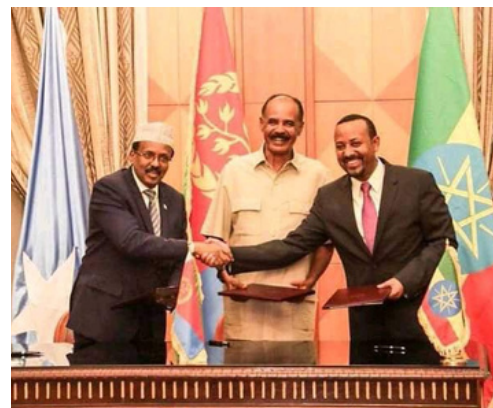


Using Lessons from the Horn of Africa to Protect the Alliance of Sahelian States

The Sahel region, spanning vast lands between the Sahara desert and the savannas of sub-Saharan Africa, stands at the crossroads of history. Characterized by a rich history of resistance to French neocolonial domination and recurring security challenges, the nations of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, which form the Alliance of Sahelian States (AES), are currently facing the challenging task of preserving their sovereignty against the many external pressures of neocolonialism and imperialism. On July 6, 2024, three signatures from the respective Heads of State officially established the confederation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) at a summit in Niamey, Niger. The confederation was introduced as a transitional step before the establishment of a federation into a single unified country under a shared federal government dispensation encompassing the entire territory of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. ***This was cheered and welcomed by the people of the region and by every African and friend of Africa who wishes to see this continent reclaim its agency and pride.***



Protecting Pan-Africanism at All Costs

There are endless similarities between HOA and AES, both in terms of potential, and also in terms of international and regional sabotage. Keeping current with events in the Horn of Africa will help the AES trio fortify their alliance against all pressures aimed at destroying it.

It is a fact that neocolonizers never sleep. Moreover, shortsighted regional actors are blinded by their myopic interests and cannot imagine scenarios where regional challenges can be solved within the region itself, without the backing or blessing of those whose history is rooted in global hegemony.

In addition to giving Sahelian nations more negotiation leverage, a united front decreases their susceptibility to polarizing strategies by other actors, and enables them to combat foreign dangers and national threats in the region. It is vital for the nations of the Sahel to learn from externally-driven challenges, including war and economic sabotage, faced by countries in the Horn of Africa so they can continue to steer towards a future of stability, peace, and sustainable development.

Perhaps most importantly, however, is that ***Africans everywhere must work to safeguard the AES from both international and regional attacks.*** This goodwill was sorely missing in the case of the Horn of Africa owing to the massive propaganda unleashed immediately after the signing of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation. Africans, even supposed Pan Africanists, were unable to tell fact from fiction and differentiate between victims and aggressors. This must not be allowed to repeat in the AES, standing as it does for shared prosperity, collective security, and the right of states to self-determination. Its survival is both a strategic and moral necessity for Africans everywhere.

Historical Parallels: Lessons from the Horn of Africa

To understand the urgency of preserving the Alliance of Sahelian States (AES), one must reflect on the recent history of the Horn of Africa. In 2018, three countries in the region, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, witnessed the signing of a Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation. This tripartite agreement, which was signed in the capital of Eritrea, Asmara, gave rise to hopes for political harmonization and economic integration and was hailed as a historic step towards peace and stability in a conflict-ridden part of the continent.

Tragically, the optimism soon shriveled like a raisin in the sun owing to several factors not least of which was the interference by old and emerging neocolonial powers that have much to lose from African countries - especially in a region with such geostrategic importance as the Horn of Africa - coming together to chart their own destiny. It is important to note, however, that ***this interference would have found no room to maneuver had it not been for shortsighted regional actors who unfortunately cannot imagine navigating turbulent political and economic waters without a compass set by those on whom they depend financially.***

The parallels with the Sahel are striking. The AES represents a chance for these nations - Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger - to unite, pool their resources, and confront shared challenges collectively. Just as in the case of the Horn of Africa, the AES trio are now facing persistent economic and political sabotage from international actors afraid of losing control of the region. Furthermore, just as in the case of the Horn of Africa, where the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) failed to play a role fit for and expected of a regional economic community, the AES are being undermined by a regional economic community, namely the Economic Communities of West African States (ECOWAS), that seems to be acting on behalf of its Western handlers and against the interests of the people of the entire region.

