



FOREIGN



liberation struggle; it was an uprising of slaves that needed to be crushed. Now, these northerners cannot abide dealing with southerners as equals. The southerners, for their part, wish to be rid of the Arabs and Islamism once and for all.

In the fall, as the date of the referendum neared, international observers and southern officials reported that Khartoum was redeploying its army, with newly purchased heavy weaponry, along the disputed north-south border. In response to the north's muscle-flexing, the southern government, which is based in the city of Juba, sent the toughest units in its own armed forces, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), and also equipped them with new heavy weaponry. The south's leaders threatened to issue a unilateral declaration of independence if the north manipulated or canceled the vote. They also privately warned that if the north attempted to occupy the oil fields in the south -- where 80 percent of the country's known oil reserves are located -- they would destroy the country's oil infrastructure. And they have the troops and the weapons to do so. If Khartoum thinks it can protect Sudan's oil infrastructure, it should reflect on the failure of the U.S. military to protect Iraq's during its occupation of that country.

Some balloting will likely take place in early 2011, but if the north tries to manipulate the referendum or postpone it by more than a few weeks, the south could erupt. Stonewalling might even precipitate war -- and perhaps a war even bloodier than the north-south conflict or the rebellion in Darfur, where the government troops' scorched-(r)TJ0 -1.

party, removed him as Speaker of the National Assembly in 1999, and has jailed him repeatedly for criticizing the regime. Until his falling-out with Bashir, Turabi had dominated the regime from behind the scenes. In his heyday, he brought Osama bin Laden to live and work in Sudan -- the two are related by marriage -- and invited numerous violent Islamist groups to locate their headquarters and training camps in the country. He supported multiple rebellions against moderate Arab regimes and even orchestrated the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995. In his fiery sermons, Turabi has called for a worldwide Islamist revolution that would start in Sudan and spread throughout Africa. Were the government of Sudan to fall to him or one of the Islamist factions

Beja, the Dinka, the Funj, the Nuba, and the Nuer, all of which have been targeted by Khartoum and its allied militias in the past. It is unlikely, however, that either Bashir or Kiir would ignite a new conflict. Both are military officers who know the cost of war -- unlike some of the militant Islamists who are demanding blood but have never heard a shot fired. Bashir might also fear that his army would not fight: Khartoum's soldiers have been demoralized by repeated purges, some have grudges against the government for its actions in Darfur, and many do not understand anymore why they are fighting.

The greater risk comes from rogue commanders. Under one scenario, Turabists in the army might try to depose Bashir and the NCP before, during, or soon after the referendum. This would almost certainly mean war. The south has a large standing army and will not tolerate any interference in its secession. On this question, all the tribes in the south are united; they have long sought independence from Khartoum. However unlikely it would be to attempt to invade the south with ground forces, a successor government in Khartoum might well use the country's new air force to bomb the region. The SPLA would probably be outgunned by the north's superior weapons, but its soldiers would be highly motivated: once more, they would be fighting to protect their families and their farms from the north's aggression.

War would also endanger the one million southerners who are still internally displaced around Khartoum and other northern cities -- one and a half million have already returned to the south -- as well as members of the Funj, the Nuba, and other African Muslim tribes who are similarly displaced. Since Sudan's independence from the United Kingdom in 1956, successive governments in the north have feared these people. When Garang returned to Khartoum after signing the peace agreement in 2005, he was greeted by a jubilant crowd of two, some say three, million people. After he died in a helicopter crash that summer, southerners who thought the accident was an assassination by the NISS rioted and burned down parts of the city. (No evidence incriminating the service has surfaced yet.) In both instances, the authorities lost control of Khartoum, and they remain terrified of the displaced population. Last fall, the minister of information and the minister of foreign affairs announced that if the south voted to secede, southerners living in Khartoum would lose their right to get a job, conduct financial transactions, obtain medicine, and even buy food. Bashir was quick to rebut these claims and said that the government would protect all southerners living in the north. But if war broke out and the southern army advanced toward Khartoum, the NISS might well begin targeting southerners living in the north. Northern officials have reportedly mapped out the locations of all the settlements of internally displaced people in Khartoum and bought hand guns for mass distribution to the Arab population.

MUTUAL ASSURED DEPENDENCE

Although the international community must continue to make clear to both the north and the south that resorting to violence or attacking civilians is unacceptable, its efforts to encourage a resolution of the impasse in Sudan will not be decisive: both sides know their own interests well and are skilled at negotiations. The southern Sudanese we spoke to dismissed as ineffectual the threat of applying new economic sanctions against the north if it does not cooperate. They believe that Khartoum, regardless of who is in charge, will be deterred from aggression only by military force, either by the SPLA or by the U.S. Air Force. Inducements on the part of the Obama administration to encourage the north to compromise -- for example, removing Sudan from the list of states sponsoring terrorism, normalizing diplomatic relations, lifting economic sanctions -- would provide ammunition to Bashir against critics of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. But because the Bashir government is fighting for its survival, any outside

pressure short of military force is unlikely to change its fundamental calculations.
