

## Welcome remarks by ORF Director Sunjoy Joshi

- 1.** Ambassador Verma, distinguished guests, friends and colleagues in the room and online watching the webcast a very good afternoon and welcome to Observer Research Foundation for this special oration on "Protecting our Shared Spaces" and the fast evolving U.S - India Partnership which places this objective at the very core of the collaborative landscape.
- 2.** I am specially delighted to welcome in His Excellency Ambassador Richard Verma a very special guest, a person with keen legislative knowledge, who in his various roles has moved with ease from the private sector to the State Department, who has worked in policy think tanks and is now steering the US-India relationship as the U.S. Ambassador in Delhi.
- 3.** And we as ORF feel rather privileged as we recall our association with Excellency Verma during his stint at the Centre for American Progress where he was heading the India Initiative, when we had the privilege of working with you Sir. Ranked by India Abroad as amongst the most influential Indian Americans he has consistently, even at the most disappointing of times, (and there have been quite a few) maintained a deep and unshakeable belief in the potential of the U.S. and India partnership.
- 4.** Sir, we have welcomed you in your new capacity in Kolkata where you overwhelmed the audience, you with your views on India's Act East initiative. You were with us at the US India Think Tank summit, yet this is the first time that I am welcoming you Excellency at our premises.
- 5.** Despite their growing importance, our shared spaces have never been as vulnerable as they are today. Whether it is terrorists targeting civilian air traffic, pirates threatening vital sea-lanes, or cyber militias attacking computer networks, the capacity of small but well-organized groups to disrupt vital common spaces has increased significantly. And, importantly, these threats are not limited to non-state actors. Therefore, it is an issue, which requires the fullest attention of all countries, particularly the US and India and other big powers, given that the interdependence and intra-dependence that we enjoy today is increasingly enabled by these global commons.
- 6.** The UN identifies outer space, the high seas and Antarctica as the global commons. But truly our shared spaces extend far beyond these. Because how can we exclude our vital cyber infrastructure, cyberspace itself as part what we need to jointly protect. Cyberspace has become the virtual resource where the economies of nations have got so integrated with each other that it is difficult to tell where one nation's interests end the other's begin/AN interdependency that manifests itself every minute of the day 24X7 through a million little financial transactions zipping their way across the world, even in and out of the hands of rogue states and rogue actors. And unlike other commons, this one has been invented, is owned by public and private enterprises, and yet has developed features that make it near impossible to not position the preservation and protection of the digital medium as one that collectively we are all tasked with.
- 7.** WE all know Hardin's depiction of the tragedy of the tragedy of the commons - where every individual tries to reap the greatest benefit from a shared resource, until the demand for the resource overwhelms the supply and everyone who partakes of that resource ends

up directly harming others, depriving them of any present or future benefit. Substitute individuals by countries, corporations, and the myriad state as well as non-state actors comprising the agency functions in this increasingly complex world and you are left staring at the tragedy of a Global Commons under siege. Given Hardin's depiction, how does anyone protect something when the ones laying siege and the ones protecting it are one and the same?

**8.** But we are already in a world of inter-dependency. And in an inter-dependent world the classical economists tragedy of the commons is actually the wrong metaphor to even problematize the issue.

**9.** Let me quote here the study by Brann and Foddy who found that as the supply of a shared resource deteriorates, then under conditions of low deterioration pool participants do tend to increase their consumption of the resource; however, rapid deterioration leads to decreased consumption. More important however was what they found regarding difference in the consumption rates of various participants. Under conditions of rapid deterioration, Subjects with high levels of trust consume far less than those with lower levels of trust. In short what played the most important role in mediating the management of resource consumption and use was not so much the dilemma of the commons as the factor of trust.

**10.** So the key to managing the commons can be encapsulated in that word trust. It is not trust just of each other, but trust and ownership of the rules, the norms, the architecture that defines the framework of the commons. If the trust exists, if all participants can jointly take ownership of the rules, interdependency ensures that the commons will be prudently managed.

**11.** India and the US are doing and can do a lot together to build that vital trust in the architecture, the rule making that goes into defending the global commons. We believe in the vitality of these Commons for the free flow of information and trade for the health of our economies depends upon these.

**12.** On the Sea, both countries believe in freedom of navigation as articulated in the Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region released during President Obama's visit to India earlier this year. Moreover, our navies have been working together in ensuring the safety and security of shipping lanes of communication and we have complemented our efforts on the sea and in the air to provide assistance and relief to those who needed it most at the time of natural or man made emergencies. ORF was delighted to partner with the U.S. State Department and the MEA to host the first Track 1.5 dialogue on HADR in Hawaii ...where Raja led the Indian delegation...and we hope to develop platforms that will bring the two countries closer in the days ahead...

**13.** On Cyberspace, Washington has already indicated its support for the ambitious Digital India programme in the Joint Declaration of Intent to further bilateral cooperation. India and the US have made clear their awareness of the threats to national security and the economy from cyber activities. To this end, information sharing, between civilian, military and other agencies in both countries, domestically and with each other, has been advanced. India has announced its intent to support the Multistakeholder model of governance for the digital commons and has specially identified the U.S. as the partner country that it would seek a special relationship with in this medium ?we at ORF are putting together a platform in

consultation with the two governments that would help further an ambitious partnership and we are delighted that the US Government will be a headline partner of the CyFy - which is ORF's flagship cyber and internet event.

**14.** On Space, the agencies of our countries have worked together in the past and there is immense potential for more collaboration in this arena. Last year, we agreed to launch a NASA-ISRO satellite mission to observe Earth and establish a pathway for future joint missions to explore Mars. We are both actively involved in the ongoing negotiations for a space code of conduct, and more recently we hear that the U.S. is soon to become a client of the ISRO launch facilities and capabilities?. We had the pleasure of hosting Assistant Secretary Frank Rose a few months ago on this subject and we at ORF have launched a Kalpana Chawla Space Conference on her birth anniversary and we will be seeking active collaboration with NASA to make this into a annual marquee event...

**15.** I am confident that under the leadership of Ambassador Verma the countries have begun to capitalise on some of the opportunity and we at ORF do assure him that we will continue to be strong supporter of this partnership,,,,,

**16.** The format for today is simple ?we will have a talk by the U.S. Ambassador followed by a couple of rounds of Questions and responses?at the end of our time today I will request my colleague Raja to say a few words and propose a vote of thanks ...

**17.** Ambassador Verma ...may I request you to address us now