tion contributed to the circumstances leading to the Bhutto assassination and the chaos that has followed, but was not the cause of her murder. Lyndon LaRouche observed, within hours of the Bhutto assassination, that whoever convinced President Musharraf to take off his military uniform and step down as head of the Armed Forces, was in the middle of the assassination/destabilization scheme. Stripped of the power of the uniform, President Musharraf has been turned into a hostage of circumstances.

Londonistan

U.S. and Indian intelligence specialists have emphasized that the investigation into the Bhutto assassination is made more difficult by the fact that the Pakistani People's Party (PPP) leader had many enemies, who wished to see her dead, creating a number of opportunities, and a proliferation of false trails to secure a coverup. They point, however, to a network of Islamist groups, including the Hisbut Tahrir, with international headquarters in London, who have heavily penetrated the ranks of the Pakistani Army in recent years, and who, therefore, had access to the secure, garrison city of Rawalpindi. Such British-intelligence-protected and -sponsored groups offered the perfect cover for a made-in-London assassination.

If there was any remaining doubt about London's drive to spread chaos in South and Central Asia, through the Bhutto assassination and its aftermath, the Jan. 5-11, 2008 edition of *The Economist* set the record straight, with a lead editorial, "The World's Most Dangerous Place—Nothing else has worked; it is time for Pakistan to try democracy." The City of London mouthpiece demanded that the assassination probe be taken out of the hands of Musharraf, that the Pakistani military and intelligence services be purged, and that "democratic" elections take place right away. The alternative: a "slide into anarchy." "For too long," *The Economist* concluded, "Mr Musharraf has been allowed to pay lip-service to democratic forms, while the United States has winked at his blatant disdain for the substance. The justification has been the pre-eminent importance of 'stability' in the world's most dangerous place. It is time to impress upon him and the generals still propping him up that democracy is not the alternative to stability. It is Pakistan's only hope."

The International Crisis Group (ICG), normally a respected NGO, in a Jan. 2 report, echoed *The Economist* and went one step further—demanding Musharraf's immediate ouster. The report virtually claimed that Musharraf's remaining in office would lead to the breakup of the country: "Bhutto's death," the ICG claimed, "has drawn the battle lines even more clearly between Musharraf's military-backed regime and Pakistan's moderate majority, which is now unlikely to settle for anything less than genuine parliamentary democracy. Many in Pakistan fear that the federation's very survival could depend on the outcome of this struggle."

The Pakistani government denounced the ICG call as "seditious."

Southwest Asia

Iraq: Calming Down or Priming for Blowup?

by Carl Osgood

The Bush Administration and its supporters have been making much out of the substantial reduction in the level of violence in Iraq that has occurred since the Summer of 2007. They declare that the surge strategy, which was hatched at the American Enterprise Institute in response to the Iraq Study Group's critical December 2006 report, has been an unqualified success; that Gen. David Petraeus is a hero for his "brilliant" implementation of a new counterinsurgency strategy; and that anyone on the political scene who still supports an unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, as quickly as possible, is trying to pull defeat from the jaws of victory.

Competent analyses are more circumspect, however, and go well beyond Petraeus's own warning, in a year-end letter to the troops, that the supposed progress there is still "reversible." Indeed, while the current strategy may have resulted in short-term gains, long-term centrifugal forces that, in certain cases, have been planted by 100 years of British imperial strategy, and exacerbated by the bungled U.S. occupation, may yet pull the country apart.

The reduction in violence has generally been attributed to three factors: the surge, last Spring, of 30,000 additional U.S. troops into Iraq to implement the new strategy; the Anbar "Awakening," in which Sunni tribal chiefs in Anbar, Diyala, and other provinces, in some cases greased with U.S. and Saudi cash, have turned on their al-Qaeda allies; and a ceasefire declared by Shi'ite firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and his Jaish al-Mahdi militia.

With U.S. military encouragement, Sunni men have flocked to join "concerned local citizens" groups (or CLCs) which are then contracted to provide security in local areas. Sadr's ceasefire, with the exception of some rogue elements said to be outside of his control, has generally been described as holding. The result, according to Petraeus, has been a decline in the level of violence by about 60% over the past year.

Many critics of the Administration have attributed at least part of the reduction in violence to the completion of the ethnic cleansing that has taken place in Baghdad since the February 2006 Samara mosque bombing. The formerly mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad, these critics say, are now either all Sunni or all Shi'ite, lessening the motivation for ethnic violence. Anthony Cordesman, the chief Middle East expert

at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., noted in an Oct. 26 report that, indeed, Iraq is dividing along sectarian lines. Cordesman, who is among the more sober analysts of Iraq in Washington, warned that if such divisions continue to the point that Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds cannot function as a nation, "the consequences are likely to be grimmer" than has heretofore been seen.

"Major new displacements of population are almost certain and every step towards further division will come at great economic cost to those involved," Cordesman wrote.

DoD/Cherie A. Thurlby

Gen. David Petraeus: Iraq progress is still "reversible."

A Legacy of Weakness and Strife

The weak government in Baghdad has hardly proven to be a unifying factor in the country. Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who makes field trips to Iraq two or three times a year on behalf of the Department of Social Sciences at the U.S. Military Academy, stated in his latest report, dated Dec. 18, 2007, that there is no functioning central Iraqi government. "The constitution promotes bureaucratic stagnation and factional strife," he wrote. "The budgetary process cannot provide responsive financial support to the military and police nor local government for health, education, governance, reconstruction and transportation."

McCaffrey notes that Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has no power base and commands no militias, "making him a non-player in the Iraqi political struggle. . . ." McCaffrey might have added that Iraq got its nonfunctional government from the United States, its constitution having been crafted by Paul Bremer's now-defunct Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004.

Both McCaffrey and former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst W. Patrick Lang warn against a permanent U.S. presence in Iraq, and argue instead for staged withdrawal over a period of about three years. In a Dec. 12 posting on his blog, Lang warned that a long-term U.S. presence, à la Korea, "would inevitably lead to continued anti-U.S. warring in the country … some of those who now have turned against the takfiri jihadis and are fighting as our 'allies' might well go back to fighting us." McCaffrey warns that the United States has decreasing political leverage in Iraq, and that the overstretched U.S. armed forces "cannot for much longer impose an internal skeleton of governance and security on 27 million warring people."

Yet, on Nov. 26, President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki signed an agreement that provides the parameters for establishing a permanent U.S. military presence in Iraq. Lang wrote of this on Dec. 21: "I guess they just don't understand that there will not be a peaceful outcome for any of the parties to such an agreement. There will simply be more war."

Interestingly, Cordesman's report includes a timeline of the history of sectarian division in Iraq that goes back to the British occupation of the 1920s, but he doesn't mention the actions of the British at that time, or since, that have helped foment those divisions, such as the carving up of the disintegrating Ottoman Empire by the Sykes-Picot arrangements that left the Kurdish population spread across four nations. Ever since that time, the Kurds have been used by the British as a lever for destabilization, such as the Kurdish extremist group PKK against Turkey, and the Kurds against the Arabs inside Iraq.

Cordesman notes repeatedly that while polls inside Iraq show that most Arabs consider the American invasion and occupation a disaster, the Kurdish view is almost completely the reverse. Likewise, McCaffrey predicts that the next war in Iraq will be between Arabs and Kurds, once Mosul, Kirkuk, and the giant oil fields of the North are absorbed into the nascent Kurdish state.

In the South, the British turned control of Basra over to Iraqi security forces on Dec. 17 with much fanfare, but who really controls that city and the southern provinces is an open question. Basra has long been a battleground among competing Shi'ite militias fighting for control of the city and the southern oil fields. It appears, in fact, that the British occupation forces actually did very little to curb this conflict, and have now left it to the Iraqis to solve. Maj. Gen. Jalil Khalaf, the Iraqi police commander, said, in a Dec. 17 interview with the London *Guardian*, that the British "left me militia, they left me gangsters, and they left me all the troubles in the world."

Khalaf said, naively, that while he thought the British intentions were good, they "trained and armed these people in the extremist groups and now we are faced with a situation where these police are loyal to their parties, not the country."

Basra is also important for another reason: The major U.S. military supply route runs through Basra on its way from Kuwait to Baghdad. Khalaf's assessment of the consequences of the British machinations in the Shi'ite south of Iraq are correct. But his notion that the British had any intention, other than to foment Shi'ite versus Shi'ite war, ethnic cleansing, and the breakup of the unified Iraqi state, is dead wrong.