an Iranian public which is resentful, of the way it has been treated and an Iranian public which is extremely sceptical of the intentions of the West. So, that is a major loss. I think the realization that that was a policy doomed to fail has brought everybody to the negotiating table. We tried, I cannot still claim that we have won, that we have all won. But we tried to present a different picture. Let me play it out to you what the picture looks like. I said in New York and again in Geneva that we need to have a shared objective and what is the shared objective, we cannot have competing objectives. If we want to gain together we need to have a common objective and the common objective is to have an Iranian nuclear programme that is exclusively peaceful. If we can agree on that objective, then we will not try something and the West tries to deprive us of a nuclear programme.

Why is it in the interest of both sides to look at her common objective in that fashion? From our point of view, it is essential for the world to accept that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. We do not have an interest in possession of nuclear weapons. Let me tell you one. In our immediate neighbourhood we are the largest, strongest country that needs to go out of its way to gain the confidence of its neighbours because of the divergence and size in population. We do not need an added possibility to have relations of cooperation with our neighbours. In fact I claim that an attempt by Iran to gain strategic superiority in its immediate neighbourhood will lead to Iran's loss of its conventional superiority in the neighbourhood because the neighbours have a better opportunity than we do to invite a foreign nuclear umbrella and at the end of the day if we tried a strategic superiority we will lose our conventional superiority.

Let me share with you another secret. In our regional calculations, in our immediate neighbourhood regional calculations, nuclear calculations never came into play. During the height of the Taliban era, our neighbours supported the Taliban and we were at loggerheads with the Taliban and I sat in Iran's national security council when we discussed the situation in Afghanistan and never even once we consider the fact that Pakistan was a nuclear power, that never even entered into our calculations because it does not make sense for us to engage

in that type of calculus. In the wider context, Iran cannot entertain either the first strike capability or the second strike capability directly or through proxy vis-à-vis its wider protagonist namely Israel and the United States. So, it does not make sense for us to be perceived even to be pursuing nuclear weapons. So, we can make that objective our own to show that our nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful. But I think it would be prudent for the West also to make that objective its own. I don't know whether they have done it yet but they have made some progress, after seeing the remarks by President Obama, after seeing the remarks by Chancellor Merkel, it seems that there is some progress being made and that is, Iran has a nuclear technology. Whether we copied it or not, depending on when you start history everybody has copied something from others. Some of us who have a deeper sense of history know who has copied what from whom.

So, whatever the source, we have made it our own. It is indigenous technology, we have our own scientists, we can produce nuclear material, we can produce centrifuges, we can connect them. So, if the west wants to make sure that we do not have a weapons programme, it should not ask us to abandon this technology, but it should make sure that this technology is implemented transparently in an open fashion under international monitoring. That is the best way to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme will always remain peaceful. So, I believe the illusion as stated by President Obama that if he had his way he would have made sure that Iran's nuclear programme did not have even a nut and a bolt, it is good that we admit that that is an illusion and start thinking about a different outlook. I believe if we share that objective, if we can make that objective our own, then not only we can make progress as we did for the initial phase a lot of people believe that the initial phase will never take place here in Iran, here in our part of the world and in the West particularly. Naysayers were always there saying no, no Iran cannot agree and then saying that Iran cannot implement and then saying that Congress and the United States will prevent implementation. But at least a degree of prudence and sober analysis has prevailed up till now. We have our deal, we have implemented it and if that realisation, again going back to the concept that I started from, if the realization that zero-sum games do not make sense even in security areas, or shall I say particularly in security areas, if that realisation prevails, then I think it is easy to reach an understanding because then we will not be so jealous about the nitty gritty of whether I get one centrifuge more or they get one more inspection a day or two more inspections a day, the total outcome must be an outcome in which I can claim that we have made a deal based on Iran's national integrity, a deal based on mutual respect, a deal based on equal footing and they can claim that they have made a deal that achieves our common objective that Iran will never have nuclear weapons, which is fine with me and with the Iranian people. The Iranian people will never accept somebody telling them that you should do this, that or the other. But they have no difficulty accepting international norms of behaviour.

Let me tell you another example that has led to the same catastrophe. The zero-sum mentality based on illusions in Syria has brought us to this stage. There was an illusion and that illusion continues to prevail, continues to see Syria based on a picture that will never happen and 150,000 people in Syria have paid the price in their lives. I think on that point too, we need to come to the realization that it is the people of Syria who have to find a solution at the end of the day, not people outside who may like or dislike this or the other person. Their like or dislike of this or the other person has prevented the people of Syria from sitting down together and finding a solution. We in the outside world whether invited to Geneva 2 or invited and...however you might want to call it, can help that process. That process in itself, the invitation and disinvasion was another manifestation of the zero-sum mentality. In Syria we have a problem that is a common problem and that is the rise of

extremism. The rise of extremism in Syria is as much a problem for Saudi Arabia as it is for Iran and Iraq and Pakistan, India or even the United States. Today almost every western country has a few citizens fighting in Syria. I can promise you that Syria will not be a slaughterhouse for extremists. It is as it has been a breeding ground for extremists. Today we have more extremists fighting in Syria than we had two years ago because blood and killing provide the propaganda tools for demagogues to take advantage of the inherent resentments that are so prevalent in our region caused by decades of occupation and suppression. They are using that in order to gain new recruits. So, the illusion that Syria will either be a slaughter house where you can pour all your extremists into the Syrian battleground and get rid of them, to put it in a realistic albeit a very cruel way, is nothing but an illusion. The illusion that you can force a government that has been able to withstand all that pressure almost from the entire international community, to ask them to simply abandon and go, has caused this continued bloodshed. The realisation that we all have a stake in a Syria that is immune from further conflict bloodshed, extremism, and repression. A Syria in which you can train the future in a way that it will not be win or lose everything for anybody who wins the election or loses the election. That is a different picture in Syria from the pre-conditions that are being put for any negotiations to lead to any success. I can assure you that unless we start looking at this issue from a realistic approach that is a non-zero sum approach. We will not be able to resolve the problem. The problem will continue to linger for I can assume years to come and in the process many more lives will be lost. You cannot simply wish it away, it won't go.

That is why I believe Iran and India can work together on all these issues. We have many common problems, we live in a dangerous neighbourhood, we will be faced with a situation in Afghanistan where you have a presidential election and the withdrawal of foreign forces, both of which can be the source of stability because presence of foreign forces are by nature inherently destabilizing because occupation under whatever guise creates resentment. But if their departure creates a vacuum to be filled by the Taliban or extremists then all of us will lose. We need to come to the realisation that all of us will lose. There won't be any winners and the first victims will be the people of Afghanistan who have suffered for the last, I don't know, how many decades. The same is true with Syria, the same is true elsewhere and we have the necessary depth of history to be able to understand the realities in international society from a historical perspective to recognize that the international community is undergoing a fundamental change giving us the opportunity to define the future of international relations in a totally different way and I believe every actor, every state, every individual can make a difference. This is the approach of the new government in Iran. We believe that we can in fact make a difference. We have that self confidence and I believe the people of Iran gave us that self confidence by going to the polls in huge numbers. 73% of Iranian people went to the polls restored the social capital which is fundamental to our legitimacy and our security and enabled us to be able to go to the international environment, to go to the international scene and with that self confidence engage. Constructive engagement requires self confidence. I am grateful to the people of Iran who have given us that self confidence to be able to engage. I see the same self confidence in India. I think we can work together. For us, our relations with India is not a reaction to our relations with anybody else. Our relations with India as our relations with Russia or China or other countries is based on its own merits. We two countries with deep historical relations, with deep historical ties, with a lot of economic potential for cooperation, a lot at stake for a secure environment, a lot at stake for prosperity in the region, a lot at stake for a corridor connecting India to Europe, a corridor which also connects Central Asian countries to the high seas and Afghanistan provides for prosperity. So, we need to base our future relations on this

understanding that the two countries have a lot in common. We have a lot of common opportunities, a lot of common challenges and I have exceeded by time, so I end here. I believe there is a lot that we can do together in order to make a better future for our children and for future generations. Thank you.

Mr Salman Khurshid: You would have felt the surge of energy there and the remarkable insights that we have been able to get from this lecture. I know that His Excellency would have been quite happy to go on for several hours, there is a lot more where that came from. But I am hoping that something will be reserved for our conversations tomorrow. But congratulations, it is wonderful. Of course, limited time but we have 3 questions that has been agreed. The first one comes from Dr Omer Ahmed, who is an eminent writer.

Q&A Session

Dr. Omer Ahmed (author): Dr Zarif, I am one of your 126,000 followers on Twitter. I also follow the President as well as the Supreme Leader. It is very interesting. This has been useful in your public diplomacy. But wouldn't it be useful also for us to have more Iranians from Iran on Twitter other than just people who are outside.

Dr Javad Zarif: I use exactly the same methodology to be on Twitter and Facebook as others in Iran do. So, there are a lot of Iranians on Twitter and Facebook and let me boast that I have 850,000 followers on Facebook, so that is even better. They are all Iranians and they follow me from Iran. I tweet in English but I write my status in Facebook in Persian. But on a more serious side, we have a very diverse society in Iran. It is the job of the government and it is not just the executive, it is the government in its entirety, to be able to respond to the demands and wishes of this larger community and the views on access to the internet because of profanity that exists because of things that they consider, a vast majority of Iranians consider to be unacceptable. The views are seriously different and divergent. I like to believe that I am on the majority side but I believe I am not. I believe the majority expect the government to have control so that their children will not be able to go to the Facebook, to go to the Internet and be subjected to the type of material that is available freely on the internet. The government needs to find a balance. This government does not have any political Acts...so we believe from a political perspective that we need to have a free space at least in the virtual world for people to interact. But we need to counterbalance that against the wishes and desires of a large segment of Iranian population to think otherwise. The process of reaching that consensus because decision making in Iran whether it is on the nuclear issue or on access to internet is usually a slow process of building consensus and I believe that through that process we can reach an agreement that is sustainable. For Indians I don't need to explain this because you know how to do things that are sustainable. You have a sustainable democracy. You can sustain the wishes and winds of change. We have been trying to establish a same type of government and that is why some people may not have noticed this but in the last 4 presidential elections every president has presided over the election of his opposition into office. That gives you a sustainability that is not apparently clear or even existent in many of our neighbours, even those who claim to have a democracy. That requires certain awareness of the social trends, of the traditional values and norms that need to interact with the modern political traditions and find a balance.

Dr Manoj Joshi (ORF): Thank you Excellency. From your sourcing address that you have given us about the non-zero sum kind of calculations, I am sorry to bring you in a different

direction a little bit east wards and I ask you how concerned are you about violent religious extremism emanating from Pakistan and affecting Iran and Afghanistan.

Dr Javad Zarif: I believe extremism and violence emanating from everywhere hurts everyone, including places where it emanates from. Extremism and violence in today's world serve nobody and every one of our friends know that. We all need to work together. I believe in this process we need to be inclusive. All stakeholders, all stakeholders in this process need to work together in order to create an environment in which we do not help breed extremism and violence. We have been talking to our friends, now we have more problems with some other neighbours than we do with Pakistan. But Pakistani territory has sometimes been used in order to wage terrorist operations against Iran. But we believe that all those and we have no evidence that the government of Pakistan is involved but we have evidence that some others are involved, some other neighbours may be involved in extremism and violence that is being waged in in Lebanon, in Yemen, from Pakistan into Iran, it is not the government of Pakistan, it may be others. But we believe that we should not exclude any of them from the talks because at the end of the day all of us will suffer, even those who tend to believe that they can be immune from the extremists that they themselves sometimes produced. I believe that realisation is extremely helpful and that is again a non-zero sum approach to dealing with this very serious security problem not only for us in this region but also globally as I said.

Dr Mithu Sengupta (Academic and human rights expert): Your Excellency, as you would know India was one of the earliest countries to recognize Palestine and support Palestinian rights. Keeping this in mind I would like to ask you about your position on Israel. Would not the world and also the Palestinian people benefit from Iran's developing more congenial relations with Israel. Recognizing or having more congenial relations would make Iran a key player in negotiations, helping end Israel's abject treatment of Palestinians and it would also strengthen your negotiating position on many issues. So, do you agree Sir, that Iran's global role will be enhanced by developing more congenial relations with Israel and are such congenial relations on the horizon.

Dr Javad Zarif: Since I am an honest person let me say simply no. But after saying no in no unambiguous terms because I don't want to mislead anybody let me make a couple of points. I recognize the fact that India has always been and continues to be a strong supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people, to self determination to human rights and we welcome that position. That is one of the issues that brings us very close to India. We have worked together closely on these issues in multilateral forums and we will continue to work together on those issues. The problem in Palestine is not Iran. Maybe a good smokescreen for some people to hide behind, the problem in Palestine is the fact that as you have said time and again that the most fundamental rights of the Palestinian people have been trampled upon for decades. The Palestinians have been deprived of their right to self determination, their most fundamental right, have been prevented from coming back to their own homes, and nobody is prepared to address those problems. If they want to find excuses that Iran is preventing that, then they are welcome to their excuses. But that is not a solution, excuses never provide a solution. We have our analysis of the problem in Palestine, we have our own view of what lies at the root of this problem and nobody can ask us to change that analysis because that analysis has been proven time and again that it is the aggression somehow inherent in occupation that has prevented a resolution. But that is our analysis. It is our sovereign decision, we will keep our analysis to ourselves, we make it clear to the rest of the world but that is our analysis. But that is not a cause. Philosophically analysis and statements cannot

be the cause for actions. Actions are the violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and they could not be justified under any excuse or smokescreen. Even if they are justified, if smokescreens are created in order to cover them up, covering up the problem will not resolve. Palestinian problem can only be resolved by restoration of the rights of the Palestinians as we and India and many others, the overwhelming majority of the international community have time and again pronounced themselves on this issue. This issue will not be resolved until and unless the rights of the Palestinians are restored, that they can have their own independent State with Al-Kuds as their capital, that the Palestinian people have a right to return to their homeland and a right to decide freely their own future. That is the only solution. So, if people are not capable of delivering that solution, then they can find any excuse that they may want to find. But Iran will maintain its position, will not change its analysis unless our analysis is proven wrong and in the last 60 years it has not been proven wrong and I don't believe it will be proven wrong. We have our analysis, we have our view, we will maintain that view. But that should not be an excuse for continuing to violate the rights of Palestinian people.

Mr Salman Khurshid: It is very difficult to add anything at all to such an erudite conversation. We thank His Excellency both for the lecture and the very candid remarks, very helpful to all of us. It only remains for me to invite Shri Lalit Bhasin to give the vote of thanks and say a few words.

Vote of thanks by Mr Lalit Bhasin

One very rarely hears such a brilliant, profound, thought provoking, stimulating address in the form of this lecture. If you share my perception, please give a standing ovation. His Excellency Dr Mohd. Zarif, Hon'ble Shri Salman Khurshid, Mr Sunjoy Joshi, Mrs Renuka Mishra, His Excellency the Ambassador of Iran to India, Your Excellencies, Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, our honourable Minister Shri Salman Khurshid made a very telling observation that Iran has an important role to play and it is too important a country to be side lined by anyone and what His Excellency Mr Zarif very rightly pointed out that India and Iran they need to achieve more synergies, mutual understanding on international environment, and the need to have a constant dialogue. He also observed, and very rightly so, no nation can claim monopoly in the context of international norms, international law and international relations. He also stressed on the need of beginning of a new paradigm of inclusion rather than of exclusion. What is the most striking feature of your lecture was that you shared with us your nuclear secrets. I have a personal relationship with this lecture because Shri RK Mishra was a friend, philosopher and guide to all of us and it is a fitting tribute to him that a person of your eminence due to efforts made by Mr Sunjoy Joshi and his entire team that this packed hall had the benefit of listening to your brilliant address. Another reason is my personal relations with Iran as a lawyer. I started going there in late 1960s on behalf of a client and when I used to come back my children used to look for the dates, the pistachios, the caviar and of course the small carpets which I used to bring from Tehran. So, Sir, it is indeed a great privilege for us on behalf of the ORF, its trustees, and on behalf of the people of India to welcome you here and I propose a vote of thanks to you and the Hon'ble Minister Shri Salman Khurshid and all the dignitaries. Thank you.