

RAJENDRA MADHUKAR ABHYANKAR

This is the third time Ambassador Rajendra Abhyankar has retired.

At the time of his first retirement in 2005, Ambassador Abhyankar was India's ambassador to the European Union, NATO, Belgium, and Luxembourg, culminating a 37-year career in the service of Indian diplomacy. Ambassador Abhyankar served as Indian ambassador to Azerbaijan, Syria, and Turkey; high commissioner to Cyprus; and deputy high commissioner to Sri Lanka. He also was India's consul general in San Francisco at a time when the technology sectors of India and the United States were collaborating to help create Silicon Valley.

After retiring from the Indian foreign ministry, Ambassador Abhyankar put his fluency in French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and four Indian languages to good use. He worked in the areas of academics, corporate philanthropy, consulting, and international Track II dialogues—informal diplomacy that helps maintain and strengthen communication on issues critical to the India–United States bilateral relationship and international community. The dialogues also deal with issues between India and its neighbors, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Additionally, Ambassador Abhyankar was director of the Center for West Asian (Middle East) Studies and a professor at Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi, director and advisor for The Asia Foundation's program in India, and president of the Hinduja Foundation in Mumbai.

In 2011, Ambassador Abhyankar again retired from several of these positions to begin his long-standing affiliation with Indiana University as a diplomat-in-residence at the Center for American and Global Security and a professor of practice at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. His research interests have included international relations and diplomacy. Moreover, Ambassador Abhyankar has taught courses in the art and practice of diplomacy and the O'Neill School's capstone course for graduate students. Known for his commitment to students and service-learning, Ambassador Abhyankar has taken Indiana University students as far afield as the jungles of



Northern Vietnam to research the biodiversity of a country that many Americans know only as the site of a long-ago war. And while at the O'Neill school, Ambassador Abhyankar has initiated collaborations among several educational institutions in India and elsewhere.

Also at Indiana University, Ambassador Abhyankar has been a prolific writer, authoring six books during his time on the O'Neill School faculty. His most recent monograph is about Syria, a country wracked by civil war. Faculty colleagues speak of his research as being right out of a spy thriller. Employing his fluent Arabic language skills and numerous Middle Eastern connections, Ambassador Abhyankar flew to Beirut, then drove to Damascus to see the country and the battlefields and to speak to Syria's leaders before writing *Syria: The Tragedy of a Pivotal State*. The book will be published in 2020 by Oxford University Press.

Another monograph, *Stuff Happens: An Anecdotal Insight into Indian Diplomacy*, has served as the basis for lectures across the Indiana University campus to help students better understand the complexity and occasional dangers of international diplomacy in the shadows between war and peace. The book details

how Ambassador Abhyankar negotiated with former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, tracked down Hezbollah leaders who had kidnapped United Nations peacekeepers, and helped apprehend an international terrorist who was wanted in India and hiding in the United Arab Emirates. Ambassador Abhyankar has also co-authored three books on Indian foreign policy in relation to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the Congo.

Ambassador Abhyankar currently holds positions in a number of philanthropic and charitable foundations. He is chair of the Kunzru Centre for Defense Studies and Research in Pune, India. In this third retirement, Ambassador Abhyankar expects to continue to speak about international affairs at universities and think tanks around the world and to contribute to newspapers and journals on international issues.

Ambassador Abhyankar and his wife of more than 50 years, Paulomi, will reside in Mumbai and Pune in India and expect to continue to travel to Europe to visit their sons and grandchildren. He also plans to finish his Ph.D. at the University of Pune.

Steven Raymer