

## **Welcome Address by Sunjoy Joshi, Director, Observer Research Foundation**

Honourable Foreign Minister of Iran, Excellency Dr. Mohd. Javad Zarif, Excellency the Ambassador of Iran to India, the very distinguished ambassadors and members of the diplomatic community, experts, scholars and friends from the media assembled here, it gives me immense pleasure to welcome in our midst Foreign Minister Dr Javad Zarif today.

We at ORF feel privileged to have you with us Sir. Close to three years ago you had graced us by delivering our annual lecture in February 2014. That was a time when Iran and you personally were occupied in the middle of crafting the solution, of negotiating the nuclear agreement, reaching the understanding that has today in more ways than one redefined the destiny of not just this region but of the larger neighborhood....

That was a time when in spite of the considerable skepticism around the world you had displayed your determination and confidence that the time for zero sum games was over and that diplomacy would triumph, because it had to triumph over contest and conflict. And as we all watched the progress of the negotiations the world came to respect someone who could lead from the front to make it happen..

In the process in you the world has come to recognize not just as the Foreign Minister of Iran but an international statesman representing a country that has today become a significant voice against terror, one in favour of peace and harmony on the world stage.

Your diplomatic skills and finesse are just half of this story. What you brought to the negotiating table was also your immense academic scholarship, the in depth knowledge of the nuclear and other complex issues coupled with your long experience of dealing with multilateral institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I recall HE's talk two and half years ago where he had, at that rather uncertain time, spelt out a vision of Iran as a strong civilizational culture, a country that was poised to be the leader amongst nations working not just against the D'aesh, but against all forms of extremism and terror for a strong and stable Asia.

Therefore we are indeed fortunate to have him here today not just as an international diplomat but an internationalist in the true meaning of the term, a scholar who has written and lectured extensively on disarmament, human rights, international law and regional conflicts. We are particularly privileged for him to be speaking to us on terrorism and extremism at a time when geo-political disruptions and political transformations across countries are demanding more from leaders within the region.

Today as the world is witnessing events unfold in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen it is also being made to see them against the backdrop of the results that democratic processes are repeatedly throwing up in Europe as well across the Atlantic These more and more make it clear that increasingly it may fall upon regional powers such as ours to engage with each other and invest for the long term stability of the region.

You have time and again expressed your innate belief in the strong civilizational underpinning of our countries and seen in those the true font for the strong potential of this region. You have had an unshakeable belief and trust in the strength of Iran and India ties.

Speaking at this very forum you had underlined that ...

We (INDIA AND IRAN) have deep historical relations, deep historical ties, with a lot of economic potential for cooperation, a lot at stake for a secure environment, prosperity in the region, and for a corridor connecting India to Europe - a corridor which also connects Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to the high seas and provides for prosperity.

Embedded in these words was the idea for an interconnected region, and an endorsement of the crucial and dynamic interplay between connectivity, prosperity and security that needed to be not just appreciated but also resolutely put into place brick by brick.

For as you said "Security is a globalized common. You cannot own it. You need to share it. You cannot have security alliances, you need to have security networking."

Security indeed cannot be a zero sum game because it is a common good and countries such as ours, have to become partners in the provisioning of that global good in this region by becoming the enablers for an integrated and inter-connected region ...from Europe to India ...and from central Asia to the Indian Ocean ....

Unfortunately, if any commodity has been in short supply in this region it has been security. ...the rise of quasi-states as instruments of terror, the Daesh; the continued support of terror by some states and the globalised occurrence of radicalism - online and offline have become everyday news.

We have seen two concurrent wars .....the War on Terror and the War by Terror ...both feeding on and feeding off each other to become the two enduring realities that have taken centre stage over the past few years ....

The interconnection and economic prosperity that many of us are keen to see materialise is held hostage by those who now see terrorism as the principle form of state power, those who see terror as a natural consequence of ideological expressions and by those who see terror as both a political and economic choice for themselves, for their people and their community.

Experts have oft argued over the best course to counter terror, Do we need to remove the underlying causes, the motivations and grievances or do we need to remove the capability and capacity to do harm...what should command our priority?

There is no need for a trade-off between the two nor is there is any need to compromise with the urgent need to cooperate, to construct integrative solutions to counter terror and its proponents...We need to do both ....remove the capabilities and capacity to cause harm. We must continue to do that by incapacitating the real as well as the digital tools that are deployed by those who want to kill and terrorize .... But at the same time ...we must continuously build pressure to ensure cogent responses to the underlying grievances and factors.....

The Heart of Asia conference has brought you to India. But we all know that the heart of Asia will truly beat only when security, counter-terrorism and peace are taken up as the conditions precedent for trade and economics. Otherwise the lack of progress on this front will continue to dampen the potential of this multilateral initiative.

This distinguished gathering is waiting to hear your thoughts on these issues as also on how can our two countries partner?

We have a history of supporting each other in our neighbourhoods ...how can we deepen it?

How can we work together in the physical as well as the digital space so that online radicalism can be curbed and countered?

How can we work together to ensure that the international community invest more deeply on these fronts ...move beyond mere lip service to create a framework where this challenge is managed with the urgency it merits ....

There are few better minds in the world who could illuminate the path ahead on these vexed matters and Honorable Minister we are delighted that you will speak to us on this subject...

So without further ado ...ladies and gentleman let me invite His Excellency Dr JAVAD ZARIF The Foreign Minister of Iran to address us...

Mr Minister the Mike is yours ...