

FOCUS

America and South Asia in the New Century

by Karl F Inderfurth

In all four of these promising areas — democracy, economic and social development, and global integration — the full potential of our growing engagement with South Asia can be realised only if that region addresses some of these issues: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and regional and social conflict.

UNDERSECRETARY of State Tom Pickering is quoted as saying that, for too long, "South Asia has been on the backside of the US diplomatic globe." Of course this is true geographically, but it has also been true in terms of our policy priorities. That, I am pleased to report, is changing — as evident in the White House announcement just yesterday that President Clinton will travel to South Asia, specifically to India and Bangladesh, next month, the first Presidential travel to the region in over two decades.

I would like to give you a sense of why this region will be increasingly important to us in the 21st century; why President Clinton and Secretary Albright decided at the beginning of this term in office — before the South Asian nuclear tests — that the US would adopt a policy of greater engagement with the countries of South Asia; and why the President will be travelling there next month.

Since this is a highly respected university, and all of you, I've been reliably told, are highly motivated students, let me begin with a brief overview of the region. Call it "South Asia 101." The region encompasses only eight countries, but each has its own special fascination.

India, of course, has captured the imagination of Americans from the days of our earliest contacts. In the 19th century Mark Twain visited India and called it "the land of

dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty... of genie and giants and Aladdin lamps, of tigers and elephants... country of a hundred nations and a hundred tongues... mother of history, grandmother of legend, great-grandmother of tradition."

Our fascination with India remains strong today. However, at the dawn of the 21st century, we no longer view it as a land of elephants and maharajas. India is now seen for what it truly is: an emerging economic powerhouse and world power, a dynamic nation forged from amazing diversity, and a successful democracy with over a billion people.

Pakistan, once part of British India but separated 52 years ago, has become a country with its own vision. That vision, as I was told by its new Foreign Minister when I was there last week, is of a "progressive, modern, democratic, Islamic state." This is a vision we can support, and Pakistan's potential as an example of progressive Islamic democracy is one reason for its importance to us today. But there are other reasons as well. Pakistan is important because it is a link — both economic and political — between the Indian Ocean and Central Asia, because it has significant human and economic resources, and because it has historically been a friend of the United States. For all these reasons, we intend to stay engaged with Pakistan despite the current difficulties it is facing.

There is Bangladesh, a land of well over one hundred million that is justly famed throughout the world for pioneering models — such as the Grameen Bank of Mohammed Yunus — of how people, especially women, can pull themselves out of poverty through microcredits for small enterprises.

There is Afghanistan, a land often described as the object of some "Great Game" played by outside powers — but one whose proud people have time and time again showed the world that they will not long be ruled by others.

There are the island nations of Sri Lanka and of the Maldives, whose tropical beauty and resources lie today at the mercy of other forces: the civil strife in Sri Lanka, and the environmental fragility of the Maldives — whose highest point is a mere eight feet above sea level, and therefore threatened by global warming and climate change.

And, finally, there are the awe-inspiring Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan, each moving in different ways to combine ancient and unique traditions with new openings to the world beyond their borders.

So much for "South Asia 101," or why this region is so interesting to us. The question now is, what are US interests in South Asia? Why should we seek greater engagement there? The answer is simple: Our growing interests and engagement reflect new realities in the region. The US has an expanding agenda in South Asia, and I would like to focus for the next few moments on four key items on this agenda: Democracy, Economic Reform, Social Development, and Integration into the Global Mainstream.

I noted before that India is the world's largest democracy, and I can add that it is a very intense, dynamic, and in almost every respect a successful one. This should make the US and India, as Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee noted about a year ago, "natural allies," and indeed it is quite unnatural that our two countries have for too long seemed at odds on many international issues. In large part that was an unfortunate legacy of the Cold War. With that behind us, we can more easily move on, as President Clinton has urged, to a deeper and more positive relationship supported

by the democratic values and practices we share.

That is good news, to be sure, but the even better news is that India is not the only democracy in South Asia. Bangladesh is another major example, even as it goes through growing pains in this respect. As such, it is a beacon of hope for other countries in the Muslim world. Also stubbornly democratic, if that is the right expression, is Sri Lanka. Despite all its tragic ethnic conflict, And Nepal this year celebrates its first full decade of democracy. We have an interest in supporting a democratic future for all these countries, and not only for sentimental reasons. For these democracies offer not just the best hope for their own peoples, but also serve as examples for others that are confronting similar challenges.

In this connection, Pakistan's military coup last October is a regrettable setback for South Asia as a whole — but one that we hope will prove temporary. We do not approve of the general's method of taking control, and we are talking very frankly to him and to his newly appointed officials about their plans to restore civilian demo-

cratic rule in this key country. Our goal, which Gen Musharraf says he shares, is to see Pakistan put back on the democratic path in the shortest possible time frame.

Economic Development is the second area of great promise I would like to note today. A few years ago, Microsoft's Bill Gates paid a visit to India. He knew something then that a lot of us are learning today: India will be a major player in the new world of information technology. Just a few weeks ago, you probably heard your fill about the Y2K problem. Well, one reason it turned out not to be a problem was that Indian software engineers were so directly engaged in the international effort to solve it.

As with democracy, India is the largest but not the only country in the region undergoing this kind of positive economic transformation. Bangladesh, for example, is another case in point. This country while still poor, is taking steps to move into the global economy. With the right policies in place, it could make a quantum leap forward by developing vast energy reserves, particularly in natural gas. Re-

gional cooperation in this area would provide Bangladesh with a huge market for this valuable natural resource, just across the border in India. Nepal, too, is looking at the new economic policies and projects needed to take advantage of its abundant energy resources — in this case hydropower cascading down its majestic mountains. This will raise Nepal's own standard of living while linking it productively with its neighbours.

Another area of unexpected success, in this case across most of South Asia, concerns women's advancement. It is noteworthy that even though ancient forms of discrimination and oppression still persist in many places, four of the five countries in the region — India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh — have elected women to the highest political office in the land. In Bangladesh right now, not only is the Prime Minister a woman, but so too is the leader of the main opposition party.

Integration into the global mainstream is a fourth area of considerable promise for South Asia. The last few years have witnessed a much higher level of involvement by the nations of this region in international organizations.

Most South Asian states are now active and constructive members of the WTO, or World Trade Organization. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are working harder to curb abusive child labour through the ILO, or International Labour Organiza-

tion. All three countries are also working hard to reduce heroin trafficking by working with the UNODC, or UN Drug Control Programme.

In all four of these promising areas — democracy, economic and social development, and global integration — the full potential of our growing engagement with South Asia can be realised only if that region addresses some of these issues: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and regional and social conflict.

There really is a fascinating world out there, one that will matter more and more to all of us in years to come — and South Asia, I am convinced, will be a significant part of that.

The author is US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs.

This article is adapted from an address given by the author at the Twenty-third Annual Merze Tate Lecture in Diplomatic History delivered at Howard University in Washington on February 2, 2000.

English Foundation Course at DU

A Time-befitting Curricular Innovation

by Obaidul Hamid

The importance of English can hardly be overestimated now when the world is speeding towards globalisation. English has, inevitably, gained the status of lingua franca among different nations. The Foundation English course at DU academically recognises the fact that there is perhaps no alternative to learning English for our survival in a world of increasing interdependence among nations.

THE University of Dhaka has been running a compulsory English course known as Foundation Course-2 (FC-2) since 1998 (session 1997-98) for first year students of the Arts Faculty. Introducing such a course was a prudent and time-befitting step on the part of the Academic Council. Although it followed the introduction of a compulsory English course at the undergraduate level in colleges across the country, and although the government had urged the university authorities to introduce a similar course in the university, introducing the course was not simply a top-down decision; initiatives were taken by the university as well. Whatever might have been the case, this curricular innovation was a considered response to widespread concern about the deplorably poor level of English language proficiency of many non-English medium Bangladeshi graduates. The innovation also coincided with the introduction of a four-year Honours programme at Dhaka University, which is widely viewed as a step forward in maintaining the academic standard required by universities around the world. It is believed that the course would contribute to realizing this important academic objective.

Yes, the FC-2 at DU was a response to a deeply felt need. This is because the importance of English can hardly be overestimated now when the world is speeding towards globalisation. English has, inevitably, gained the status of lingua franca among different nations. The Foundation English course at DU academically recognises the fact that there is perhaps no alternative to learning English for our survival in a world of increasing interdependence among nations. We cannot stay isolated any more; nor can we live away from English any longer.

Certainly, the DU authorities deserve applause for the newly-introduced English course which has created opportunities for students to improve their proficiency in English. Despite its teething problems,

inevitable in any curricular innovation, the English Department, endowed with the course responsibility, arranged classes and exams of the first batch (session 1997-98). Their results have already been published while the succeeding session (1998-99) is about to finish their classes. Students are reported to be quite enthusiastic about the course and many consider themselves fortunate because it was introduced during their session. Some students have even wondered whether it was feasible to extend the course to a second year. Such enthusiasm also indicates student's realization that they must learn English for their own benefit and the benefit of their country.

The fact that students are keen on FC-2 will certainly inspire the English Department to carry out the course with renewed sincerity and commitment. A formal evaluation of the programme is a must to measure its effectiveness. Such an evaluation will pave the way for future course of action — specifying more feasible objectives, defining approaches, and introducing appropriate methodology to realize them in view of the logistic supports available. Also, the Department has tried to offer all possible services within its limited capacity to make the students benefit from the course. Despite an oddity has already compiled a textbook to meet the indigenous needs of Bangladeshi students. At the same time, the department regrets that it cannot maximize its services for want of suitable physical infrastructure, access to education technology such as photocopiers, overhead projectors, audiovisuals and other support essential for conducting language courses. The Department started the course with only four full-time FC-2 lecturers and access to age-old classrooms for holding classes in the Arts Faculty building — classrooms which are equipped with only blackboards and immovable benches. Teachers cannot arrange listening lessons for students because they do not have access to cas-

sette players, not to speak of visual equipment and other accessories. They cannot even supply any handouts to the students from a photocopier. Official activities of the Department have increased considerably after the course was introduced, but it has been working with its previous office staff.

True, all these needs for the effective management of the course cannot be addressed overnight given resource constraints. One would not certainly demand that kind of hectic solution either. However, issues could be prioritized, and steps taken to address them over a period of time. More importantly, since FC-2 is a permanent addition to the university curriculum, attention should be paid for its development so that maximum benefit can be drawn out of this course. It has already inspired the English Department to conceive of some useful and prudent plans.

It provides grounds for the establishment of a Centre for English Language Services (CELS) as a 'special unit' within the English Department. In early 1998 the Department formally proposed to the Dean of the Faculty of Arts to consider the possibility of such a centre, headed by a director. The proposed language centre seems to be essential to meet the increasing demand for English language teaching in the university. In addition to FC-2 which is confined to the Faculty of Arts, several other departments/faculties have been arranging English courses for their students. Very often the English Department is approached by these departments/faculties for conducting these courses. Moreover, English Across the Curriculum (EAC) may be a reality at DU in near future. All these English teaching concerns, the proposal asserted, could come under the jurisdiction of the proposed CELS.

It was pointed out in the proposal that CELS could provide English language services and consultancies to other institutions and organizations in the country in addition to taking

responsibility for English language support throughout the university. The proposal reported that the English Department has been approached for consultancy service in 'translating and editing' and several members of the faculty have been individually involved in rendering these services, which could be covered by CELS. Noteworthy is the fact that the Department has signed a link programme with the Centre for Language Teaching Services of the University of Warwick. A number of workshops on different aspects of ELT (English Language Teaching) were arranged for the faculty members under the programme. Another function of CELS, the proposal mentioned, would be to provide training facilities/certificate courses for ELT at various levels. Also importantly, CELS could contribute significantly to ELT improvement and research in Bangladesh.

One might, of course, question the necessity of the proposed CELS at DU since the Institute of Modern Languages (IML) offers courses in a number of Asian and European languages, including English. But it has to be remembered that IML cannot specifically focus on English because it has to deal with other languages as well. Secondly, it cannot take responsibility of any course such as FC-2, which constitutes a compulsory portion of any departmental syllabus. Also, IML is geared to offer diploma courses, whereas the Department is in a better position to offer courses at the B A Honours level.

It is therefore arguable that the proposed CELS can provide useful and important services within and outside the university. The university authorities should be taking appropriate steps to set up the centre with adequate resources and support materials as recommended in the proposal, and make these services available for university students and the community at large.

The author is a lecturer in English at DU. He is now studying at Deakin University, Australia.

Cosmic Retribution!

by Abul M Ahmad

LEADERS and political parties, generally speaking, have also to pay collective fine (in kind) for cultivating the holier-than-thou attitude. Those who assume national power, and presume that it is all right to make hay while the sunshines, face the oversight of the incoming debit bill — it will be more than an overdraft. Because it is cosmic. There is a time for reckoning for the defaulters.

And such a situation has built up again in the society, and the day of recompense is just round the corner. There is no time to change the course or apply the brakes.

Non-political leaders in the society must unite to prevail upon the political leaders to withdraw; or behave — but not the way they want it, or have been pursuing. The nation is bleeding today, and the suckers are the political community, like it or not. Political threats to the citizens never pay — in the long run. The time has come

to watch for the result. The hope and expectation of the millennium has been spoiled by the games the politicians are playing, holding the society as hostage. The approach to the forest is faulty: there is no point in getting busy with the details of the fighting inside the forest. The lessons have to be learnt — there is no option to opt out of this judgmental situation. There are several unfailing options for the verdict to prevail, which means there is no escape from the coming retribution.

In the heat of the moment, the future aftermath is overlooked. There lies the weakness in the strength; otherwise history would not have been so abrupt — and so interesting; it is the weakness of human ambition. History is a reflection; some are blinded, and some are maimed.

The tendency of the rulers to live in the past is a national complex, good or bad. What we are experiencing is undesirable.

The freedom of the individual has been ransomed. Personal freedom cannot be suppressed, because it is an inbuilt human characteristic, which will respond intuitively, as are the urges for security, food, family, and shelter.

Violation at the state-level of personal and private freedom of the citizens will not be tolerated by the people at large. The newspapers are full of grievances — against poor leadership. So, why people would continue to listen to the false admonitions of the immature and greedy leaders who cannot control their own secret passions?

The country is not in danger when a particular political party comes into power; therefore preparations for state witch-hunting is suspicious. The divide and rule policy is being applied in full-swing now. Look out for the cohesive factor of the mass reaction. Basic human nature has survived the tugs of the uncivilised.

TREATING THE HEART

Physiological Pacing with Single Pass Lead

by Dr A K Bardhan

COMMONLY used pacemaker for heart block is VVI. VVI pacing, although cheap, is not physiological and has different complications like cardiac failure, pacemaker syndrome and diminished exercise tolerance. Physiological pacemaker like DDD also has its own demerits like VA conduction, dislodgement of atrial leads and high price. So recently, VDD pacing has been introduced with single pass lead. This VDD system provides two main components of physiological pacing: a) rate responsiveness and b) AV synchrony. This system, thus, mimics the complexities found with VVI, while having the choice of easier implantation and intermediate cost as compared to DDD.

Material and Methods: Our objective was to verify the performance of the VDD system in comparison with VVI and DDD. We recruited 47 patients for this purpose in last one year, of which 30 male and 17 female. The mean age of the patients was 62±10 years.

The diagnoses were: Complete heart block — 27 cases, LBBB with intermittent CHB — 15 cases, 2:1 AV Block — 5 cases, SA node function was normal in all cases.

Type of Pacemaker was VDD, type of lead was single pass, steroid eluting bipolar with two ring atrial electrodes — providing bipolar atrial sensing and AV spacing.

P wave sensing was between 2.2–3.8 mv. P wave sensing on deep inspiration was 1.0–1.6mv. Atrial sensitivity programming was done as follows: 1.0 mv — 35 patients, 0.5 mv — 11 patients, 0.18mv — 1 patient.

The tip of the electrode was placed in RV apex and atrial bipoles in RA, just below SA node/mid RA. Patients were given questionnaires form to know regarding symptomatology and registration form. Follow up was performed every three months with questionnaires, echocardiography, TMT, and chest X-Ray. TMT was tried in all cases but most patients with VVI pacemaker could not perform TMT.

Results: Echocardiographic results showed significant difference in the left ventricular diastolic diameter in VDD patients, compared to VVI (57±10mm vs 50±9 mm; p<0.05, stroke volume was increased in VDD patients (120±45 ml vs 102±38ml; p<0.01). Ejection fraction showed significant difference (64±2vs 60±1; p<0.05). Other parameters in echocardiography such as left atrial diameter and left ventricular systolic diameter showed no significant change.

Improvement of about 3.2±/2 min in patients on VDD pacing compared to VVI. Also, normal target heart rate could be achieved in most patients on VDD pacing.

Chest X-Ray: Repeat chest X Ray after VDD pacing showed no cardiomegaly as compared to findings in patients on VVI pacing.

Haemodynamics: Patients on VDD had less symptoms compared to patients on VVI pacing. The general physical

well being of VDD patients was much better than that on VVI. This is possibly because of rate-responsiveness and AV-synchrony.

Conclusion: The results of this study show that physiological pacing in the form of VDD is beneficial compared to VVI pacing. The patients preferred the physiological pacing mode.

At the present time it can be concluded that physiological pacing can be recommended for use in patients of A-V block

with normal sinus node with VDD pacemaker and single pass lead.

Considering the demerits of DDD pacemaker like V-A conduction with reentry tachyarrhythmias, atrial lead dislodgement and high cost, VDD with single pass lead should be recommended in all cases of heart block with normal sinus node function.

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Institute of Bangladesh Studies
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Advertisement

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- Group-A: Accounting/Management/Finance & Banking/Statistics/Geography.
- Group-B: Sociology/Social Work/Anthropology/Political Science/Public Administration/Law.
- Group-C: Bangla/English/Philosophy/Fine Arts.

Forms and particulars regarding qualifications and requirements may be obtained from the undersigned by sending a self-addressed envelope with postage stamp worth Tk 4/- only.

* 10 (ten) copies of the application form duly filled in along with an application fee of Tk 80/- (eighty) in Bank Draft (non-refundable) in favour of the "Director, IBS, Rajshahi University" must reach the undersigned on or before April 30, 2000.

Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel. Incomplete applications will be rejected without notice.

Qualifications and experience for the position of

- 1) Associate Professor
 - (a) Candidates must have high academic distinctions with doctorate degrees in the subjects/fields for which applications are made;
 - (b) Candidates must have a minimum of 7 (seven) years of teaching and/or professional experience out of which at least 3 (three) years as an Assistant Professor in a university.
 - (c) Candidates must have original research contributions/publications of high merit as well as ability to guide M.Phil./Ph.D. level work and conduct/guide research relating to the life, society and development of Bangladesh.

In cases of extraordinary merit one of the above conditions may be relaxed.

2) Fellow (in the rank of Assistant Professor)

- (a) Candidates must have a Master's degree with at least one first class either at the honours or at the post-graduate level or candidates without honours degree must have at least a second class at both Degree Pass and Masters' previous levels in addition to a first class at the post-graduate level and no third class in any of the above degrees.
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Candidates having qualifications described in 2(a) above may be considered for appointment as Assistant Professor after one year of service as specified in 2(b) above if she/he has an M.Phil degree in the relevant field.

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