

Opening Remarks

by

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at

Sapru House Lecture on

“India and the Great Powers: Managing Strategic Triangles”

at

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Shri Salman Haidar, former Foreign Secretary, Dr. C. Raja Mohan, Distinguished Fellow at ORF, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much for responding to our invitation to this special event. Your presence in large numbers is an indicator of the continuing ability of Sapru House to draw its supporters and admirers and, of course, the extra-ordinary stature of our guest speaker today. We are particularly delighted that a number of reputed educational institutions have made it a point to send their young scholars and faculty members. We want our regulars to come here again and again, but we also welcome new guests, especially the young minds willing to be ignited.

2. Let me take this occasion to pay a sincere tribute to the exceptional men and women who dreamt about and toiled for this institution in earlier years. It is their combined endeavours that made the Indian Council of World Affairs a potent instrument of India's soft power in an age when the very phrase was yet to be invented. Great people like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sarojani Naidu were associated with this institution and its activities. A sterling role was played by the founder President, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Shri H.N. Kunzru, the second President, Dr. A. Appadorai, the first Secretary General and many others. They helped to make the ICWA the premier foreign policy think tank in Asia. Through this Sapru House Lecture series, we express our gratitude to these luminaries and re-dedicate ourselves to ensure that ICWA plays its optimal role in the fields of study, research and knowledge-dissemination concerning India's role in the world.

3. I am grateful to Shri Salman Haidar for agreeing to chair this meeting. He is aptly considered as one of India's finest diplomats. He served in many important positions including Ambassador to Bhutan, to China, High Commissioner to United Kingdom and Secretary in MEA. As Foreign Secretary, he served India with distinction and left an impact. He has been active in public service since his retirement too. In particular, he has been contributing significantly to this institution as a

member of the Governing Council and as Chairman of its Finance Committee.

4. Our guest speaker, Dr. C. Raja Mohan, is an embodiment of what goes by the name of Track-II in diplomacy and international affairs. Probably Track-II has three pillars – academia, think tanks and strategic community, and media. He has excelled in all three spheres. He has a master's degree in nuclear physics and a PhD in international relations. He was a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University as well as Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He served as diplomatic editor and Washington correspondent of 'The Hindu' and also as the strategic affairs editor of 'The Indian Express.' Presently, he is a distinguished fellow at ORF and is leading their strategic studies initiative. Besides, he is currently a member of India's National Security Advisory Board and has served there earlier too.

5. Although he has not served with ICWA, we feel a special claim on him because he spent many years of his youth in this iconic building. He worked for IDSA which was anchored in Sapru House in those days. He is the country's leading opinion-maker; we seem unable to do without reading and savouring his take on world affairs, week after week.

6. Finally, a word about today's lecture - 'India and the Great Powers: Managing Strategic Triangles.' This emerged from our discussion a few weeks earlier. Most of our scholars are interested in specific themes, regions or countries of the world, but you would agree that, from time to time, we need to evaluate the broader picture of international affairs. William Avery, a former US diplomat, chose an enticing title for his new book – 'China's Nightmare, America's Dream: India as the next Global Power'. So, is India a great power, a global power, a potential super-power? How does it really stand vis-à-vis the major powers of the world? How does it manage or how should it manage to protect and promote its interests in today's complex multi-polar world? Which are the power triangles that concern us most? These and many other issues, I am sure, will be covered by the distinguished speaker with his customary erudition.

May I now invite the chair to take over the proceedings and make his initial remarks?

Thank you very much for your attention.

