



The Making and Termination of Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact: A Retrospective Analysis

Raliat O. ENESSI¹
Shakira H. OSASONA²

Abstract

The intricacies of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement threw up a number of intriguing questions, necessitating a closer interrogation. The Nigerian opposition decried the defence agreement as a neo-colonial scheme that was an obstacle to full independence. The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was an agreement between Nigeria and the United Kingdom that outlined military cooperation shortly after Nigeria gained independence from British Colonial rule. The question is whether the defence agreement transitioned from Imperial rule to informal influence or control. The main argument of this paper is that this was not the case. The study relied on secondary sources of data and the realist theory of international relations. The study concludes that the protests and eventual termination of the pact highlighted the importance of engaging the public and key stakeholders in decisions that affect national sovereignty. Nigeria's rejection of the pact can be seen as a broader statement about the country's desire to chart its own path on the global stage, free from the influence of former colonial powers.

Keywords: Defence Pact, Nigeria, Britain, Military Cooperation, Independence.

Introduction

The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, signed in 1960, was an agreement between Nigeria and the United Kingdom that outlined military cooperation shortly after Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule. As Nigeria transitioned into a sovereign state, the defence pact was intended to ensure mutual defence against external aggression and maintain stability in the West African region. For Britain, the

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Abuja, Nigeria.

² Department of Political Science, Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State, Nigeria.

Corresponding author's e-mail: shakira.osasona@fulokoja.edu.ng

pact represented a way to preserve its strategic military interests in the region, given Nigeria's size, resources, and location in the context of the Cold War. For Nigeria, the pact was seen by some as a means of securing external support during its formative years.

Governments across the world desire comfort, prestige, freedom from external control, security, protection and preservation of territorial integrity and independence, economic prosperity and well-being of citizens. The pursuit of these objectives requires the employment of economic tools (such as foreign aids, grants, trade, sanctions and embargoes) and political instruments (such as diplomacy, treaties/agreements), and military instruments (including military alliances, force and wars) (Katsina, 2008, Dauda, Adie and Nwokedi, 2018). Defence pact, an aspect of military alliances in particular, has been utilized by different countries to achieve their defence interests (Attina, 2004). The United States, for instance, has over many collective defence agreements across the world (Watson, 2017). Similarly, prior to independence in 1960, Nigeria and the British Government signed the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact to serve their defence interests.

However, the Pact quickly became a highly controversial issue in Nigeria, sparking opposition from various political and social groups. Nationalists and activists, who had fought for independence, saw the agreement as a form of neo-colonialism that continued to bind Nigeria to its former colonial overlord. Public protests, particularly from students and left-wing political movements, demonstrated concerns that the pact compromised Nigeria's sovereignty and would allow British military interference in African affairs. This opposition reflected the wider anti-imperialist sentiments sweeping across newly independent African nations.

Amid growing protests and pressure from the Nigerian public, the government, led by Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, faced a difficult decision. While some leaders initially viewed the pact as beneficial for maintaining security, the increasing unrest and criticism from both local and international communities forced Nigeria to reconsider its commitment. In 1962, the Nigerian government officially terminated the defence pact, signaling a decisive break from Britain's influence. The pact's termination was a landmark moment in Nigeria's early post-independence history, marking its desire to assert complete sovereignty and shape its own defence and foreign policy.

The intricacies of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement threw up a number of intriguing issues, necessitating a closer interrogation. The Nigerian opposition decried the defence agreement as a neo-colonial scheme that was an obstacle to full independence. As argued by Campbell (2024), decolonisation did not always result in

fully-fledged independence. In numerous cases, it represented the transition from formal imperial rule to informal influence or control. Was the defence agreement thus part of a British neo-colonial design in Nigeria? The main argument of this paper is that this was not the case.

Conceptual Clarification

Anglo

The term "Anglo" refers to things related to England or the English-speaking world, particularly the cultural, historical, and political influence of England or the United Kingdom. In the context of global relations, "Anglo" is often used to describe the influence of the UK on its former colonies, especially through language, governance, and institutional frameworks. In the case of Nigeria, which was a British colony until 1960, "Anglo" refers to the continuing impact of British influence after independence. This influence was not only linguistic and cultural but also political, as seen in agreements like the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact. Such agreements highlighted how former colonial powers like Britain sought to maintain strategic and military ties with their former colonies even after they had gained sovereignty. The "Anglo" dimension, therefore, often signifies the blend of historical colonial ties with post-colonial relationships that can carry both cooperative and contentious aspects (Campbell, 2024).

Pact

A pact is a formal agreement or treaty between two or more parties, often governments, designed to achieve a specific set of goals, usually related to defence, security, or cooperation. Also, a pact is a formal agreement between two or more people, organizations, or governments to do a particular thing or help each other (Collins, 2018). Other synonyms include: agreement, treaty, accord etc. As used in this study, a pact means an agreement signed between Britain and Nigeria.

In international relations, pacts are created to establish clear terms of collaboration, ensuring mutual benefits or protection for the signatories. The concept of a pact implies commitment, trust, and an understanding that each party will honour the terms agreed upon. In the case of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, the agreement was meant to formalize military cooperation between Nigeria and the United Kingdom shortly after Nigeria gained independence (Collins, 2018). Such a pact often involves obligations like mutual defence or support in the event of external threats. However, pacts can become controversial when one party feels that the agreement compromises its sovereignty or independence, as seen in Nigeria, where opposition viewed the defence pact as a lingering form of British control. Therefore, while pacts

are intended to create security and partnership, they can also provoke political and ideological conflicts when the balance of power between the parties is unequal (Omeni, 2025).

Defence Pact

A defence pact is a formal agreement between nations or parties that establishes mutual defence commitments in the event of an external threat or aggression. It typically involves military cooperation, joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and assistance in times of conflict. Defence pacts are often formed to enhance security and stability, especially for nations seeking to safeguard their territorial integrity or align themselves with stronger powers for protection. These agreements can range from bilateral treaties, like the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, to large alliances like North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), where multiple countries commit to collective security. Defence pact refers to a type of treaty or military alliance where the signatories promise to support and defend each other militarily (Krause, 2001).

Omoigui (2015, p. 2) defines a defence pact or treaty as “a formal covenant between states to enhance the defence and security capabilities of its signatories. In a general sense, it can range from a non-aggression pact to a broader joint ‘friendship and cooperation’ security treaty to a very specific military commitment and mutual defence against aggression or to protect sovereignty and/or territorial integrity and/or strategic defence interests”. Defence pacts, therefore, are more than just military agreements; they are reflections of the political relationships between nations. They can strengthen alliances and provide stability, but they can also ignite debates over sovereignty, autonomy, and the influence of more powerful nations over smaller, less powerful ones.

Theoretical Framework

Realist theory is considered to be appropriate for the subject matter. The theory emerged basically from Kenneth Waltz’s 1979 publication entitled *Theory of International Politics* where he centres his argument on the structure of international system as being anarchic. Waltz emphasizes the importance of the ‘structure’ of the international system and its role as the key determinant of state behaviour. The author defines the structure of the international system in terms of three elements – organising principle (anarchy and hierarchy), differentiation of units (states), and distribution of capabilities across units, which according to him is of fundamental importance to understand crucial international outcomes (Mgonja and Makoba, 2009).

In the context of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, realism provides a lens through which to understand the motivations and actions of both Britain and Nigeria

in terms of power, security, and national interest. Realism posits that states operate in an anarchic international system where there is no overarching authority to guarantee security. Consequently, states must prioritize their own survival and power, often through military means or strategic alliances (Mayer, 2024).

Britain's primary motivation was to safeguard its geopolitical interests in West Africa, especially in the early years of the Cold War. Despite granting Nigeria independence in 1960, Britain wanted to maintain influence over a strategically important region. Nigeria, the most populous and resource-rich country in Africa, was vital to Britain's broader global strategy. A defence pact with Nigeria ensured that Britain could retain access to military bases and resources in West Africa, which was critical for monitoring and responding to Soviet activities or other geopolitical threats. Thus, Britain's actions can be viewed as a classic realist approach to preserving its power and influence, even in a post-colonial context. The theory simply put, argues that the international system is anarchic that is, without a central authority or sovereign entity to regulate the conduct/behaviour of states like the nation state that has a way of enforcing law and order within its territorial borders- given this situation, states are compelled to provide security for their own survival (Dornan, 2011; Dauda, 2013; Adeniji and Adie, 2015).

For Nigeria, the decision to enter into the defence pact can also be understood through the lens of realism, where national security and survival are paramount. As a newly independent state, Nigeria faced significant challenges, including the need to stabilize its borders, build a strong military, and secure itself from potential external threats. Aligning with a powerful former colonial master like Britain offered immediate military support and resources during this transitional period. Nigeria, operating within a realist framework, may have seen the pact as a pragmatic decision to bolster its defences while it built internal capacity. From this viewpoint, the pact was an act of self-interest designed to ensure national survival in a potentially volatile post-independence landscape (Mayer, 2024).

However, the realist theory also helps explain the eventual termination of the defence pact. As Nigeria became more confident in its sovereignty and internal security, the leadership faced growing nationalist and anti-colonial sentiment. Realists argue that domestic pressures and public opinion are less important than state security, but in this case, the Nigerian government recognized that sustaining internal stability was crucial to preserving the nation's power. The widespread opposition to the pact, which was seen by many Nigerians as a continuation of colonial influence, threatened Nigeria's political cohesion. By terminating the agreement in 1962, Nigeria aimed to reduce internal dissent and assert its sovereignty, a move that can still be framed in

realist terms. The termination was not simply about appeasing public opinion, but about maintaining internal stability and preserving national strength (Anderson, 2024).

From the British perspective, while the termination of the pact was a setback, it was not a complete loss of influence. Realism suggests that states are constantly recalculating their strategies to maintain power (Talibu & Abdulrasheed, 2025). After the pact's dissolution, Britain could still maintain some influence in Nigeria through economic and diplomatic means, even without formal military ties. Thus, realism explains Britain's willingness to agree to the pact's termination while still seeking to protect its broader interests in the region. Using this theory, the researcher argues that the British and the Nigerian governments decided to negotiate the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in order to provide security and defence for each other in the absence of a central authority in the global system to protect their interests.

Overview of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact

The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was a military agreement signed between newly independent Nigeria and the United Kingdom in 1960, shortly after Nigeria gained its independence from British colonial rule. The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was a basic foreign policy that came into existence shortly after Nigeria's independence in 1960 (Okpoko, 1994). It was also "Nigeria's first action as an independent state and represented an initiative designed to foster greater Nigeria-British relations" (Adeniran, 1989, p. 32). Before the Pact was initiated, it was reported that prior to Nigeria's independence in 1960, the British government was seriously concerned about the future of her defence interests in the new Nigeria as well as Africa. This triggered a careful review of her defence policy interests producing a conclusion that Britain required overflying and staging rights in Nigeria in order to reinforce her forces elsewhere in Africa and the Indian ocean, all of which would require the use of Kano airport and the signing of defence agreement (Lynn, 2001, p. lxxxiii).

The pact was intended to formalize defence cooperation between the two nations, ensuring mutual assistance in the event of external aggression or threats to Nigeria's security. The agreement allowed British military forces to continue using Nigerian military bases and provided for technical support and training for the Nigerian Armed Forces. For Britain, the pact represented an opportunity to maintain a strategic foothold in West Africa during the Cold War, ensuring its ability to protect its geopolitical and economic interests in the region. Consequently, during the London Constitutional Conference of 1958, the then British Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys, presented an document containing the following provisions to the Nigerian Leaders as conditions for the granting of independence:

1. an undertaking by the two governments to afford one another such assistance as may be necessary for mutual defence;
2. U.K. to provide Nigeria on request and on terms to be agreed, personnel to help in the staffing, administration and training of the Federal Armed forces; training facilities for members of these forces; expert advice and assistance in operational and technical military matters; and assistance in the supply of military equipment;
3. military aircraft of either country, including aircraft under the control of the armed forces of either country, to enjoy unrestricted overflying and air staging facilities in each other's territory;
4. Nigeria to lease to the U.K. (on terms to be agreed):- (a) a piece of land in Kano (of up to 150 acres) on which the U.K. may construct facilities and station personnel for staging purposes; (b) on application by UK a piece of land large enough (about 1,000 acres) for the construction and operation of an airfield and staging post, if for any reason Kano became unsuitable;
5. Nigeria to permit supplies and equipment required by UK for the purposes of the defence agreement to be moved without hindrance and discrimination to and from Kano or another staging airfield;
6. Nigeria to afford UK in time of emergency such port facilities at Lagos and port Harcourt as Her Majesty Government may request; and
7. The above, and such necessary provisions, to be elaborated and embodied in a formal agreement to be concluded between the two government on independence (Lynn, 2001, p.573) The document was signed by Tafawa Balewa, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and the Sardauna (Lynn, 2001).

For Nigeria, the pact was initially seen by its government as a practical step toward securing military assistance and modernization during a time when the country was still in the process of establishing its sovereignty and defence infrastructure. Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and his administration viewed the defence agreement as a way to strengthen Nigeria's military capabilities, especially since it had just emerged from colonial rule and faced numerous internal and external uncertainties.

However, the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact quickly became a source of widespread controversy within Nigeria. Nationalist groups, students, trade unions, and left-wing political organizations vehemently opposed the pact, arguing that it was a

form of neo-colonialism that undermined Nigeria's independence. They believed that the agreement allowed Britain to retain undue influence over Nigeria's defence and foreign policy, essentially continuing colonial control in a different form. The opposition was fueled by a growing sense of Pan-Africanism and a desire for Nigeria to assert itself as a fully sovereign nation, free from foreign interference. Explaining, Nigeria's representatives had to sign the document which would allow Britain to lease land and facilities in Kano, have overflying and staging rights, and use Lagos and Port Harcourt harbours in event of war in turn for military training, assistance and equipment. Katsin (2008) stated that the Nigerian leaders were not happy with the idea of the Defence Pact but went ahead to sign it with the hope that it would be revisited after independence.

The public outcry and protests that followed the signing of the pact led to its eventual termination in 1962. Which was accompanied by widespread demonstrations by students of the university College Ibadan, who stormed the Federal Parliament in Lagos to call for its cancellation (Adeniran, 1989). As a result of the demonstrations and other factors we shall soon consider, the Defence Pact was abrogated in 1962 (Adeniran, 1989; Lynn, 2001). It also reflected Nigeria's growing commitment to non-alignment and solidarity with other newly independent African nations in the fight against neo-colonialism.

The Making of the Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact

The making of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1960 was rooted in the complex political and strategic relationships between Britain and Nigeria as the latter prepared for independence. As Nigeria approached the end of British colonial rule, discussions were held regarding the future of the relationship between the two nations, particularly in terms of defence and security. The British government, having controlled Nigeria for decades, sought to retain its influence in the region even after Nigeria achieved full sovereignty (Akpuru-Aja, 2009). Given Nigeria's size, population, and geopolitical importance in West Africa, maintaining military ties through a defence pact was seen by Britain as essential for securing its interests, particularly in the context of the Cold War.

It is reported that up until independence in 1960, the Federal powers over defence and foreign affairs were exercised by the British government. But during the 1957 Constitutional Conference, it was decided that by 1958 the British control over Nigeria's military forces should come to an end (Idang, 1970), thereby leaving a vacuum in terms of defence and security. Thus, in order to fill the vacuum, the British lobbied the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Alhaji Tafawa Balewa for the establishment of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact (Akpuru-Aja, 2009). The defence pact was

designed to ensure continued military cooperation between Nigeria and the UK. It allowed Britain access to Nigerian military bases and provided the Nigerian Armed Forces with training, technical support, and military equipment. For Britain, the agreement ensured that it would maintain a strategic presence in West Africa, a region seen as critical for its broader geopolitical strategy during a time when global powers were competing for influence in Africa. By keeping military ties with Nigeria, Britain hoped to counter the potential influence of the Soviet Union, which was actively seeking alliances with newly independent African nations as part of the Cold War dynamics (Ukelina, 2024).

From Nigeria's perspective, the pact was initially seen by its leadership as a way to secure external military assistance and expertise. Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and his government recognized that, as a newly independent state, Nigeria lacked a fully developed military infrastructure and expertise. The country faced various potential threats, including border issues, internal unrest, and the need to defend its sovereignty. Thus, the Nigerian government believed that maintaining military ties with Britain would help modernize its armed forces and provide a layer of security during its transition from colonial rule to full independence. The Nigerian leadership viewed the pact as a pragmatic step to stabilize the country and ensure protection against external aggression. Nigeria has always been seen as the leader of Africa given its position, arable land, population, economic opportunity among others. Therefore, signing the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact would not only served as an "image booster" but also "additional element to project its ambition of leadership in Africa from a position of strength...." (Apkuru-Aja, 2003, p.252).

However, the agreement was negotiated largely behind closed doors, with limited input from key political and social stakeholders in Nigeria. This lack of transparency would later become one of the primary reasons for the widespread opposition the pact faced from the Nigerian public. Many Nigerian nationalists, who had fought for independence, felt that the agreement was a betrayal of their efforts to break free from British colonial rule. For them, the pact represented a continuation of colonial control under a new guise, with Britain still wielding significant influence over Nigeria's military and foreign policy. Moreover, the idea of allowing British troops to continue using Nigerian bases after independence was seen by many as an infringement on Nigeria's sovereignty (Pensive & Uche, 2024).

Thus, the making of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact reflected both Britain's desire to maintain its strategic foothold in Africa and Nigeria's initial attempts to secure military support during a vulnerable period of its development. However, the failure to adequately engage with the broader Nigerian public and political forces ultimately

set the stage for the opposition and protests that would later lead to the termination of the pact.

Major Provisions of the Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact

The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, signed in 1960, outlined several key provisions that formalized military cooperation between newly independent Nigeria and the United Kingdom. These provisions primarily aimed to ensure mutual defence, safeguard Nigeria's territorial integrity, and maintain Britain's strategic influence in West Africa. While the exact text of the pact was not widely published, the main elements of the agreement revolved around military support, access to bases, training, and technical assistance (Voice of Reason: Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact, 2014).

Mutual Defence Commitment

A central provision of the pact was the mutual defence agreement between Nigeria and Britain. In this arrangement, both nations pledged to support each other in the event of external aggression or security threats. For Nigeria, this meant that Britain would come to its aid in case of an attack or invasion by a foreign power. This provision was particularly important in the context of Nigeria's post-independence security concerns, as the country lacked a fully developed military infrastructure and faced potential external threats. On the British side, it secured an ongoing strategic foothold in Nigeria, ensuring that Britain could respond to any geopolitical threats in the region, particularly during the Cold War era (The Gravel International, 2015).

Use of Nigerian Military Bases

Another significant provision was the agreement that allowed British forces continued access to Nigerian military bases after independence. This meant that Britain could station its troops, aircraft, and other military assets in Nigeria as needed. The presence of British military installations in Nigeria was crucial for Britain's broader geopolitical strategy, as it provided a platform for projecting power and maintaining influence in West Africa. During the Cold War, this provision was vital for Britain, as it helped counter Soviet influence in the region and allowed for quick military responses in case of regional instability or external aggression. However, this provision became one of the most contentious aspects of the pact, as it was seen by many Nigerians as a sign of continued British control over their country's affairs (The Gravel International, 2015).

Military Training and Technical Assistance

A key benefit to Nigeria under the pact was Britain's promise to provide military training and technical assistance to the Nigerian Armed Forces. At the time of

independence, Nigeria's military was still developing, and the country lacked the technical expertise and infrastructure needed to maintain a modern military. The pact allowed Britain to provide Nigeria with military advisors, instructors, and training programs to help professionalize the Nigerian army, air force, and navy. This provision was seen by the Nigerian government as a necessary step in strengthening the country's defence capabilities. Britain's role in training Nigerian military officers and providing technical support was aimed at ensuring that Nigeria's armed forces could defend the country without reliance on foreign troops over the long term (The Gravel International, 2015).

Supply of Military Equipment

Another provision of the defence pact included Britain's role in supplying Nigeria with modern military equipment and weaponry. As part of the agreement, Britain would provide Nigeria with arms, ammunition, and other necessary military resources to build a capable defence force. This was important for Nigeria, as it lacked the industrial capacity to produce its own military hardware at the time. The provision of equipment helped bridge the gap while Nigeria developed its own defence industry. For Britain, this provision allowed it to maintain influence over Nigeria's military by controlling its supply of arms, ensuring that Nigeria remained aligned with Britain in terms of military technology and capabilities.

Consultation and Coordination

The pact also established mechanisms for regular consultation and coordination between British and Nigerian military officials. These consultations were meant to ensure that both countries were aligned in their defence strategies and that any security threats were dealt with in a coordinated manner. The provision for military coordination allowed Britain to stay informed about Nigeria's security situation and ensure that Nigeria's defence policies did not conflict with British strategic interests in the region. For Nigeria, the consultations provided an opportunity to access British military expertise and improve its defence planning (The Gravel International, 2015).

These provisions of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact were designed to solidify a defence relationship between the two nations, with Britain offering military assistance, training, and equipment, while gaining continued access to Nigerian bases and influence over its military affairs. While the Nigerian government initially saw these provisions as beneficial for national security and military development, they were soon viewed by many Nigerians as a form of neo-colonialism, leading to widespread protests and the eventual termination of the pact in 1962.

The Termination of the Defence Pact

The termination of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1962 was a pivotal moment in Nigeria's early post-independence history, reflecting the broader tensions between national sovereignty and lingering colonial influence. The decision to annul the pact came after widespread public outcry, driven by nationalist sentiment and a growing desire for Nigeria to assert its full independence from Britain.

Growing Opposition and Nationalist Sentiment

Although the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was signed with the intent of ensuring Nigeria's security and military modernisation, it quickly became a source of controversy. From the moment it was announced, various segments of Nigerian society, including student groups, trade unions, leftist political parties, and nationalists, criticized the agreement. They argued that it was a form of neo-colonialism, whereby Britain sought to maintain its control over Nigeria's defence and foreign policy despite the country's newfound independence. For many Nigerians, allowing British forces to continue using military bases in Nigeria symbolized a continuation of colonial domination.

Nationalist movements, influenced by anti-colonial rhetoric and the rising ideology of Pan-Africanism, viewed the pact as an affront to the ideals of African sovereignty and self-determination. They believed that Nigeria's association with Britain in defence matters compromised its independence and aligned it too closely with Western powers, particularly at a time when many newly independent African nations were embracing non-alignment during the Cold War. The fear was that the defence pact would make Nigeria a pawn in global geopolitical struggles, particularly between the West and the Soviet Union.

Protests and Political Pressure

Public opposition to the pact peaked in the early 1960s, with widespread protests, particularly from student unions, political activists, and intellectuals. In 1961, the University College Ibadan saw a major student protest, with demonstrators demanding the immediate cancellation of the pact. Many Nigerians felt that the defence agreement reflected a lack of trust in Nigeria's ability to manage its own security affairs and saw it as a betrayal of the fight for independence. These protests soon spread across the country, signaling that public opinion was firmly against the pact.

The public opposition to the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was also a notable factor that led to its cancellation (Gravel International, 2015). According to Omoruyi (2001, p. 2) the thinking was that the defence pact "would unduly deny Nigeria the

independence that was in the offing. More seriously it was feared that the Defence Pact would unduly drag Nigeria into military involvement contrary to the Nigerian national interest". Also, in the opinion of Emetulu (2008), the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was interpreted by Nigerian popular opinion of the day as an attempt to recolonise the country through establishment of British military base in Kano – hence the need to annul it.

In addition to student activism, various political leaders voiced their concerns. Prominent figures like Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had played major roles in the nationalist movement, publicly criticized the agreement. Even members of Nigeria's ruling political class, who had initially supported the pact for pragmatic reasons, began to distance themselves from it due to the rising wave of nationalist sentiment and the risk of further political instability (Omeni, 2025).

In the case of Nigeria, there emerged a rapid "Nigerianization" of the officer corps; there was improvement of relationship with the Cameroon after the British Cameroon plebiscite; Nigeria became more prominent and gained a lot of reputation and confidence both on the continental and at the global levels; there was reduction in cold war tension between the West and the East; the Northern Peoples' Congress sought rapprochement with the opposition Party, Action Group thereby ending the feud generated internally and; the street protests calling for its abrogation (Idang, in Omoigui, 2015).

The Government's Response

Faced with growing political and social pressure, the Nigerian government, led by Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, was forced to reconsider its position. While the government had initially viewed the pact as a means of securing external support for Nigeria's defence needs, the escalating public opposition made it politically untenable. In an effort to maintain national unity and prevent further unrest, the Nigerian government began to engage in discussions with British officials about revising or terminating the pact.

The change of leadership, on the side of Britain, affected the life span of the Defence Pact considerably. As stated earlier, the initiator of the Pact in 1958 was the British Minister of Defence Duncan Sandys who was in office between 1957 and 1959 when he was replaced (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). The new Minister of Defence, Harold Watkinson felt that rather than having a base, which was no longer acceptable in Nigeria, all the new components of the Pact could be achieved informally. He therefore opted for the abrogation of the Defence Pact (Idang, in Omoigui, 2015). By 1962, the government concluded that continuing the defence pact

was no longer in Nigeria's best interest. Nationalist sentiment had become too strong to ignore, and there were concerns that the pact could lead to further unrest or destabilization of the government. Additionally, the political leadership began to recognize that Nigeria needed to assert its sovereignty more fully in the international arena and distance itself from its former colonial ruler.

Formal Termination

In early 1962, after negotiations between Nigerian and British officials, the defence pact was formally terminated. The Nigerian government announced that it would no longer maintain a formal military agreement with Britain and that British forces would cease using Nigerian military bases. The termination of the pact was met with widespread approval across the country, particularly among nationalist groups and the broader public.

For Britain, the termination of the pact was a setback, as it had hoped to maintain a strategic military presence in West Africa. However, Britain recognised the strength of nationalist opposition within Nigeria and sought to preserve its relationship with the country through other diplomatic and economic means. Thus, while the defence pact was ended, Britain continued to maintain strong ties with Nigeria in other areas.

Legacy of the Termination

The termination of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact in 1962 was a watershed moment for Nigeria's post-independence political development. It marked the country's first significant break from the legacy of British colonial influence and was seen as a victory for Nigerian nationalists who had long advocated for full sovereignty. The event also symbolised Nigeria's commitment to charting an independent course in its foreign and defence policies, free from the direct influence of its former colonial ruler.

Moreover, the termination reinforced Nigeria's growing alignment with the broader Pan-African movement, which emphasised African unity, independence from foreign powers, and non-alignment in global politics. Nigeria's decision to terminate the pact helped solidify its position as a leader in post-colonial Africa and strengthened its ties with other African nations seeking to resist neo-colonialism.

The termination of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was a reflection of Nigeria's determination to assert its independence and break away from the remnants of colonial rule. It highlighted the tensions between the interests of a newly

independent state and those of a former colonial power, and it underscored the importance of national sovereignty in shaping Nigeria's post-colonial identity.

Conclusion

The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact was a significant yet controversial chapter in Nigeria's early post-independence history. Initially conceived as a mechanism to provide security and military support for the newly independent nation, it quickly became a symbol of neo-colonialism for many Nigerians. The widespread opposition to the pact, fueled by nationalist sentiment and the desire for true sovereignty, demonstrated the strong rejection of any continued foreign control or influence over Nigeria's defence and foreign policy. The termination of the pact in 1962 marked a critical moment in Nigeria's assertion of its independence and its determination to fully break free from the remnants of British colonial rule. This event also signified Nigeria's growing alignment with Pan-Africanism and its commitment to non-alignment in the Cold War era.

While the defence pact provided Nigeria with temporary military support and technical assistance, its overall impact was overshadowed by the broader political and social backlash it generated. The protests and eventual termination of the pact highlighted the importance of engaging the public and key stakeholders in decisions that affect national sovereignty. Nigeria's rejection of the pact can be seen as a broader statement about the country's aspirations to chart its own path on the global stage, free from the influence of former colonial powers.

References

- Anderson, E. A. B. (2024). Researching Decolonization: Exploring the Applicability of the Concept of Decolonization to Student Activism in Ghana. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 21582440241280760.
- Adeniji, A. S. and Adie, E. I. (2015). A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria and Singapore Defence Policies. *Journal of Development and Society*. 3(4).
- Adeniran, T. (1989). Nigeria and Great Britain. In Akinyemi, A. A. Abgi, O. S. and Otubanjo, O. A. (eds), *Nigeria Since Independence: The First 25 Years*. Volume X.
- Adeniran, T. (2007). *Introduction to International Relations*. Yaba. Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Akpuru-Aja, A. (2003). The State and the Military: Perspectives on Nigeria-US Military Cooperation. *Strategic Analysis*, 27(2). Apr-Jun.
- Akpuru-Aja, A. (2009). *Policy and Strategic Studies: Uncharted Waters of War and Peace in International Relations*. Abakaliki: Willyrose and Appleseed Publishing Coy.
- Alile (2010). How we Opposed Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact-Alile(2) <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/05/how-we-opposed-anglonigeria-defence-pact-alile-2/>
- Arogundade, L. (2015). The role of Nigeria Students in the Continuity of Democracy. *The Premium Times*. <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2015/07/23/the-role-ofnigerian-students-in-the-continuity-of-democracy-by-lanreorogundade/>
- Attina, F. (2004). *State Aggregation in Defense pacts: Systemic Explanation*. Jean Monnet Working Papers, University of Catania, nr 56, November.
- Attina, F. and Repucci, S. (2004) ESDP and the European Regional Security Partnership” in Holland, M. (ed) *Common Foreign Security Policy: The First Ten Years*. London: *Continuum International Publishing House*.
- Awolowo, O. (1961). A lecture delivered by chief Obafemi Awolowo (Action Group (AG) Leader, and Leader of Opposition in the Nigerian Federal Parliament) to Nigeria Students at Conway Hall, London, on 3rd September, 1961.

- Balogun, M. J. (2011). *The Route to Power in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited
- Collins Dictionary (2018). Definition of Pact. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/amp/english/pact> (Accessed on 15/06/2018).
- Campbell, S. (2024). In defence of ideological struggle against neocolonial self-justifications: Revisiting Asad's Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter amid the decolonial turn. *Anthropological Theory*, 24(1), 3-18.
- Dauda, S. (2013). *Theories of International Relations*. Makurdi: Aboki Publishers.
- Dauda, S., Adie, E. I. and Nwokedi, L. O. (2018). *Readings in Diplomacy*. Abuja: Tabith Publishers Limited.
- Dornan, M. (2011). Realist and Constructivist Approaches to Anarchy. www.e.ir.info/2011/08/29/realist-and-constructivist-approaches-toanarchy.
- Ede, C. C. (2013). *The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy in Nigeria: An Appraisal*. <https://www.coursehero.com/file/14605/82/THEIMPACT-OF-PUBLIC-OPINION->
- Emetulu, K (2008). *Anglo-Nigerian Relations: An Oily Romance* <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com/forum/threads/anglo-nigeriarelations-an-oily-roman.21446/>.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica (2018). Duncan Sandys. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Duncan-Edwin-Sandys>.
- Garuba, D. (2008). Nigeria and its Regional Context CIDOB International Yearbook.
- Gravel International (2015). *How Nigerian Youths Truncate the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact*. <https://gravelinternational.org/how-nigeriayouths-truncate-the-non-anglo-nigeria-defence-pact/> (Accessed on 10/06/2018).
- Idang G. J. (1970). The Politics of Nigerian Foreign Policy: The Ratification and Renunciation of the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement. *African Studies Review*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.2307/532471>.
- Inamete, U. B. (1985). The Concept of Non-Alignment and Nigerian Foreign policy, 1960-1983. Being a PhD Thesis Submitted to the Department of Political Science, University of Oklahoma.

- Katsina, A. M. (2008). *Nigerian Defence Policy in the Fourth Republic: A Critical Analysis*. Kaduna: Nigeria Defence Academy.
- Krause, V. and Singer, J. D. (2001). Minor Powers, Alliance and Armed Conflict: So Preliminary Patterns. In Lynn M. (ed), *Small State and Alliance* pp.15- 23. London: The Stationary Office.
- Mayer, A. (2024). Nigerian Radicalism: Towards a New Definition via a Historical Survey. *Historical Materialism*, 1(1), 1-36.
- Mgonja, B. E. S. and Makobe, I. A. M. (2009) "Debating International Relations and its Relevance to the Third World." *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3(1), 027-037.
- Omeni, A. (2025). Politics and the Nigerian Army (1965-1966): 'Nigerianization' and the Implications of Aguiyi-Ironsi's Appointment as General Officer Commanding (GOC). *Journal of African Military History*, 1(1), 1-38.
- Ojeih, C. O. (2016). Extraneous Considerations to the Personality Variables in Foreign Policy Decision Making: Evidence from Nigeria. UFAHAMU: *Journal of African Studies*, 39(2).
- Okpoko, J. I. (1994). *The Contribution of the Press to the Making of Nigeria's Foreign Policy: A Case of Two Nigerian Policy Issues*. Being a Master of Arts Dissertation submitted to Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsuka.
- Omoigui, N. (n.d). History of Civil-Military Relations (Part2): Nigerian Civilian Control of the Nigerian Military 1958-60. <https://dawodu.com/omoigui4.htm>.
- Omoigui, N. A. (2015). Military Defence Pact in Africa. <https://www.dawodu.com/omoigui1.htm> (Accessed on 10/06/2018)
- Omoruyi, O. (2001). The Nigerian-US military Pact: Fine Prints Recipe for Danger; whither national Assembly. Nigeria World, Thursday, July 12. Available at <https://nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/omoruyi/071201.html>.
- Talibu, O., & Abdulrasheed, A. (2025). Multilateralism, Foreign Policy and National Interests of States: A Case Study of Nigeria. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3(1), 75-88.

- Ukelina, B. (2024). Independence Amidst Entanglements: Nigeria's Defense Agreement with Britain, 1959-1962. *Ajayi Crowther University Journal of History and International Studies*, 1(1).
- Pensive, A. C., & Uche, N. C. (2024). The Unethical Operation of the Nigerian Army that Marred the Unity of Nigeria. *Awka Journal of History (AJOH)*, 2(1).
- Voice of Reason (2014). Anglo-Nigeria Defence Pact. *Tribune Sunday*, 03 August <https://www.latestnigeriannews.com/news/717408/voice-of-reasonangionigerian-defence-pact.html>
- Watson, B. (2017). Mapped: America's Security Defence Agreements Available at <https://www.defenseone.com/idea/2017/02/mappedamericas-collective-defense-agreements/135114> (Accessed on 20/06/2018)
- Wyss, C. (2016). The Post Imperial Cold War Paradox: The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement, 1958-1962. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Issue Number, 6(44).