If events go as planned, southern Sudan in just weeks will separate from the north and the world's newest nation, the Republic of South Sudan, will be born. However, serious impediments to a peaceful separation still must be addressed. And even if an uneventful separation does take place, that will not be the end of the story—it will be the end of the beginning. Many challenges lie ahead both for the new independent nation and for what remains of the old Sudan, as well as for neighboring countries, the wider region, and the international community.

Seared in my memory is a visit I made in May 2008 to Abyei, a border town contested by north and south Sudan. Just days earlier thousands of families had lived, laughed, and loved there. On the day of my visit I saw only remnants of lives lost. The town's dirt roads stood empty except for three teenage soldiers wearing flip-flops and carrying Kalashnikov rifles. I saw burned-out huts, blackened chairs and bed frames, scattered fragments of clothes, the occasional charred skeleton of a truck, and the contorted remains of a child's bicycle. Here and there rose wisps of smoke, the pungent smell hanging heavy in the air.

An unknown number of innocents had been killed in the spring of 2008, and many more forced to flee their homes, in a terrible flash of violence carried out by nomadic Misseriya Arabs while Sudan's armed forces stayed in their barracks and allowed the carnage to rage on. Tens of thousands of people lost the lives they had known. They were only the latest victims of the endless violence in Sudan, a nation that has suffered more trauma and tragedy than any society could possibly digest.

Weeks later I visited Agok, a day's walk from Abyei, where over 50,000 displaced people who had fled the Abyei destruction had settled temporarily. It was the rainy season. The people were crowded under plastic sheets hung between trees. My feet sank three inches into the mud as I walked from shelter to shelter to visit the victims of yet another spasm of senseless destruction. These people, kept alive by humanitarian aid, were hurt and angry, but determined to return to their homes and rebuild.

The final disposition of Abyei—whether it becomes part of the new Republic of South Sudan or remains part of the north—has yet to be determined. This question is one of the many consequential matters still unresolved as we approach the scheduled separation date of July 9, 2011. Abyei is just one example of how fragile things are and of how much work remains to be done before a peaceful separation can proceed.

At the Margins

Throughout much of Sudan's painful history, Arab Muslims at the center have been favored while the non-Arab, non-Muslim people at the periphery have been marginalized. Indeed such discrimination—in the economy, politics, health care, and education—has defined Sudan's past 200 years. The country's divisions are deep and its injustices significant; no vision unites Sudan, no sense exists that various groups share a stake in the nation, no agreement pertains on what it is to be Sudanese.

Under the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century and the British Empire during the first half of the twentieth century, the Arab Muslims at the center were partners in ruling this diverse land, where nearly 600 ethnic groups and tribes speak almost 400 languages. When the British left in 1956, political power was transferred to the

Arab Muslims and, not surprisingly, they continued the patterns of marginalization practiced by their former imperial rulers.

Economic deprivation, political discrimination, and injustice naturally produced deep resentments. Periodic efforts by Khartoum to assert greater control over the periphery, coupled with attempts to impose sharia, led to rebellions and warfare.

No acceptable narrative for a broader Sudan has ever existed; nor a sense of nationhood; nor the harmony and tranquility associated with a normal state. Instead the country has experienced discrimination and division, strain and struggle, fragmentation and friction, bickering and brutality. These were the underlying causes of the long north-south Sudanese civil war, a conflict that began in 1955, stopped in 1972, then resumed in 1983. It was Africa's longest war, claiming 2.5 million lives and displacing more than 4 million people.

A 2005 peace agreement ended the worst violence of that war and created a six-year path toward self-determination and the independence of the south. But it is important to understand that the people of the south are not the only group on the periphery that has long been marginalized. Peoples of the east, of the central Nuba Mountains, of Darfur in the west, and elsewhere have suffered similar injustices and have rebelled from time to time. The fundamental problems between them and Khartoum will not end with the south's independence. Indeed, the danger of violence between Khartoum and these other peripheral areas may well increase.

YES AND NO

President George W. Bush and Jack Danforth, a former senator and my predecessor as Bush's special envoy to Sudan, took the lead in trying to end Sudan's north-south civil war. Negotiations were long and difficult, and involved Khartoum; Juba (the city in southern Sudan that is now slated to be the capital of the new republic); countries belonging to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, a regional grouping; and other stakeholders, such as Norway and the United Kingdom. The result was the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between Khartoum and the leadership of the southern rebels, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. The agreement was signed in January 2005.

Implementing the pact has been difficult and imperfect. Low-intensity fighting has continued and casualties persist. The north after the agreement was reached failed to live up to some important commitments. Leaders in southern Sudan, meanwhile—especially Salva Kiir, the president of the south—proved patient, skilled, and disciplined. They refused to respond proportionally to violence sponsored by Khartoum. They kept their focus on the prize of self-determination.

The CPA, while often in danger, proved resilient, and the parties moved toward the January 2011 referendum on southern independence that was specified in the agreement. The vote was deemed credible. Over 99 percent of southerners chose independence.

Still, it is worthwhile to examine some CPA commitments that have not been honored—for example, regarding border areas contested between the north and south. In the agreement, both parties committed to accept a border demarcation to be drawn by the Abyei Border Commission, a body of international experts who were to rely on various specified criteria.

The commission gathered information and rendered its judgment. The south did not get everything it had hoped for, but nonetheless met its obligation and accepted the border decisions. The north, however, abrogated its commitment by refusing to accept the commission's decision.

After the May 2008 flare-up in Abyei, both the north and the south made various commitments, outlined in a document called the Abyei Road Map Agreement. This agreement specified that, among other things, the contested border issues would be referred to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague and that both sides would abide by whatever decision this international body reached. In essence, the south agreed to let the north have a second bite at the apple.

Filings were made, documents were entered into evidence, and arguments were tendered to the court. The court made its decision. The new border demarcation was somewhat less favorable to the south than that rendered by the Abyei Border Commission; nonetheless, consistent with its commitment, Juba accepted the decision. The north, again in violation of its commitment, refused to accept.

Similarly, the north did not disarm and demobilize its proxy Arab militias as it had committed to do in the CPA. The north did not fully integrate joint security forces, nor did it provide transparent accounting for the sharing of oil revenues as agreed to in the CPA. The list goes on. The point is that
Khartoum’s failure fully to live up to its commitments has created various negative consequences. First, the south has developed a deep distrust of Khartoum’s reliability; it appears to be the north’s conscious strategy to give little weight to fulfilling its obligations. Second, other marginalized peoples in Sudan have witnessed this record and taken note. Third, the international community has developed a poor record of inducing the north to honor its commitments and of holding Khartoum accountable for its breaches.

While serving as special envoy, and working with Sudan’s prominent personalities and watching the maneuvering of the north, I came to believe that Khartoum had decided there was little cost to abrogating commitments. Rather, the leaders in the capital saw value in a strategy that drew things out. They liked to set up elaborate processes for consideration of critical matters. Then they would discuss, deliberate, debate, and delay. Meanwhile, the international community’s attention would wander to some other pressing issue somewhere else in the world. So Khartoum would escape the immediate crisis and kick the can down the road.

SHIFTING LEVERAGE

Before a peaceful separation can occur in July, a number of pressing issues must be resolved. These issues have been understood for more than six years. That they remain outstanding is a testament to the north’s success at controlling the pace of deliberations.

The north’s thinking seems to be that its leverage will grow as July 9 draws closer. I suspect that Khartoum believes Juba will increasingly feel that it must make a deal as that date approaches; that the south will make concessions and the north will win more-than-equitable terms on key issues.

Furthermore, given the Barack Obama administration’s tilt away from Juba and toward Khartoum, the north might calculate that the United States will pressure Juba to make concessions. Based on the US government’s posture over the past 28 months, that seems a reasonable perspective. But if Washington were to act in this way, it would be a grave mistake, and might imperil any chance for stability after the south’s independence.

Key issues include Abyei and five other contested border areas, citizenship, various treaty commitments, security guarantees, and sharing of oil revenues. All of these matters are consequential, but the two most critical are oil-revenue sharing and the future of the Abyei region.

When President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and his regime came to power in 1989 in a coup d’état, total exports from Sudan amounted to around half a billion dollars a year. Thanks to oil, current Sudanese exports are about $9.8 billion per year. That enormous growth has helped prop up the regime, bought security, paid for various armed conflicts, and made many people in Khartoum rich. However, 70 to 80 percent of the oil comes from the south.

Naturally, the north does not want to lose that revenue stream. The viability of the regime might even be endangered if it lost all its revenue from oil in the south. I believe the reason that the five contested border regions remain unresolved is not that Khartoum harbors a deep desire for more land, or that it feels particular loyalty to Arab nomadic tribes in those areas (some of whom have served as proxy militias for Khartoum), but because of the oil that lies under the ground.

The south, understandably, does not want to share its oil with the north, which has marginalized and brutalized it for so long. It wants the oil revenue to help build the south, to develop its economy, and to provide the peace dividend its people are hoping for. But the south has a problem. The pipeline through which the oil flows (built by the Chinese) goes through the north to oil storage facilities (also built by the Chinese); from these facilities, located near Port Sudan, the oil is exported to world markets. There is no alternative route. The south has few paved roads and receives about 50 inches of rain a year, making truck transport unfeasible. Building a pipeline to the sea through neighboring countries would take at least three years.

Consequently, both north and south have reasons to reach some accommodation, at least for the short term. The south has said it will not share revenue from the oil that rightfully belongs to the south; however, the south also has said it would be willing to pay a fee for use of the north’s pipeline. So the basis for an agreement is available.

As of this writing, however, no deal has been struck. Various international partners, including the United States, are working as facilitators to help the north and south reach agreement on this and other issues. No reason exists that an agree-
ment cannot be reached, but we can expect the north to overreach and the south to be parsimonious. The facilitators must act as honest brokers to guide the parties to a sustainable resolution of this crucial issue.

The Abyei area—a region on the border between the north and south—presents a different sort of challenge, one charged with emotion and political significance, and complicated as well by oil issues. It is the home of the Ngok Dinka, the tribe to which many of the most prominent personalities in southern Sudan belong. However, the nomadic Misseriya Arabs graze cattle there and consider it part of the north. It has been the site of clashes over the years, including the terrible violence of May 2008.

Abyei did not take part in the January referendum because the north and south could not agree on who there should have the right to vote. Since the referendum Abyei has seen some scattered clashes, as well as major armed violence in late February and early March that claimed hundreds of lives. Each side accuses the other of starting these clashes. Additional United Nations peacekeeping troops have been sent to the area. The situation remains tense, with both sides drawing lines in the sand and refusing to compromise.

Bashir’s adviser for security affairs, Salah Abdallah Gosh, has warned that Abyei will remain part of the north whether through a bilateral agreement or war. For Bashir, any compromise on Abyei would be a major political victory, while for Kiir it would be a major defeat. Nonetheless, some agreement must be reached. Otherwise, it is difficult to see a path toward a peaceful separation.

**HEDGING BETS**

Nine countries share borders with Sudan. Most, while hedging their bets, have favored unity as the safest and most stable outcome. They are concerned about the contagion of instability and the possibility of terrorists exploiting power vacuums. They also are concerned that separation might set an example for resolving disputes within their own states. In various ways, large and small, most neighboring states in the past have found ways to be supportive of Khartoum during its various clashes with marginalized peoples on Sudan’s periphery.

However, each neighbor has charted its own course, and in fact most have been active within Sudan’s borders. Ethiopia has generally supported Khartoum but also has provided training for the southern Sudan People’s Liberation Army. Uganda, plagued by rebels known as the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)—who have gained some support from Khartoum and found safe haven within Sudan—has supported separation in the expectation that an independent southern Sudan will be less hospitable to the LRA.

Egypt, where some Sudanese refugees have flowed, is concerned about treaties and other arrangements regarding the Nile River, which flows through southern Sudan’s vast marshland, and consequently has tilted heavily toward unity. Chad has served as a safe haven and a launching site for the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Darfuri rebel group. In retaliation, Khartoum has provided safe haven and a launching pad for rebels in Chad. Libya’s Muammar el-Qaddafi has provided support for various Darfuri rebels. The list goes on.

Within the past year, however, things reached a tipping point. In part because of a diplomatic surge by the Obama administration last fall, it became clear that separation was inevitable. Since then neighboring countries have increasingly focused on nurturing a peaceful separation and supporting a stable outcome. Of course, this is better for the Sudanese people as well as their neighbors.

The African Union (AU) has long favored unity. Most African nations are multiethnic and many face ethnic and regional stresses of their own, which has led to AU concerns about Sudan splitting into two states. While it never openly opposed the CPA, for a long time the AU was neither enthusiastic about it nor particularly helpful regarding its implementation. In more than one meeting at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, I heard concerns about the dangers of elections, referendums, and the splintering of a country.

Over time, however, the wider region has come to accept the inevitability of separation, and African nations have recently sought to help with maintaining stability. This has been a very constructive development. Such regional help could prove invaluable in the immediate aftermath of separation, when both the north and the newly in-
dependent south will confront enormous internal stresses as well as the threat of violence.

The international community beyond Africa has been divided in its dealings with Sudan. Washington, the European Union, and most others have been committed to full implementation of the CPA. These countries have spoken out about violations of the CPA, supported mechanisms for implementation of the agreement, and provided humanitarian assistance and development aid to southern Sudan in preparation for possible separation. Norway in particular has been helpful, providing expertise on a range of oil-related matters.

Some countries, however, have been less helpful. Those that sell weapons to Sudan and those that purchase its oil have favored Khartoum in ways that have not always promoted full implementation of the CPA. China in particular has been singled out as having provided cover for Khartoum when the UN Security Council has considered the slow-motion genocide in Darfur and the violence and other problems in southern Sudan. The problematic nations, however, including China, seemed at some point last year to accept the probability of the south's secession and to behave more favorably toward stability in Sudan and development of the south.

**High stress**

If the key issues—revenue sharing, Abyei, the five other contested border areas, citizenship, security, and so on—are resolved so that separation can proceed as scheduled in July, a number of major problems will still have to be overcome if sustainable peace is to be achieved.

Khartoum will face a crisis of legitimacy. Some will challenge the regime on the grounds that it allowed dismemberment of the country. Opposition political parties in the north are already in consultations about unifying to challenge Bashir's National Congress Party (NCP). Khartoum will also have to contend with a substantial drop in revenues because so much oil money will go to the newly independent south. This economic shock will feed further political turbulence.

Furthermore, the political unrest that began in Tunisia and proceeded to Egypt and elsewhere has bled into Sudan. While Egypt boiled over, demonstrations took place in Khartoum. The protests were not as large or sustained as they have been in many other Arab nations, but further unrest and political turmoil could ensue. Some commentators have suggested that this may lead the NCP to take a more Islamist tack. Many observers suspect that Bashir's recent declaration that he would not seek reelection in 2015 is a response to the unrest running through the Arab world.

During this time of great stress in the north, various rebel movements in Darfur and elsewhere may seize on Khartoum's weakness and renew demands for greater autonomy or independence. Especially problematic may be the JEM, which in May 2008 successfully advanced all the way to Omdurman, just across the Nile from Khartoum. This is the only time that any rebel group has been able to penetrate the defenses of Sudan's armed forces and strike near the heart of the regime.

From my many discussions with senior officials of the NCP, I know healthy concern exists about the military capabilities of the JEM. This may explain efforts that Khartoum has recently made to relieve tensions with Chad, Sudan's neighbor on the Darfuri border, and may also explain the deployment of more Sudanese troops to the Darfur region.

Indeed, Khartoum may be planning attacks of its own in Darfur. This would add more names to the long list of Darfuri victims, including those of innocent civilians. Moreover, attacks by Khartoum would make it very difficult if not impossible for the Obama administration to lift sanctions on Khartoum, as it has promised to do, if separation proceeds peacefully. After all, the most restrictive sanctions were imposed not because of the north-south struggle but because of the carnage in Darfur.

The south will also face enormous stress immediately after separation. President Kiir has a long history as a successful rebel general, but he is an accidental president. The dominant personality and unifier of southern Sudan's rebel movements was John Garang, the charismatic and skillful warrior-politician who drove the negotiations for the CPA and who, it was assumed, would be the country's leader when the CPA was fully implemented. Tragically, soon after implementation began, Garang was killed in a helicopter accident—and his quieter vice president, Kiir, rose to the presidency.

I have enormous respect for Kiir. For almost six years he has been the indispensable man in keeping the CPA's implementation on track, often at considerable political cost. But he does not have a dominant personality—and during the long transition period, many other aspirants to the top post have been submerging their own ambitions. After independence, many constraints will be gone. The

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unifying force of a common enemy, Khartoum, will disappear, and personal ambitions will be unleashed. The jockeying for power, prestige, and position will be considerable, and Kiir's own position will be fragile.

FOR PEACE’S SAKE

For the sake of stability, this natural political competition must occur within normal nonviolent boundaries. If the United States and others in the international community press Kiir to make excessive concessions on the final resolution of Abyei, or to concede too much to the north regarding oil revenues, such actions would invite a political crisis that would gravely endanger stability.

Furthermore, the new government of the Republic of South Sudan must deal with widespread expectations among southerners that a significant peace dividend will flow from independence. Southern Sudan is the size of Texas. It has no paved roads outside the capital. Most southerners live on less than a dollar per day. And while the United States and the international community have provided massive humanitarian assistance to the south, very little development has occurred.

Things must change and change quickly. Governance capacity is urgently needed. Improved education and health care are required, as are roads, bridges, and other infrastructure. And to move toward economic viability, the south must expand beyond oil extraction—it must exploit other mineral resources, establish small-scale manufacturing, and, most urgently, achieve sustainable agricultural development. For this, multilateral and bilateral development assistance is required. Assistance must be targeted and effective if stability is to be achieved in this land that for generations has been a cauldron of conflict and humanitarian crisis.

The appointed date for southern Sudan’s separation fast approaches. But a great deal must be done for separation to occur peacefully. And once separation does take place, both north and south will still face a multitude of stress points, risks, and challenges. The Sudanese people, having suffered greatly, yearn for an end to the violence. It is in the interest of Sudan’s neighbors, the region, and the international community to help them attain the diplomatic and material means to achieve the sustainable peace they desire.