



UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of South Asian
Regional Cooperation (UMISARC)
Pondicherry University



Cordially invites you to a talk on

“Democracy in India despite Continuing Problems”

**on December 16, 2011 (Friday)
at 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm**

By

Dr. Paul Wallace

About the Speaker: Dr. Paul Wallace (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley) is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Missouri, Columbia. He has been a consultant on South Asia to a member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the US Attorney General’s Office, defense lawyers, and other agencies in North America and has received five Smithsonian funded awards for national election studies in India. In 2009, he twice served as a consultant to the U.S. government in Washington, DC on India.

His research in India includes a Senior Fulbright Research Award, and funding from the Ford Foundation, the American institute of Indian Studies and various government and non-government groups in India. Professor Wallace is the author or editor of eight books and 40+ book chapters and articles. His last edited book, with Ramashray Roy, is *India’s 2011 Elections: Coalition Politics, Party Competition and Congress Continuity* Sage Publications, 2011, 399 pp.; their 4th India election book with Sage.

His most notable terrorism chapter publication is “Counterterrorism in India: Khalistan & Kashmir” in *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace) 2007, pp. 425-482. Recent publications include “**Kashmir**,” and “**Sikh Terrorism**” in Frank Ciment ed., *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, 3d edition (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2011) and “**Sikh Militancy and Non-Violence**,” in Pashaura Singh (ed.), *Sikhism in Global Context* (India: Oxford University Press, 2011).

About the talk: Democracy is alive and well in India despite its many problems and detractors. Non-violent, Gandhian-type revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt—popularly termed the Arab Spring-- as well as the violent overthrow of Muammar Khadafy’s regime in Libya raise basic issues pertaining to democracy and governance. They suggest a comparison with India. Will the democratic India model result from the Arab Spring? What kind of governance will replace the former authoritarian regimes in the Middle East?

India’s democracy continues to project “soft power” politically as well as from its surprisingly vibrant economy. Democratic values, institutions and values enables it to provide a model for the post-revolutionary states newly emerging from the Arab Spring as well as their spin-off to other non-Arab states. India’s model may be appropriate to countries such as Egypt. Differences of substance will change. An anti-Mubarak consensus united Egypt’s population in February 2011 until he resigned on the 11th. That allowed for the establishment of procedures and the existence of public space that could offer an opportunity for effective representation in a democratic system. What the emerging leaders and the people make of their system and the evolving role of the military will differ from time to time.

Questions of effective representative and public policy will remain. But people power provides a critical foundation. People power won out in Tunisia and Egypt, it provided the energy overthrowing authoritarian rule in Libya, and the continuing people-based movements in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. Earlier, in 1986, it triumphed in the Philippines against dictator Ferdinand Marcos. People power galvanized eastern Europe in breaking with the Soviet Union through the Solidarity Movement in Gdansk, Poland in 1980 and in the Velvet Revolution led by Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia in 1989.

Democratic participation is a norm in India, even a passion. Corruption and other warts mar Indian politics and society, but democratic participation including elections uncovers the warts and provides a means of addressing them, however imperfectly. By contrast, rural discontent in China is manifested by numerous riots and subsequent repression. Consequences of the building of the gigantic Three Gorges Dam, and present efforts to move water from the south to the drought stricken north involve massive, largely involuntary movement of villages that dwarf efforts to obtain land for industry in India. Perhaps basic to the authoritarian actions of the one-party Chinese Government is its efforts to maintain a rigid hold over society through the dominant Han majority. Thus, problems with its minorities in Tibet and Uyghur in the east periodically erupt in violence.

India and the U.S. share the value of a public belief in diversity that substantially guides public policy despite the many problems in both societies. Concern with human rights flow from these democratic values enabling both societies to address deep rooted problems involving race, religion, regionalism, caste, etc. as they are politically transformed into issues of human rights. Gandhi and Martin Luther King clearly recognized the linkage here between civil rights and politics. Movements in both societies such as “Occupy Wall Street” in the U.S. and Gandhian-type fasts in India are contemporary examples of people power in a democracy. They complement the more institutional role of elections, challenging state institutions such as Parliament, Assemblies, judiciaries and even bureaucracies to adapt in an appropriate democratic manner.

**Venue: UMISARC Auditorium
Silver Jubilee Campus
Pondicherry University**

Prof. N.K. Jha

Director, UMISARC