Large war starts with large defense acquisitions. The flows of arms can help to trace the potential hotbeds of conflicts – weapons go to the areas of pain, aggravate the old conflicts and bring closer the breakouts of new violence.

Recent news coming from Sudan indicate that the country is preparing for war, which may eventually spill over into neighboring states and change the borders in the region.

European and Arab colonizers took the African tribes out of their primordial life, taught them to live in cities, believe in new gods and even participate in the elections. But independent African ethnic groups stopped in their progress between the savagery and civilization. Western billions make a significant contribution to the budgets of some local governments – they create an illusion of survival for the poorest and corrupt the *nouveaux riches*.

The lands separated by artificial borders drawn by the colonial powers in the 19th and 20th century without bearing in mind natural ethnic and cultural boundaries are full of unresolved conflicts. Old territorial claims, interethnic and religious problems are exacerbated with the rapid population growth, exhaustion of natural resources, and climate change.

**REBELLION IN BORDERS AND WITHOUT BORDERS**

Darfur is a rebellious province of Sudan. Its sun-burnt land is the reason for conflict between the two local communities – Arab Muslims (and its armed wing of Janjaweeds, who ride through the sands with their Kalashnikovs across the chest) and Africans (comprising Muslims, Christians and pagans). Government forces try to stop the violence from time to time and separate the parties. The African community normally gets more casualties, so people seek refuge in neighboring states. According to the official data, the number of refugees and internally displaced (IDPs) is over 200,000 people, most of whom live in Chad.

Armed struggle between the Arabs and Africans does not stop in Chad itself (the Muslims make 65 percent of the local population). Two conflicts are interconnected – the Darfur militants use the territory of Chad as their rear base, while the rebels from Chad hide in Darfur. Both states secretly support the militants from both sides. Darfur is the battlefield of undeclared war between Sudan and Chad, while the legitimate government of Chad has to share the power with the tribe leaders and warlords.

Kenya is the country which until recently seemed to be relatively trouble-free, despite the splashes of interethninc violence and the mutiny of ethnic Somalis. During the 2007 disturbances nearly 2,500 people died. Fragile peace settled after the establishment of the coalition government of national unity enables the country to have the reputation of safe-haven in the West and attract foreign tourists to local safaris. Kenya is a popular place for conducting inter-
national conferences on various topics – from salvation of African elephants to reconciliation of enemy clans from neighboring states.

The Democratic Republic of Congo suffers from differences between the Hutu and Tutsi, which continue to instigate civil war, despite the efforts of the UN peacekeepers. Neighboring Rwanda and Uganda make attempts to derail the process of national consolidation, in order to be able to exploit the natural resources in the areas controlled by the militants loyal to them.

In Uganda there is a hope for settlement, which will put an end to the twenty-year civil war involving the Northern Nile ethnic groups and Bantu southerners. But the next step of the peace plan – voluntary disarmament of the rebels – seems unrealistic, bearing in mind the fact that the International Criminal Court convicted the leaders of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) for crimes against civilians, so the criminal prosecution and the penalty are pending.

The history of modern Central African Republic is a series of coups. After the 2001–2003 war the country lives under the tough authoritarian regime. It is challenged by various bandit groupings in the north of the country, which try to acquire some political status.

The world also looks indifferently at the collapse of Somalia, which breaks up into a dozen of feuds. Warlords have their own rules and laws there and neglect the internationally recognized transitional federal government. The war with Ethiopia followed by the inter-clan war turned Somalia into a country of refugees and IDPs, while its economy is ruined. Ethiopia supported by the United States tried to fight against the Somali Islamists. However, military victories of the Ethiopians in Mogadishu were short, while the UN-backed transitional government suddenly declared the sharia law in Somalia. Nowadays Somalia is mainly associated with Islamism and piracy.

Eritrea established in 1993 after successful guerrilla war has its own problems. The Eritreans occupied most of the sea coast in war-torn Ethiopia and deprived the country of access to the ports. Since then after a number of local conflicts, in which Ethiopia was luckier, the parties have been preparing for a decisive battle. Meanwhile, peace is monitored by the UN peacekeepers as well. Nonetheless, their presence does not prevent the Eritrean volunteers to fight with Ethiopia on the territory of Somalia and to support any enemies of their adversary with arms and money.

This set of regional conflicts and wars demonstrates some samples of peacemaking, which can surprise the observers. For instance, Sudan’s leadership has many times showed its ability to achieve peace at the negotiation table with the toughest opponents.

RECONCILIATION OF UNRECONCILED

20 years of bloodshed in Sudan and the truce that put an end to it are both connected with the name of John Garang. A Dinka by birth he graduated the University of California (Berkeley) and in 1983 was sent to the south of the country to suppress the mutiny against the Islamic government of Sudan. He broke the oath of allegiance and led the rebellion, set up the Sudan’s People Liberation Army (SPLA). The war against the Islamization of the South was one of the most dramatic conflicts of the late 20th century. During the years of war nearly two million people died and four million lost their homes.

At first sight, the war in the South resembled a traditional religious conflict, since the majority of population in this area is made of Christians. However, an important root of the conflict was under the ground – the parties wanted to divide the potential (and since 1997 – actual) oil revenues, since most of the oil in Sudan is in the south of the country.

In 2002 the leaders of the conflicting parties – President Omar al-Bashir and John Garang – managed to overcome the differences and signed the framework peace agreement that stopped the civil war. After three more years of negotiations, most of the issues were settled. On January 9, 2005 the comprehensive peace plan was signed – it was guaranteed by the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the EU, the African Union, the United States, the U.K., Norway, the Netherlands, Italy, Egypt, Kenya, and Uganda. It implied that John Garang
would be the vice president, Islam would no longer be the only official religion, and South Sudan got the self-government, posts in the government of national unity, and half of the revenues from resources extracted on its territory (chiefly – the oil). The armies agreed to establish a joint military unit in the South, which would become an exemplary case for the rest of the Armed Forces. And moreover, the parties approved the idea of the referendum in 2011 in South Sudan, which should decide its future – autonomy or full independence.

South Sudan got a broad autonomy. It seemed that the conflict was resolved, but far from that. John Garang did not manage to see the results of his victory – six month later, in July 2005 he died in a plane crash flying back home from negotiations in Uganda. The helicopter belonging to the Ugandan president hit the rock. This tragic death raised new suspicions among the parties and caused a new wave of violence and riots in Sudan.

Garang’s followers were less open for talks than their leader – in October 2007 the government of South Sudan suspended the activities of its ministers and presidential advisors in the government of national unity and urged the central authorities to comply fully with the provisions of the comprehensive peace agreement. President al-Bashir agreed with some arguments of the opposition and in December 2007 new ministers from South Sudan took their posts again.

In early 2003 when it turned out that that the Sudanese government was ready to share the oil revenues in order to achieve peace, a number of militant groups in Darfur began their own intrigue. They launched a dispute on the land possession in this region. The clashes with the local tribes, which were a regular thing due to permanent famine since the early 1980s, became a real armed struggle in 2003, when the leaders of the belligerent parties felt the smell of oil. In December the representatives of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) in Darfur asked for self-government, control of the territory of Darfur and 13 percent of oil revenues of the country (the population of Darfur makes 13 percent of the population of Sudan).

Let us point out that there is no oil in Darfur. The nature was cruel to this province, which territory is equal to France – Sahara attacks the arable lands, two thirds of the region are sand and rocks and high population growth makes famine inevitable. The rebels realized that firepower and oil in the neighboring province would make a perfect formula of success, which would give them a new sense of existence.

**BLOOD AND OIL**

The variety of ethnic groups living in this area is reflected in numerous rebel movements. The most influential party in Darfur is the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). Three other significant groups are the factions of the Sudan Liberation Army – SLA). They represent different tribes with different political weight and combat potential, fight with each other more often than with the central government. But JEM and SLA started the rebellion against the social isolation of the peoples of Darfur in 2003. Beside them, there are many bandits who prefer the mask of rebels and many rebels who do not have the armies, but have Web sites and satellite phones to connect the foreign press.

The parties in Darfur can fight with each other, they have different political claims to the central government, but they all agree that Khartoum should compensate for the damage inflicted by the Janjaweeds. This movement popped up in 2003 to support the regular army of Sudan in suppressing the JEM and SLA militants. Being Muslims, Janjaweeds do not hesitate to destroy the mosques, kill the imams and desecrate the religious books of black Sudanese from Fur and Zagawa tribes.

The military strength of the rebels is normally counted in jeeps in this area. An experienced driver and a dozen of armed militants with a heavy machine gun on the roof, with a stock of gas and food make an ideal combat unit in the desert and can easily cover long distances.

In 1990 a leader of such detachment comprising 300 jeeps – Idriss Déby – marched from Darfur to Ndjamen and overthrew the government of President Hissène Habré in Chad. He now keeps fighting against the local rebels and support the militants in Sudan.
For instance, in May 2008 his friends from JEM tried to repeat the mobile operation and attack Khartoum. But the Sudanese authorities were tracking their movement and defeated the group. They also captured the phone call by Khalil Ibrahim (JEM’s leader) to Idriss Déby asking for a rescue helicopter. President al-Bashir was furious and broke diplomatic relations with Chad.

External interests in Darfur are reflected in various ways. Chad is closely connected with both rebel groups – they get support, hide on the territory of the country, recruit new militants among the Darfur refugees in the camps located in Eastern Chad. The camps are secured by the EUFOR – a French-EU enterprise – deployed in Chad and the CAR upon insistence of France in late 2007. According to the bilateral agreement, the French materiel and nearly 1,500 servicemen are based on the territory of Chad.

President Déby once got his military education in France. France granted an asylum to Khalil Ibrahim. A leader of SLA – Abdel Wahid al-Nour – also lives in Paris and refuses to take part in the peaceful settlement in Darfur. The French control the developments in the rebellious region.

However, Paris is an important, but secondary player. Le Monde argues that the participation of France in Darfur is regarded as useful by Washington, since France has levers in the region (Chad, CAR) and contacts (Eritrea) which the U.S. administration lacks. Hence, Paris becomes a key U.S. partner in the region and the logic of the conflict is aimed at keeping the U.S. interested.

In April 2008 the Western media reported a curious statement by a JEM spokesman – he argued that the rebels in Darfur wanted to replace the Chinese oil companies with the Western ones. In his interview with Dow Jones Newswires he maintained that the movement was ready to provide better assurances of oil revenue distribution and environmental protection. He also hoped for the dialogue with the United States – JEM’s support for Chad which hosts the oil pipeline from Chad to Cameroon operated by Exxon Mobil Corp. is allegedly the assistance to the U.S. oil interests in the region.

Successful oil production in the region attracts global powers – China and the United States. Due to the problems in the Middle East, the Americans seek the alternative sources of cheap oil. In the late 1990s the President of Chad became a true friend of Washington. The discovered oil reserves in this country amount to 1.5 billion barrels. Since 2003 the oil from the Doba fields in the southeast of the country has been supplied to the world market via the oil pipeline operated by Exxon Mobil and Chevron together with Petronas from Malaysia. The pipeline is 1,070 km long and connects Chad with the sea terminal in Cameroon – the daily production rate is nearly 160,000 barrels.

However, in 2007 Déby let China enter the market. PetroChina explored a new oil field in Chad with over 100 million tons of reserves and in September 2007 it signed the contract with the government establishing a joint venture with CNPC. The rivalry for oil between China and the United States affected Chad.

In February 2008 a coup attempt occurred. 2,000 armed rebels crossed over 1,000 km from Darfur to Ndjamenah within a few days and seized the presidential palace. Déby hid at the French military base and hesitated for a couple of days. The French military, who were tactical partners of the United States, were inactive and let the rebels reach the capital and did not prevent the pillage. Soon after Déby must have promised to behave and was restored at his throne with the help of the French troops.

**WEAPONS FOR THE REVOLUTION**

The region is weaponized – even Israel supplies some Darfur rebels, despite their Muslim origin. SLA has even opened its representative office in Israel.

The Sudanese authorities accuse Ethiopia and Kenya of supplying weapons to South Sudan.
Minister of Finance of South Sudan Kuol Athian indirectly confirmed the active weaponization of the autonomy – in 2008 the parliament had to approve $980 million of expenditure in addition to the $1.6 billion budget. In his interview with Reuters he confessed that the major reason for such extra spending was the army – it spent $500 million more than planned.²

A cargo with illegal weapons was detected by the UN inspectors – they helped to seize DC 130 from Ethiopia with 40 tons of ammunition and light weapons in the airport in Juba. The Foreign Ministry of Sudan issued a note to the Ethiopian ambassador.

Such reports are numerous – the region is saturated with small arms and light weapons. It is easier for arms smugglers to cross the borders than for the refugees. The rebels in Darfur would like to fix the right to carry a machine gun for farmers and try to make it one of the points of the truce. Not surprisingly such illegal arms deals are thriving. However, there are some changes and they are astonishing.

The region becomes a destination for heavy weapons. Machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars – this armament of the jeep detachments is available to everyone, it can good for tactical success, but real power is brought by armored vehicles.

The 2011 referendum is approaching. According to various observers, its outcome is clear – the Southerners will vote for complete independence. Such result would mean the resumption of civil war, so tanks arrive in South Sudan.

On February 13, 2009 Faina vessel liberated from the pirates started to unload its cargo in Mombasa in Kenya. 33 T-72M1 and T-72M1K tanks, six 14.5 mm ZPU-4 air defense machine gun systems, 150 RPG-7V grenade launchers, 8,788 125 mm VOF-36 ammunition, 5,000 125 mm VBK-10 ammunition, 18,490 dynamic protection systems for tanks, over 1,000 tons of small arms, six GRAD rocket launchers, Strela-2M portable rocket launchers.

Everyone in Kenya knew that the cargo was meant for South Sudan, even though the officials denied the delivery. Standard arms acquisition procedures were not complied with in this case. Normally a seller supplies Kenya with a sample for tests and then long before any decision is taken a group of Kenyan military go to the exporting country to learn how to handle the weapons. There was nothing of that kind between the government of Ukraine and the Kenyan MOD.

Kenya does not suffer from serious external threats, but it has problems with domestic security. Nonetheless, one can hardly imagine that riots can be suppressed with tanks and air defense systems. Moreover, training and supplies to the Kenyan officers are sponsored by the donations from the United States, so the army follows the NATO standards. Why on Earth would it buy the Soviet materiel, which the Kenyans can neither operate nor maintain?

New facts add to the intrigue. Ukraine’s report on arms export of June 18, 2008 submitted to the UN Conventional Arms Register indicates that in 2007 Ukrainian companies delivered to Kenya 77 T-72 tanks and five rocket launchers (BM-21 Grad), 122 mm howitzers and 203 mm guns. It is noteworthy that 203 mm self-propelled gun – 2S7 Pion – was created in the Soviet Union to destroy and suppress the nuclear offensive means, enemy artillery and firepower, field and long-term defense facilities and logistics. Such weapons cannot be employed against the disturbances – they are designated for a serious warfare. By the way in 2007 the Kenyan MFA submitted to the UN Register a very short report – no export, no import.³

Thus, the African desert consumed hundreds of artillery pieces and thousands of small arms, as well as 110 T-72M1 and T-72M1K tanks – an extremely modern weapon for the continent. Such supplies are the sign of a new war, which will not be confined to South Sudan, but will spill over into Darfur, may involve Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda and even transform the conflict into another Great African war.

A few dozens of NGOs are trying to detect illegal or destabilizing arms transfers in the world – thanks to them, such information becomes public and is investigated by UN special commissions. But after all, such transfers are never accidental or may pass unnoticed. They cannot be noticed only if there is no desire to identify them at all.
Nowadays Western mediators, humanitarian and human rights agencies, UNIDIR officers in various provinces of Sudan keep silence about the buildup of weapons in South Sudan and this reminds of a plot.

The aforementioned weapons – tanks, rocket launchers, self-propelled artillery systems – are complicated machines, which require good training of the crews and technicians. To maintain such tanks, one needs an appropriate technological basis and resources. None of the African states can cope with this task without attracting foreign military advisors. And there is no doubt that such experts are in the region and there are many of them. It is not yet clear, which state they belong to, but one may presume that the Soviet equipment is maintained by our former compatriots from the ex-U.S.S.R, who are also engaged in training. Behind this, one may feel the presence of some evil force – it is frightening to name it.

THE OIL: SPLITTING PEOPLE, UNITING PEOPLE

It is believed that the Islamic fundamentalism is the deafest religion as far as external arguments are concerned. However, the broadly condemned regime in Sudan has showed good examples of effective compromise with belligerent opponents. After the conclusion of the peace agreement with the South, Khartoum seriously believed that reconstruction and investments in infrastructure of South Sudan would help to build friendly relations with the local population. These hopes are still strong today.

In accordance with the achieved agreements, Sudan began to change. The downtown of Khartoum with its trade district is boiling busily with loud prays of Muslims and rhythmical Christian gospels. The Evangelistic church is based there. It is surrounded by neatly dressed youth, Sudanese girls with uncovered heads and faces. In the street nearby every evening a polite young man disseminates free pocketbooks – copies of the New Testament.

The Khartoum University trains the staff for the government and the opposition. It was established by the Brits and 17,000 students study mainly in English. Professors come from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Germany, and the U.K. Knowledge penetrates the minds of the youth along with the seeds of liberalism.

The country is thriving with massive construction. A new road network is the first thing a foreigner notices when he arrives in Khartoum. The number of flights in the airport has grown several times and it is much easier and cheaper to come to Sudan nowadays. The country is covered with new bridges, electricity grids, pipelines. Due to the lack of coal, Sudan’s energy sector makes stakes on the Nile – hydropower plants are being built. Khartoum hopes that the periphery, including the Southerners, will soon feel the change.

Most of the oil in Sudan is concentrated in the south. As of 2002, the proven oil reserves amounted to 631.5 million barrels, natural gas reserves were 99.11 billion cubic meters. Sudan currently produces 500,000 barrels of oil per day and this is far less than other African oil exporters – Nigeria, Angola, and Equatorial Guinea. The Sudanese government hopes to extract 600,000 barrels by late 2009 and 1.1 million per day by 2010.

The conflict in South Sudan would impede the functioning of this industry – fragile oil facilities would die in the fire of civil war. Hence, oil was a powerful impetus for reconciliation.

The resumption of the conflict would be a blow to Khartoum, which would be deprived of oil revenues. However, for Juba the open war with the central government would mean the suspension of petrodollar flows – the pipeline goes north to Port Sudan via Khartoum. The oil infrastructure is a uniting factor for the elites of both parts of large Sudan – it facilitates the attraction of foreign investments, it helps to increase the budgets and ensure the prosperity of the nation, as the wages grow along with the oil revenues.

However, one can hardly expect the Southerners to be guided with geopolitical interests in their choice. Most probably they will follow the voice of their hearts and support complete independence, for which nearly one million people sacrificed their lives. If the province succeeds in evading the war, it will have to learn to live independently.
The oil rich area does not take this problem seriously. The government of South Sudan can always construct a new pipeline via Kenya. Khartoum is not against building a pipeline along the shortest route – from South Sudan to Mombasa, if the population of the region agrees to stay within the united country. If this is not the case, Khartoum will try its best to disrupt the construction of the pipeline to Kenya. Such project would require about $2 billion, which could be invested by the United States or India (which wants to have a pipeline connected with the Indian Ocean). But Kenya is not a stable country, it suffers from Somalia Islamists and the pipeline would be an irritating factor for all militants, especially those who refer to the war in South Sudan as the war between the Muslims and the Christians.

UNITED STATES, CHINA, RUSSIA: WHEN ALL THE PATHS MEET

In 1997–1999 the international consortium led by CNPC made the first contribution to the oil infrastructure of Sudan – $2 billion. Since then the Chinese investments have increased to $15 billion and Beijing became the major foreign policy and economic partner of Khartoum. The total number of the Chinese specialists in Sudan amounts to 15,000 people. In the last 10 years the trade turnover between Beijing and its African partners increased by 1,000 percent! Two thirds of the Sudanese oil are delivered to China and this makes about eight percent of all oil supplies to China.

China’s global problem is the lack of energy resources. China (daily demand for oil is seven million barrels) is the second largest consumer of oil in the world after the United States (20 million barrels per day). Even though Washington relies on oil imports more than China (60 percent against 47 percent), China’s per capita oil consumption is 20 times lower than in the United States. To maintain high growth rate China requires permanent increase in oil consumption – the forecast for 2011 is nine million barrels per day. Under these circumstances, the Chinese has only one way out – to invest and select the partners without any political correctness or scrupulousness. Africa with its conflicts is the perfect place for such risky investors as China. Other investors, mainly American, have left the continent, since free capital does not like the risks.

While China develops projects with Khartoum, the United States tries to improve its relations with South Sudan and Darfur. The Americans do not make business in these troubled waters, they fund the humanitarian projects. Through the USAID mission in Sudan the Americans help to organize the work of local administrations and wake up the civil society. The United States is the largest donor of Sudan and it pays for 90 percent of humanitarian aid delivered to the country. Every year U.S. expenditure on humanitarian, construction and peacemaking projects in Darfur and South Sudan exceeds one billion dollars.

The United States imposed economic sanctions against Khartoum, but is ready to cooperate with South Sudan. However, business interests of the U.S. corporations in South Sudan are quite modest. The projects launched indicate that their participants would like to take over other U.S. companies in the race for the right to produce oil in South Sudan.

In the recent years Sudan has turned into an irritation factor in the Sino-American relations. China is not only the major importer of the Sudanese oil, but is also the major arms supplier to Sudan. Khartoum pays with Chinese petrodollars for the Chinese weapons and uses them against the militants and civilians in Darfur. Despite the pressure on the part of the United States, China until recently has tried to avoid imposing its influence on the Sudanese leadership. According to some experts, Beijing has lately changed its approach and agreed to support the UN and AU peace initiatives, and also limited the supplies of the most sensitive weapons to Khartoum.

Except mutual Cold War suspicion, the United States and China have no reasons for conflict in Africa. Two largest oil consumers in the world are interested in reliability and security of supplies at reasonable prices. The example of Angola proves that the two Great Powers can cooperate without conflicts with a supplier, which every year gets bad mark from the U.S. Department of State for the human rights abuses.
New U.S. policy with respect to China will most probably mean that Washington will get rid of the human rights fetish in order to convince Beijing to take some part of the peacekeeping burden. As the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi put it, “Even when the train of the world economy eventually reaches some flat land, it will still be necessary for China and the United States, two giant motors, to push this train forward together and all the time.”

Russia also shows growing interest in the region and returns to Africa. In December 2008 there was established a post of the special presidential envoy on Sudan. It is occupied by Mikhail Margelov, Chair of the Committee for International Affairs of the Federation Council.

Before Margelov the continent was reopened for Russia by Vladimir Putin personally – he made historic visits to Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and South Africa, which are advanced and more or less prosperous nations in African terms. During his tours he was not engaged in big politics, but rather defended the interests of the Russian companies and signed new contracts. Russia wanted to invest billions, to get concessions and to sell weapons – to make billions as well.

What does Russia looks for in the war-torn region? In early 2009 Mikhail Margelov went to Sudan and visited Khartoum, Al-Fashir and Juba, where he met the leading politicians, the president and vice president in Khartoum and the president of South Sudan. The Russian senator was seemingly speaking about the same things – resumption of political and economic cooperation. However, he did not touch upon any economic project and he was accompanied mainly by journalists – the businessmen were not in the delegation.

The flagships of Russian business have issues to discuss in Khartoum. Russia had its moments of glory in Sudan as well. In 1997, for instance, Zarubezhneftegazstroy signed a contract on oil pipeline construction (411 km). Due to the lack of funding in Sudan and in Russia the company found an investor in France ($300 million) and invented an effective scheme of returning the loans. However, the Ministry of Energy in Sudan broke the contract under the pretext of delay with the start of works (in fact, Sudan received a better offer from Beijing).

In 1998 Lukoil signed a contract on the construction of a mobile pipeline with the capacity of 12,500 barrels per day. Despite long negotiations, the project failed to be implemented (the Sudanese argue that Lukoil was claiming for concessions without even starting the works). Slavneft and Tatneft were also among the Russian companies announcing their strategic plans in Sudan. However, only Rosoboronexport was successful – the Russian weapons are appreciated in Sudan more than the Chinese ones.

As far as other areas are concerned, China is winning over both rivals. The Sudanese agree that the quality of the Chinese products is 20 percent lower than the Russian, but it is improved, while the quality of the Russian products is going down. Besides, China’s prices are much lower and there is no room for competition here.

China’s major trump card is funding – Beijing easily provides large loans which can be paid back in parts during 15 years. For the Russian banks 15 years is something beyond understanding.

Three years ago Russia made an effort to overcome its economic impotence in Africa and made a presentation of the leading Russian companies and banks to ambassadors and military attaches from Central and Eastern Africa. Rosoboronexport, Technopromexport, Vneshtorgbank, Vnesheconombank, etc. took part in the event and talked about their corporate potential and plans. The Russian government nearly agreed to fund (on reasonable terms) the projects of the Russian corporations in Africa. When the Africans asked for the specific numbers, the Russian cautiously made different statements in discord – remembering “state interests” as carte blanche or “LIBOR and no less than nine percent a year”.

The ambassadors who were stunned with sudden attention repeated the only phrase – the Russian state was turning to the African continent. They promised to convey this message to their leaders, promised copper, nickel, diamonds, invited Russian companies to cooperation, but with the Russian money and not higher than three percent a year. This was a good talk.
Nowadays Russia is on the red carpet going to Africa once again. The public interest is high, the media interest is high. But as soon as the oil pipe was launched, the red carpet became narrower. The number of flights to Khartoum has increased several times, hotels are expensive but are full. The country is getting used to international attention and to... the Chinese technologies. Russia is about 15 years late. China got its Cannes Palme d’Or at this festival.

However, Mikhail Margelov came to Khartoum with a proposal – to host an international expert conference on Darfur in September 2009 in Moscow. The idea was immediately supported by President al-Bashir.

Margelov had a philosophical explanation for such a strange venue for the conference, “We have no countries, where our interests do not extend. Sudan is not an exception. Stability of Sudan, real implementation of the agreement between the North and the South, success of the negotiation between the North and Darfur – all this also affect Russia.”

China held a similar event in 2008. Beijing was forced to step into Sudan’s political life – under the pressure of Western criticism for assisting the authoritarian regime. The Chinese are ready to take part in shaping a more comfortable political climate in Sudan for the sake of their economic projects.

Russia and China, being the permanent members of the UN Security Council, rendered Sudan a number of services – prevented tough sanctions, for example. Nowadays Sudan is under embargo imposed by the United States and the EU. The UN has sanctions only against Darfur, while the central government got away and did not fall under the international regime of sanctions, thanks to China and Russia. Beijing’s motivation is clear – it consumes two thirds of Sudan’s oil, while investments in Sudan are the largest project of CNPC. Chinese companies one after another win tenders on construction of infrastructure – dams, hydropower plants, electricity grids, plants. For China the support of Sudan is converted into billions of dollars. So no wonder that Beijing supplies the country with tanks, aircraft, artillery, develops its defense industry, in order to protect the investments.

Russia is often condemned for its political support to Sudan. The international community is even more concerned about arms supplies. Russia began to deliver the vehicles in 2001 – 40 Mi-24 helicopters, 12 MiG-29 aircraft, 30 BTR-80 armored personnel carriers. KAMAZ also rests its hopes on Sudan – over 100 trucks have been delivered and there are plans to start assembling the vehicles on the spot. From time to time Sudan acquires Mi-17 helicopters. The overall economic effect is about $30 million.

Military-technical cooperation with Sudan may help Russia to gain more respect from Africa and the Middle East, but it inflicts serious damage to the Russian reputation in the West. Russian arms dealers are treated with suspicion in the world because of their supplies to Sudan. And the MFA statements about the compliance with the international arms transfers’ laws are not taken seriously.

Russia’s attempt to enter Africa via Sudan may be regarded as an offer of the new rules of the game – today Russia in exchange for supporting Sudan in the UN Security Council gets a privilege of selling weapons to Khartoum. This is a trifle in comparison with the benefits obtained by China. So Moscow now would like to convert this strong political support into specific economic projects – access to the deposits, construction contracts, equipment supplies. In other words, Russia is ready to make business with the use of its political capital.

Vladimir Putin voiced these plans three years ago, “The immense positive political material developed and paid for by the Soviet Union should be transformed today into pragmatic relations in economic sphere. Nearly all countries of the African continent present an interest for the economy of any nation, including Russia – to increase the extraction of natural resources, to get necessary products from those countries, which are not or cannot be manufactured in Russia. Above all, I mean the agricultural products, tropical fruit – they are not cultivated in Russia and will never be. All this plus political interaction.”

Russia has neither means, nor impetus to compete with China within the framework of open economy with its tenders, etc. China has to make many concessions to obtain energy resources, while Russia has no such problems.
Russian interests in Sudan are not specific, they are too global. Russia would like to remain a Great Power and, hence, it claims for some role in Sudan as well, just as in many other parts of the world. In 2005 when the peace agreement was signed, eight countries, including the Netherlands and Norway guaranteed the implementation of the document. Russia’s signature was not there. Perhaps, another historic treaty in Sudan will contain the signature of Mr. Margelov along with other parties. This would help Moscow to become an international mediator, to strengthen its global status and to compensate for economic weaknesses.

**WARRANT FOR UNREST**

As the referendum in South Sudan is approaching, the tensions grow and the new war is much more probable. Western experts assume that President al-Bashir should be the only victim of the internal conflict – such scenario is quite attractive to them. Until he rules the country, the future always lies between war and peace, and the military outcome is much more probable. If Bashir disappears from the political scene, there are other alternatives and the military scenario is not inevitable any longer.

A good example is Mozambique. In 1976–1992 the country was torn with the civil war. In 1985 its president – Samora Machel – died in the plane crash organized by the South African secret services. He was replaced by Joaquim Alberto Chissano, who launched the course on economic and political liberalization. The 1990 Constitution, which provides for the multiparty democracy is effective until now. The death of Machel helped to stop the war and to move the river of the armed conflict into political canals.

Until recently the U.S. military strategists believed that the regime in Sudan can easily be replaced – it was considered a technical issue. 2,500 U.S. soldiers should have been enough to change the power in Khartoum. The temptation was big. In 2007 Joe Biden stood for the military intervention and supported this scenario in the Senate. But such attack against Sudan required international support, which America lacked.

The accusation of the authorities in Khartoum of genocide could provide for such international backing. The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide empowers the United Nations to prosecute and punish the culprits of genocide regardless of their position – “whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.” Washington attempted to portray Janjaweeds as a tool of genocide, which would enable the United Nations to apply effective measures of punishment and to bring the criminals to the International Criminal Court. However, the attempt failed.

The decision of the International Court to issue a warrant for arrest of President al-Bashir was another attempt to solve the problems in Sudan by removing a specific person from power. Democratic countries are so keen on throwing al-Bashir out of his palace in Khartoum, as if they know his successor and can foresee the implications of removing from power such a tough leader.

Sudan’s closest neighbors, the League of the Arab States, the African Union, Russia, China, and India – those nations that understand true situation in this country – disapproved the decision of the ICC, condemned it as destabilizing and urged for its suspension. Further developments confirmed their apprehensions. The JEM rebels, who signed a declaration of good intentions with the government in February 2009, immediately after the March decision argued that there would be no negotiations with Khartoum and it was the time to get rid of al-Bashir. Khalil Ibrahim was ready to provide evidence to the ICC and claimed for the resumption of investigation of genocide. The Darfur militants immediately attacked the UN peacekeepers supplied by the African Union.

The warrant for arrest means that the West has put an end to all the attempts to achieve peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Sudan. Many negotiators will now withdraw their commitments, since they do not want to deal with the international criminal. The decision of the ICC was regarded by the rebels as a start of the hunting season against al-Bashir – who on Earth would defend the president accused of five crimes against humanity and two war crimes? Perhaps,
taking into account the fate of Samora Machel, Khartoum established a special government committee to ensure the security of flights of President al-Bashir abroad.

The Bashir regime will hardly become more compliant. It is condemning the United States and the EU – rallies bring together tens of thousands of people, who support the president. Sudan closed the offices of 13 international organizations, shut down three local NGOs and accused them of cooperation with the ICC. These are mostly the organizations, which in the last six years have been conducting the largest humanitarian operation in the world – their assistance helped to survive over two million refugees and IDPs in Darfur. Thus, the ICC decision allegedly aimed at bringing justice to the population in Darfur and stopping the conflict, ipso facto led to new sufferings.

**DIPLOMATIC PAINFUL HOLD**

Let us make a forecast about possible developments in Sudan. The West pursues the course on toughening the relations with Khartoum.

As many experts assume, there were three active supporters of Darfur in the U.S. Congress – Barack Obama, Joe Biden, and Hilary Clinton. Nowadays these people formulate the U.S. foreign policy. The new president appointed Scott Gration as his special envoy for Sudan. Lt.-Gen. Air Force (ret.) Gration is famous for his 274 sorties in Iraq. Obama blessed him with the following words, “Sudan is a priority for this administration, particularly at a time when it cries out for peace and for justice. The worsening humanitarian crisis there makes our task all the more urgent.” His military experience must be an advantage for the new envoy.

The policy towards the current Sudanese regime will follow the hard line – expansion of the UN measures to protect the population in Darfur, active involvement of the rebels in the negotiation process, aggressive diplomatic pressure on the leadership in Khartoum. The United States does not need a slap in the face in Africa, so the administration will not take chances. For that purpose, Washington needs a broader support from the Western nations, China as an ally, and non-interference of Russia, Arab states and Sudan’s neighbors. The media campaign about the hardships of the IDPs in Darfur and expulsion of the international humanitarian organizations will facilitate this task. Feeling the compassion in the West, the militants in Darfur will provoke al-Bashir to undertake military operations that will be condemned by the West. Al-Bashir will be in a tight corner and will make one mistake after another – send out humanitarian missions, bomb the bases of the rebels, make harsh statements concerning the United States and Israel, introduce curfew, expel Western ambassadors, threaten to start Jihad.

Depending on the gravity of the situation, the Western response may be the following:

- limit diplomatic contacts with al-Bashir to peace negotiations only;
- set up a broad coalition to ensure international isolation of the Sudanese authorities;
- involve China in the peace process in Sudan;
- exert pressure on Russia and China to force them to curb military cooperation with Khartoum;
- create a black list of state companies in Sudan;
- freeze the assets of Sudan and ban the payments for oil;
- ban the flights of war aircraft over Darfur, just as it was in Iraq during Saddam Hussein’s regime when the Iraqi Air Force could not go beyond a certain zone;
- block the ports in Sudan to stop the oil exports and arms imports;
- shift from candid approval of arms supplies to South Sudan to open military support of the authorities in the south and some political forces in Darfur;
- conduct international peace enforcement operation against Khartoum.
Unlike the tactics used in Somalia in 1995 during the UN operation (UNOSOM), this time the United States will rely on local armed groups in South Sudan and Darfur.

Then Omar al-Bashir will have the only way out – to resort to sharia and Allah. This would mean chaos and Somalization of the country, return to the civil war but at a new technological level – with T-72 tanks and aircraft. The country will turn into another bloody hotspot, which will be abandoned by humanitarian missions and peacekeepers. And no wonder that one of the ideologues of terrorism – Abu Azzam al-Ansari – called Africa an “unexplored gold mine” for Al Qaeda.

Notes


3 UN Conventional Arms Register, http://disarmament.un.org/UN_REGISTER.NSF


6 http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2006/09/07/1300_type63380type82634_110888.shtml
