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# Afrocentrism and Dependence: An Examination of Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, 1960-1966

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## Abstract

*Foreign policy is the set of goals and actions a nation pursues abroad to protect its national interests. The study examined Nigeria's foreign policy under Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa from 1960 to 1966. Historical secondary sources were utilised in the study's research methodology. The study revealed that Balewa's key speeches in the House of Representatives, at Independence, and before the United Nations identified the ideational basis of Nigeria's early foreign policy. He articulated six core principles: Afrocentrism, non-alignment, sovereign equality, multilateralism, anti-colonialism, and gradualist integration. Thus, Balewa espoused non-alignment, but the country's foreign policy remained structurally aligned with Britain and the West due to economic dependence and inherited colonial ties, etc. Achievements such as the institutionalisation of a foreign policy framework, support for decolonisation, and active participation in the UN and OAU are weighed against challenges of economic vulnerability, domestic fragmentation, and limited bureaucratic capacity. The study concludes that Alhaji Tafawa Balewa was successful in making Africa the cornerstone of Nigerian foreign policy and establishing Nigeria's reputation as a moderate and responsible actor, preserving Nigeria's autonomy and preventing direct entanglement in superpower conflicts.*

***Keywords***: *Nigeria; Tafawa Balewa; Foreign Policy; Non-Alignment; Afrocentrism*

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## Introduction

Foreign policy represents the systematic set of principles, strategies, and actions through which a sovereign state interacts with other actors in the international system to protect and advance its national interests.[1] For newly independent states, the formulation of foreign policy is both a statement of sovereignty and a test of statecraft, as it requires translating domestic priorities into coherent positions on the global stage.[2] In the Nigerian context, the evolution of foreign policy is divided into two distinct phases: the colonial and the post-colonial period.[3] The colonial phase, spanning 1914 to 1960, was defined by Nigeria's status as a British colony. During this period, the conduct of external relations was a prerogative of the British Colonial Office. Nigeria, as a political entity, lacked juridical sovereignty and didn't possess the capacity to articulate or execute an independent foreign policy.[4] The achievement of independence on 1st October, 1960, signified a pivotal break in this arrangement. Sovereignty granted Nigeria the legal and political power to manage its own international affairs. As a result, the immediate post-independence period was essential in determining the country's international orientation.

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, renowned as the golden voice of Africa, served as Nigeria's inaugural Prime Minister and Head of Government from 1960 to 1966, during which he established Nigeria's foreign policy framework. Nigeria's inherent colonial links, multi-ethnic domestic structure, and Cold War bipolar dynamics all hindered this endeavour. A deliberate posture of moderation and pragmatism characterised Balewa's foreign policy. It sought to reconcile three imperatives: maintaining cordial relations with Britain and the Commonwealth, asserting Nigeria's identity as an African state committed to decolonisation and unity, and preserving non-alignment in the ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.[5] This approach manifested in Nigeria's active support for the liberation of African territories, its cautious participation in international organisations such as the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, and its reluctance to enter into military alliances that could compromise national autonomy.[6]

The underlying objective was to project Nigeria as a stabilising and responsible actor in Africa while safeguarding its internal cohesion and economic development. Although subsequent Nigerian governments have altered the style and emphasis of foreign policy, the foundational objectives articulated during Balewa's tenure—national interest, African solidarity, and peaceful coexistence—have exhibited remarkable continuity.[7] This continuity underscores the formative significance of the 1960–1966 period in Nigeria's diplomatic history. The fulcrum of the study is to examine the post-colonial foreign policy of Nigeria under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. This period is significant not only as a chronological starting point but also as the period in which the conceptual and practical foundations of Nigerian diplomacy were laid. An examination of this period reveals the interaction between domestic constraints, regional responsibilities, and international pressures that continue to shape Nigeria's engagement with the world. By revisiting Balewa's foreign policy, the study

contributes to a deeper understanding of how a newly independent state navigates the complexities of sovereignty, identity, and external relations.

## Conceptualising Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is essential in the examination of international relations as it serves as the primary means by which states engage within an anarchic international system. Scholars have defined foreign policy from multiple perspectives, reflecting its complex and multidimensional nature. Morgenthau, a classical realist, conceived foreign policy as the pursuit of national interest defined in terms of power. For Morgenthau, the primary goal of any state's foreign policy is the protection of its political integrity and the advancement of its relative position vis-à-vis other states.[8] Rosenau broadened this conception by emphasising the linkage between domestic and international spheres. He argued that foreign policy involves the selection and implementation of strategies by official actors to respond to both internal demands and external pressures.[9] This linkage perspective is particularly relevant to newly independent states like Nigeria, where domestic stability, ethnic diversity, and economic constraints directly influence external behaviour. According to Asanebi et al., foreign policy can be seen as the totality of a nation's national interest that results from the interaction of internal and external actors and non-state actors as expressed by the nation's foreign policy decision-makers.[10] The techniques utilised by foreign policy are strategically employed to safeguard the nation's national interest and engage with other nations.[11]

For Aluko, foreign policy is the total of a state's external relations, including its goals, objectives, and the means employed to achieve them.[12] Similarly, Akindele and Olusanya viewed it as a decision-making process that seeks to align a country's values, interests, and capabilities with the realities of the international system.[13] For this study, foreign policy can be seen as the set of goals and actions a nation pursues abroad to protect its national interests. Groups within and outside the government exert pressure to formulate these goals, which Tafawa Balewa ultimately articulated. It can also be considered the set of goals, decisions, and actions Tafawa Balewa adopted to protect and advance Nigeria's interests beyond its borders. These definitions underscore that foreign policy is both a goal-oriented activity and a process involving actors, institutions, and constraints. They provide the analytical lens through which the factors, objectives, and outcomes of Balewa's foreign policy can be examined in subsequent sections. In this sense, foreign policy can also be defined as a strategic response to the interaction of domestic imperatives and international realities, rather than a collection of diplomatic statements.

## Core Elements of Foreign Policy

From the foregoing definitions, three interrelated elements emerge as central to foreign policy formulation and execution:

**National Interest**: Is a guiding objective that informs a state's external behaviour. It is not fixed; it is interpreted by political leaders in light of historical experience, economic needs, and security concerns. At independence, Nigeria's national interest included territorial integrity, economic development, and continental prestige.

**Foreign Policy Objectives**: These are the specific goals derived from the broader national interest. They may be short-term, such as securing foreign aid, or long-term, such as achieving leadership in a regional bloc. Objectives provide direction and measurability to policy actions.

**Instruments and Means**: These are the tools available to a state in pursuing its goals. Diplomacy, economic support, trade, cultural interaction, and, in extreme circumstances, armed force are all examples. The choice of instrument is determined by the state's powers and the nature of the issue at stake.

## Functions of Foreign Policy

Foreign policy connects a state's internal goals with its external capabilities and performs several essential functions for state survival and influence by providing a framework for protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats, facilitating economic cooperation and access to markets, technology and investment, enabling states to project their identity and values to enhance prestige and soft power, promoting participation in multilateral institutions and contributing to the maintenance of international order, managing interdependence within an increasingly globalised system, and strengthening domestic legitimacy and political stability.

## Foreign Policy in Post-Colonial States

Foreign policy formulation provides distinct challenges to postcolonial African States. Unlike established powers such as France, England, Portugal, and the United States of America, these African states frequently lack institutionalised foreign policy machinery, have limited material resources, and must balance inherited colonial links with the ambition for an autonomous African identity. As a result, post-colonial African states' foreign policy tends to emphasise anti-colonialism, non-alignment, regional integration, and the pursuit of a fairer global economic system. These issues were evident in Nigeria under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The government had to define Nigeria's role in a world divided by the Cold War while simultaneously addressing domestic pressures arising from regional and ethnic diversity. The conceptual foundations established during this period demonstrate a pragmatic effort to reconcile idealism with realism, as well as sovereignty with interdependence. In summary, Balewa's foreign policy was the result of balancing the internal and external determinants below. The interplay explains the consistency of Afrocentrism alongside the inconsistencies in non-alignment, and it provides a framework for evaluating the period's

achievements and limitations. This multidimensional approach demonstrates that postcolonial foreign policy is the result of negotiated responses to structural constraints and opportunities, rather than free choice.

## Factors Determining Nigeria's Foreign Policy under Balewa, 1960–1966

Foreign policy is not an arbitrary act, but rather the consequence of the interplay between a state's internal conditions and the external environment. As Northedge observed, the foreign policy of a country is a product of environmental factors, both internal and external to it.[14] Under Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's foreign policy was influenced by a variety of structural, ideational, institutional, and situational factors. These determinants explain both the objectives articulated and the limitations encountered between 1960 and 1966.

### 1. National Interest

Balewa's foreign policy was primarily aimed at safeguarding and promoting Nigeria's national interests. National interest, defined as territorial integrity, political stability, economic development, and international prestige, provided the rationale for prioritising African decolonisation, non-alignment, and multilateral engagement.

### 2. Structure of the Economy

Nigeria's dependence on primary commodity exports and foreign capital created structural constraints on external behaviour. The economy's linkage to Britain and Western markets limited the scope for independent policy choices and produced a bias toward maintaining cordial relations with Western powers in this era.

### 3. Geostrategic and Demographic Location

The geostrategic location, size, topography, shape, and climate are important factors. A state's sizeable territory, good climate, natural defence boundaries, arable land for food production, and a shape that is compact and easier to defend are seen as possessing the necessary power potential that enables a state to prosecute an independent foreign policy.[15] Nigeria's size, population, and position in West Africa endowed it with regional significance. This strategic location influenced Balewa's emphasis on African unity and regional stability, as Nigeria sought to project influence while avoiding involvement in conflicts beyond its immediate neighbourhood. Thus, the country's regional variety shaped its position as Africa's natural leader. This demographic weight supported the country's claim to play a prominent role in African politics, as well as its advocacy for collective African action.

## 4. **Political Structure and Domestic Politics**

Nigeria's federal structure and multi-ethnic composition created impetus for balanced external representation. Domestic political instability, elite competition, and regional rivalries often constrained foreign policy options, as leaders sought to avoid actions that could exacerbate internal divisions.

## 5. **Cultural and Historical Influences**

The colonial legacy, Commonwealth membership, and historical ties to Britain influenced Balewa and other elites' opinions and policy preferences. At the same time, Nigeria's African identity and devotion to Pan-Africanism influenced its support for decolonisation and continental integration. This dual identity produced the tension between pro-Western orientation and Afrocentric rhetoric.

## 6. **Personal Idiosyncrasy of Leadership**

Foreign policy, like domestic policies, is a product of various processes. The elite which makes these policies are human beings who have their individual preferences, worldviews, and emotions. The decisions that they make, to a large extent, are a reflection of their personalities.[16] Balewa's personal worldview—moderate, pragmatic, and cautious—left a distinct imprint on policy. His penchant for consensus, gradualism, and diplomacy over confrontation shaped Nigeria's non-confrontational approach to Cold War politics and regional disputes.

## 7. **Military Capacity**

The military strength of a nation, to an extent, influences its foreign policy. Militarily strong nations often adopt aggressive postures on issues they feel strongly about.[17] The low number and capacity of Nigeria's armed forces in the early 1960s hampered the usefulness of military instruments in foreign policy. As a result, Balewa depended heavily on diplomatic and multilateral measures to achieve national goals, in line with the doctrine of non-interference and peaceful coexistence.

## 8. **Ideology and Worldview**

Although Nigeria eschewed formal alignment, the government's anti-communist attitude and devotion to liberal democracy reflected the governing elite's ideological orientation. Balewa's open rejection of communism served as a domestic political statement as well as a signal to Western allies.

## 9. **Public Opinion and Media**

Public opinion is particularly important in real democratic countries, where the government cannot easily go against the grain of public opinion. One major issue is that organised pressure groups can galvanise public opinion to favour their own interests and force the government to adopt a policy they prefer.[18] Emerging nationalist sentiment and student activism influenced policy on issues such as the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact. In 1962, the pact was terminated due to public pressure, demonstrating that domestic opinion could constrain elite foreign policy preferences.

## 11. **Institutional and Bureaucratic Capacity**

The newly established Ministry of External Affairs lacked trained personnel, resources, and institutional memory. This limited Nigeria's ability to formulate proactive, long-term strategies and contributed to reactive diplomacy in the early years.

## 12. **Impact of International Organisations and Norms**

Membership in the United Nations, Commonwealth, and later the OAU exposed Nigeria to international norms of sovereignty, decolonisation, and peaceful settlement of disputes. These norms shaped policy discourse and provided multilateral platforms for advancing Nigerian interests.

## 13. **Exogenous and Cold War Pressures**

The bipolar structure of the international system, superpower rivalry, and the policies of former colonial powers exerted significant influence. Balewa's government had to navigate these internal and external determinants while attempting to maintain an independent posture in world affairs.

## **Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa's Foreign Policy, 1960–1966: Principles, Practice, and Contradictions**

The foreign policy of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first and only Prime Minister, represents the initial systematic and institutional attempt by an independent Nigeria to convert the theoretical tenets of foreign policy into tangible state action. As conceptualised in the study above, foreign policy can be seen as the set of goals and actions a nation pursues abroad to protect its national interests. For Nigeria between 1960 and 1966, this meant managing the contradictions of statehood: inheriting colonial administrative and economic structures, asserting sovereignty in a bipolar Cold War international system, and responding to the ideological and material demands of African liberation and post-colonial solidarity.[19] The years 1960-1966 are essential for understanding how a newly independent

African nation implements national interests, defines foreign policy goals, and selects diplomatic tools within the constraints of limited autonomy and state capacity.

## 1. The Principles of Balewa's Foreign Policy

Balewa's administration articulated a set of guiding principles that eventually became the foundation of Nigerian foreign policy. These include:

1. Afro-centrism: The recognition that Africa was the centerpiece of Nigeria's foreign policy. This influenced Nigeria's commitment to decolonisation, anti-colonialism, and devotion to liberation movements in South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

2. Non-alignment: While maintaining close historical, economic, and military ties with Britain and the West, Nigeria formally declared a non-alignment policy. The goal was to avoid involvement in Cold War blocs while maximising aid and technical assistance from both the Eastern and Western blocs.

3. World Peace and Respect for International Law: Commitment to the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Nigeria positioned itself as a "peace-loving" nation that would pursue dispute settlement through dialogue and multilateralism.[20]

4. Economic Diplomacy: The pursuit of foreign investment, technical aid, and trade to consolidate domestic development. This made relations with Britain, the US, and later the USSR and Eastern Europe economically driven.[21]

## 2. The Practice: Operationalising National Interest

In practice, Balewa's administration translated these principles by employing specific diplomatic actions:

1. Africa and Decolonization: Nigeria played a leading role in the formation of the OAU in 1963 and hosted several liberation movement offices in Lagos. It offered moral, diplomatic, and material assistance to freedom fighters in Portuguese colonies and Rhodesia.

2. Relations with Great Powers: Despite non-alignment, Nigeria signed a controversial Defense Pact with Britain in 1964, later abrogated due to domestic pressure.[22] It also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1961 to equalise Western influence and gain access to development aid, scholarships, and technical assistance.

3. Regional Diplomacy: Nigeria pursued good neighborliness with Francophone states and attempted mediation in the Congo Crisis (1960-1964), where it contributed troops to UN peacekeeping.[23] This demonstrated a willingness to project power beyond its borders and uphold regional stability.

4. Commonwealth and UN Diplomacy: Balewa used the UN and Commonwealth platforms to project Nigeria as a moderate, responsible African voice.[24]

## 4. The Contradictions

Despite appearing coherent on paper, Balewa's foreign policy was filled with contradictions that reflected Nigeria's internal weaknesses and external pressures.

1. Non-alignment vs. Neo-colonial Ties: The rhetoric of non-alignment and sovereignty was at odds with the persistent dependence on Britain for trade, defence, and training. The 1964 Anglo-Nigerian Defence Agreement was cancelled due to widespread protests, highlighting the discrepancy between stated policy and its implementation.

2. Afro-centrism vs. Domestic Capacity: Nigeria's desire to be the continent's leader was not accompanied by adequate military and economic resources, which severely limited its capacity to impose laws or provide funding for liberation movements.[25] This created a credibility gap between Nigeria's rhetoric and capabilities.

3. Principle vs. Pragmatism: The government frequently had to compromise its values to secure foreign investment and aid. For instance, Nigeria maintained trade and diplomatic contacts with Portugal despite condemning Portuguese colonialism, because of economic interests in shipping and aviation.

4. Domestic Instability and Foreign Policy: The most significant contradiction was the impact of internal crises on external policy. The 1964 Federal Election crisis and the 1965 Western Region crisis polarised the country along ethnic and regional lines.[26] These crises had three effects on foreign policy: First, by redirecting government attention and resources from foreign affairs to internal security, they undermined Nigeria's diplomatic efforts. Second, they reduced Nigeria's moral authority in Africa. Balewa found it difficult to preach peace and constitutionalism abroad while the nation was dealing with electoral violence and a state of emergency at home. Third, the instability exposed Nigeria's vulnerability and weakened its bargaining position with external actors. Britain and the United States closely monitored the situation and conditioned their aid on political stability.[27] By late 1965, the government was excessively focused on survival to undertake audacious foreign policy initiatives. The January 1966 coup that terminated the First Republic truncated Balewa's foreign policy vision during its execution.

## The Ideational Foundation: Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's Articulation of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Tafawa Balewa's conception of Nigeria's foreign policy was articulated through three foundational pronouncements: The House of Representatives debate of 20th August 1960, the Independence Day address of 1st October 1960, and the United Nations admission speech of 8th October 1960. These speeches show a concerted effort to define Nigeria's international character in terms that are consistent with the aspects of foreign policy defined in the study above.

First, Balewa at the House of Representatives debate on the 20th August, 1960, identified national interest as the guiding principle. He rejected blind alignment, stating: "We shall not blindly follow the lead of anyone; so far as is possible, the policy on each occasion will be selected with a proper independent objectivity in Nigeria's national interest".[28] Secondly, Balewa defined Nigeria's foreign policy objective as the promotion of African decolonisation, continental unity, and peaceful coexistence. At the United Nations, he declared Nigeria's commitment to work "with other African states for the progress of Africa and to assist in bringing all African territories to a state of responsible independence".[29] This is consistent with Aluko's conclusion that postcolonial African states prioritised anti-colonialism and regional solidarity as primary objectives.[30] Thirdly, Balewa, at the United Nations admission speech on 8th October 1960, articulated a preferred instrumental approach: moderate diplomacy, multilateral engagement, and non-alignment. He distanced Nigeria from Cold War blocs, stating that "independent foreign policy" was the most accurate label for Nigeria's stance.[31] This conforms to Akindele and Olusanya's view that foreign policy-making in Nigeria entailed managing internal diversity and external influences through careful, incremental diplomacy.[32] From these pronouncements, six interlocking principles emerged: Afrocentrism, non-alignment, sovereign equality, multilateralism, anti-colonialism, and gradualist integration. These principles served as the ideational and practical foreign policy through which Nigeria projects itself as a responsible and stabilising force in Africa and the world.

## Structural Constraints and the Gap Between Rhetoric and Practice

While Tafawa Balewa's speeches articulated a policy of independent non-alignment, the actual conduct of foreign policy revealed the structural constraints typical of post-colonial states, as theorised in the study above. Thus, several contradictions illustrate this gap:

1. **Pro-Western Orientation vs. Non-alignment:** Under Balewa, Nigeria was pro-Western in practice but non-aligned in principle. He was a pragmatist who needed Western aid to develop and African support to lead. Despite rhetorical non-alignment, Nigeria's foreign policy in this era has remained firmly tied to her colonial master, Britain, and the Western bloc for the following reasons: history, security, and economic needs.

2. **Delayed Engagement with the Eastern Bloc:** Balewa's delayed engagement with the Eastern Bloc was one of the defining features of Nigeria's early foreign policy. This delay was driven by ideology, economics, and the fear of internal instability. It was not total rejection, but a policy of watch and wait. Historically formal diplomatic relations with the Eastern Bloc, which were postponed, commenced in 1961, reflecting sensitivity to Western concerns and reluctance to antagonise Nigeria's primary economic and security partners. The result was that Nigeria's foreign policy in 1960-1966 remained west-leaning, but with a rhetorical commitment to non-alignment. Full diversification to East and West only came after 1966.

4. **The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact**: The Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact of 1960 was Balewa's attempt to secure Nigeria's external defence at independence. Though short-lived, its controversy forced Nigeria to define a more independent, non-aligned foreign policy and accelerated the building of indigenous military capacity. Thus, Balewa's initial acceptance of the pact and its subsequent abrogation only under domestic pressure revealed the tension between elite foreign policy preferences and domestic public opinion.

5. **Selective Support for Liberation Movements**: While Nigeria opposed colonialism in principle, it declined to train Angolan guerrillas fighting Portuguese rule, citing concerns about provoking Portugal and destabilising the region. This cautious approach reflected a prioritisation of regime stability and international respectability over revolutionary solidarity. These inconsistencies do not negate Tafawa Balewa's policy but rather illustrate the limits of autonomy in a dependent post-colonial economy. As Ekenedirichukwu argues, Nigeria's economic dependence on Western capital and trade created a structural bias toward pro-Western foreign policy, even where official rhetoric suggested otherwise.[33]

## Afrocentrism as the Enduring Core

Despite these contradictions, Afrocentrism remained a consistent and coherent part of Balewa's foreign policy. Nigeria's support for decolonisation, participation in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, and advocacy for gradual continental integration established it as a leading voice for African solidarity. This emphasis reflects what Akinyemi termed the African personality in Nigerian foreign policy—the idea that Nigeria's international role was inextricably linked to its responsibility to Africa.[34] Balewa's prioritisation of Africa can be understood through the lens of national interest as defined in the study above. For a multiethnic country with regional vulnerabilities, regional stability and continental prestige were critical to domestic security and international legitimacy. Balewa hoped that by championing African unity, he could improve Nigeria's standing while avoiding the costs of direct military involvement in Cold War conflicts. The persistence of Afrocentrism in subsequent Nigerian administrations emphasises the formative nature of Balewa's reign. It demonstrates that, even when policy practice diverged from rhetoric due to structural

constraints, the ideational and normative foundations established between 1960 and 1966 shaped Nigerian diplomacy's long-term orientation.

## Balewa's Foreign Policy as Foundational Statecraft

Balewa's foreign policy exemplifies the challenges of statecraft in a newly independent country. It reflects an attempt to reconcile foreign policy's theoretical components—national interests, objectives, and instruments—with the material realities of dependence, diversity, and Cold War polarisation. While the disparity between declared non-alignment and pro-Western practice demonstrates the limits of autonomy, the policy's enduring emphasis on Africa and multilateralism confirms its fundamental nature. In analytical terms, Balewa's administration defined foreign policy as both a decision-making process and a set of objectives aimed at securing Nigeria's place in the international system. The legacy of this period is not the absence of contradictions, but the establishment of a framework for subsequent governments to negotiate Nigeria's external relations.

## Achievements of Balewa's Foreign Policy

Despite structural constraints, Balewa's administration achieved notable accomplishments that established Nigeria's international profile:

1. Institutionalisation of an Independent Foreign Policy Framework: Balewa laid the ideational and bureaucratic foundation for Nigeria's external relations. The creation of the Ministry of External Affairs and the formulation of core principles provided a reference point for subsequent governments.

2. African Leadership and Decolonisation: Nigeria's openly expressed support for the liberation of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and Southern Rhodesia strengthened its moral authority in Africa. Balewa's advocacy contributed to the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960.

3. Multilateral Engagement and Prestige: Nigeria's admission to the United Nations in 1960, as well as its active role in the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963, positioned it as a responsible member of the international community. Participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Congo from 1960 to 1964 demonstrated a commitment to collective security.

4. Preservation of National Sovereignty: By avoiding formal military alliances and maintaining a moderate stance in the Cold War, Balewa preserved Nigeria's autonomy and prevented direct entanglement in superpower conflicts.

## Challenges and Limitations

The policy also faced significant challenges that limited its effectiveness. These challenges are;

1. Economic Dependence and Structural Vulnerability: Nigeria's reliance on British trade, investment, and technical assistance constrained its ability to pursue a genuinely non-aligned policy. Economic dependence translated into political deference, as evidenced in the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact episode.

2. Domestic Instability and Elite Fragmentation: Ethnic and regional tensions undermined foreign policy coherence. Nigeria's credibility as a spokesperson for the African continent suffered as a result of its inability to present a united domestic front.

3. Inconsistency Between Rhetoric and Practice: The gap between declared non-alignment and pro-Western practice created credibility issues both domestically and internationally.
4. Limited Institutional Capacity: The newly established Ministry of External Affairs lacked trained personnel and resources, resulting in reactive rather than proactive diplomacy.

## Conclusion

The study examined Nigeria's foreign policy under Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa from 1960 to 1966. The study findings show that Balewa's foreign policy was shaped by a tension between normative aspirations and structural constraints. The gap between rhetoric and practice does not diminish the significance but rather illuminates the realities of statecraft in a dependent post-colonial context. Balewa sought to position Nigeria as a stabilising and responsible force in Africa and the international system, guided by the principles of Afrocentrism, non-alignment, and peaceful coexistence. The study further shows that the ideational and institutional foundations laid between 1960 and 1966 continue to influence Nigeria's external relations, confirming the enduring legacy of Balewa's statecraft. The study concludes that Alhaji Tafawa Balewa was successful in making Africa the cornerstone of Nigerian foreign policy and establishing Nigeria's reputation as a moderate and responsible actor, preserving Nigeria's autonomy and preventing direct entanglement in superpower conflicts, which welcomed a new state into the international system.

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