

# The Prospect of Proportional Representation of States: A Study of the Nigerian Defence Academy

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## Abstract

Nigeria is country with 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with an unequal population among them. However, the same numbers of slots are allocated to the state in all public institutions without any regard to population sizes of the states. This system creates a feeling of marginalization and domination especially from the states with larger population who are left with higher number of unemployed due to this system of allocation to the states. With such feelings, it became imperative to find out if there is justice in the treatment of un-equals equally by allocating the same number of slots to all the states regardless of population density? The objective is to suggest on a more equitable formula for the allocation of slots to all the states and the FCT. To achieve this objective, a one-on-one semi-structured interview was conducted on 15 respondents who are critical to the research area. The findings have revealed that proportional representation of states where by the actual population size of each state will determine the number of slots allocated to that state is appealing and also has the capacity to alleviate if not eliminate the feelings of marginalization and domination expressed across the country.

**Keywords:** Consociational democracy, proportional representation, federal character principle, marginalization, domination.

## 1. Introduction

Nigeria consists of 36 states and the FCT with a combined population of about 177.5million people according to the World Bank (2014). The state with the highest population is Kano with about 9.4million and the least populated state is Bayelsa with about 1.7million. According to Otite (1990), over 370 different ethnic groups have been identified with Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria, Yoruba of the south-west and Igbo of the south-east as the major tribes constituting about 68% of the country's total population.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of the country, power sharing was adopted and institutionalised under the 1999 constitution so as to ensure no section of the country is marginalised or dominated in the composition of the government, agencies and public institutions. To achieve this objective, constitutional provisions were made under section 14(3) of the 1999 constitution as amended. The federal character commission was established to monitor and ensure compliance to the federal character principle that advocates for adequate representation of states in all public institutions under section 153(1) of the 1999 constitution as amended. The principle of federal character basically denotes the recognition of the heterogeneous nature of the country in terms of recruitment and allocation of both political and administrative offices economic resources of the nation. The objective of federal character principle is to ensure the reflection of the country's diversity in the composition as well as conduct of public affairs and institutions reflect (Majekodunmi, 2013).

The Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) established in 1964, is the institution charged with the responsibility of recruiting, training and commissioning of military officers in the country. It is the entry point of all military officers for the Army, Air Force and the Navy. The Academy is to equip each and every officer cadet with the required skills, knowledge, and values that are necessary for the military officer. Recruitment by the NDA is carried out annually through the Regular Combat Course (RC). The RC is a 5 years programme that involves a 4 years academic program and a 1 year military training. At the end of this programme, the cadets will be awarded with a Bachelor Degree and a presidential commission to the rank of second lieutenant, or its equivalent in the Navy and the Air Force (NDA 2015). However, it has been the tradition of the military when it comes to sharing and allocation of cadet slots to the states, to allocate the same number to all of them regardless of population size. The consequences of this action is that more populated states feels dominated and marginalised due to the fact that they have larger population who at the end of the day will remain unemployed. Thus, the feeling of marginalisation and domination persist in the country despite the introduction of the federal character principle.

This study intends to find out if there is justice and equity in the allocation of the same number of vacancies and slots to all the states regardless of population size? The aim is to provide a more equitable sharing formula for

the distribution and allocation of slots and vacancies to all the states that will be suitable and appealing to all. Previous literatures have been reviewed that discusses on consociational democracy in general, its characteristics and proportional democracy in particular by looking at its meaning, advantages, disadvantages and how it's being applied by so many countries around the world. Although consociational democracy is not the only form of power sharing, it has been widely acknowledged as the best form of managing heterogeneous society. One of the characteristics of consociational democracy is proportional representation. This provides for adequate representation of all segments of the society so as to produce a more peaceful, stable and harmonious society where everybody feels represented and carried along by the government. This study therefore, intends to examine the allocation of cadet slots to the states as well as the cries and feelings of marginalisation and domination by the people and the prospect of proportional representation in Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA).

## 2. Literature Review

Consociational theory as advanced by Arend Lijphart among other scholars is considered among the most influential theories in the field of comparative political science. Its key contention is that heterogeneous societies either states or regions with the history of antagonism that are either religiously, ethnically, or linguistically divided, are more effectively governed through the application of consociational principles (McGarry & O'Leary, 2006) Consociational democracy has been defined according to Lijphart in terms of four basic principles or characteristics as follows.

1. Grand Coalition – Whereby the government is represented by all the major segments of the society.
2. Proportionality – whereby all segments of the society are proportionally represented in the various arms of the government.
3. Mutual Veto – this guarantees that minority segments are not overruled or out vetoed by the majority.
4. Autonomous Segments – whereby there is delegation of decision making power to all the segments as much as possible.

Proportionality being the focus of this study could be further explained as the representation of ethnic and religious groups under proportional representation based on the actual population of those ethnic and religious groups. If one segment accounts for 50% of the population of the overall society, then that segment will occupy 50% of all positions in the civil service, police force, military and in all other national as well as civic sectors of society (Lijphart, 2008).

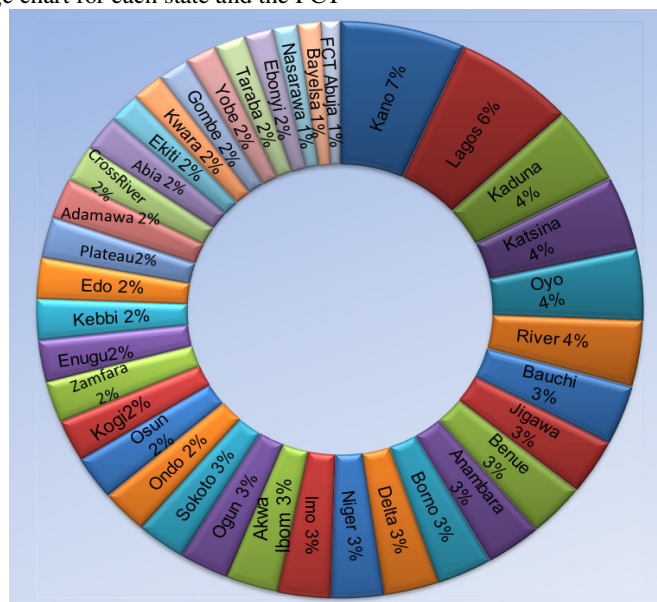
Representation according to Population started first in Canada around the Union period (1840-1867) when the Lower and the Upper Canada were merged under a single government. This Union provided for equal number of representatives for both of them despite the fact that the Upper Canada only accounted for about 41% of the total population and the Lower Canada accounting for about 59%. The aim was to ensure that the Lower Canada had limited power in the newly formed legislature and consequently to achieve assimilation. The French-Canadians wanted proportional representation but couldn't realise that and by 1851, the Upper Canadian population was higher than that of the Lower and the gap kept increasing and now the Upper Canada agitated for representation according to population. This led to the creation in 1867 of a federal system where the Upper Canada established representation according to population while the Lower ensures that its culture could not be changed by the Upper Canada with much bigger population (Claude 2001). Proportional representation therefore, is a system whereby seats are allocated to the states in such a way that it reflects the population of the states. The more the population of a state means the higher the number of vacancies and seats that should be allocated to that state. Basically, proportional representation is the simple democratic principle that connotes "one person, one vote". Under this principle, all votes counts equally (Claude, 2001).

Proportional representation as explained earlier, could be a formal or informal arrangement whereby allocation of slots and vacancies to the states are done either according to the population sizes of the states, according to the population sizes of religious groups in the states and the country in general and lastly according to the population of ethnic groups in the state and the federation at large as obtainable in other countries like Belgium, India, Canada and a host of other countries. The main aim is to ensure, the various segments of the society feels adequately represented and not marginalised in any way so as to have a peaceful and harmonious country (Lijphart, 2008). It should be noted here that one of the major problems of proportional representation according to Jesse and William (2005), is when the proportionality system is regarded as unalterable. That is when the proportion of the states or groups is permanently fixed. This is because when the population of such state or group changes, automatically its share of allocation should also change. Failure to reflect such changes is what

even led to the civil war in Lebanon.

Representation of states in public institutions using proportional representation in Nigeria, taking into consideration the above classifications, advantages and disadvantages, could be based on the actual population of each of the 36 states of the federation. If a state accounts for 10% of the population of the overall country, then that state should be allocated 10% of all positions in the civil service, police force, military and in all other national as well as civic sectors of society. A headcount (census) is conducted by the NPC periodically and the share of allocation of the states and the FCT should reflect those periodic figures released by the commission. The Chart bellows shows the population percentage of each state and the FCT in Nigeria as presented by the National Population Commission (NPC) in accordance to the 2006 census figures.

Figure 1: Population percentage chart for each state and the FCT



Source: Adapted from National Populations Commission, 2006

Paradoxically, the contention now is on the justification and consideration by the NDA on the impartial representation of states and the FCT in its admission policy. Why is population of the states not regarded in the allocation of slots? Is there equity or justice in the allocation of the same number of slots to all the states regardless of population size? Is there equity in the treatment of unequal equally? The objective is to suggest on a more equitable, fair and impartial formula for the allocation of slots to all the states and the FCT. With these series of questions and objective, the researcher went to the field in an attempt to provide answer to the questions and meet the set objective.

### 3. Methodology

An in-depth semi-structured face to face interview was conducted on 15 high ranking officers from 5 different institutions who were considered critical to this study in an attempt to get answers to the questions raised earlier. These are people who are in position of power and authority who were and still are involved in the formulation and execution of policies in the research area. They were purposely selected because there is no gain in randomly looking for respondents who could not provide answers to the questions raised (Cohen et al., 2007). The respondents were selected from the following institutions.

- National House of Assembly: being the highest law making body in Nigeria charged with the constitutional powers of enacting laws for the order, peace and for the good governance of the country.
- Federal Character Commission: being the body established by Act No. 34 of 1996 for the implementation and also enforcing the Principles of Federal Character aimed at ensuring fairness and equity in the allocation slots among the various federating units that made up the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Federal Civil Service Commission: being the executive body that is charged with the obligation of

making appointment and transfer of all federal civil servants.

- National Populations Commission: Being established by the federal government in 1988 and charged constitutionally with the powers of gathering, analyzing and broadcasting population and demographic data in Nigeria.
- Ministry of Defence: being the federal ministry that is charged with the obligation of providing both administrative services and support to the armed forces.

#### 4. Findings/Discussion

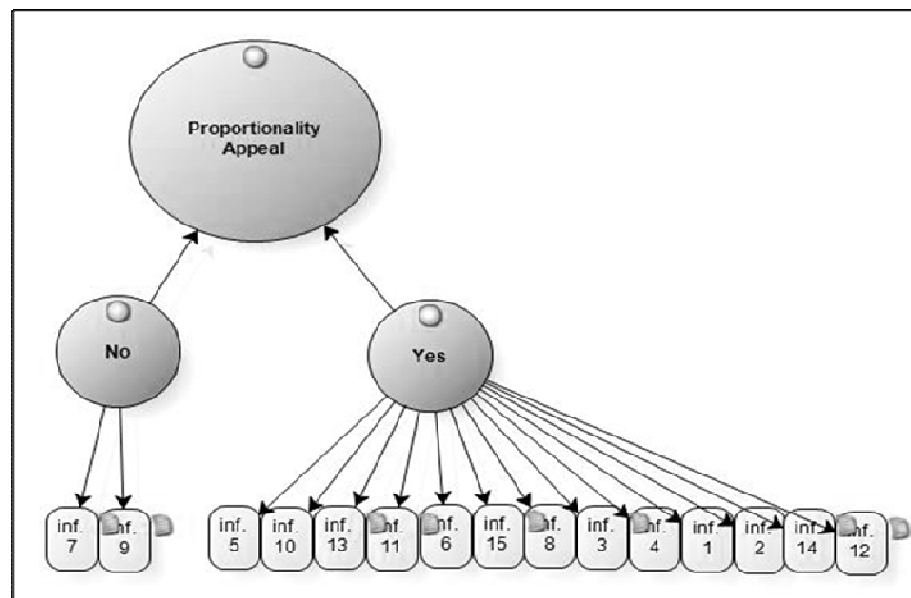
It has been revealed that proportional representation is not regarded or giving any consideration in all government institutions including the NDA and this resulted in the allocation of the same number of slots to all the states regardless of population size by the NDA and other public institutions. Hence, state with over 9million population and state with over 1million population are treated and allocated the same number of slots without any consideration to their population size. This system is viewed as unjust and unfair which serves as a major cause to the feeling of marginalisation and domination across the country (Asaju & Egberi, 2015).

In the same vain, it should be noted that the country even with about 371 different ethnic groups does not regard or deemed it fit to consider this factor in the allocation of slots in its public institutions including the NDA. The Hausa-Fulani situated in the northern part of the country constitutes about 29% of the country's population, the Yoruba of the south-west constitutes about 21% while the Igbo of the south-east constitutes about 18% and the remaining 368 ethnic groups constitutes 32% of the country's population (Mustapha, 2009).

Constitutionally, the country is divided into 6 geo-political zones. The north-east zone, north-central zone, and the north-west zone are carved from the northern region which is dominated by the majority Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The south-west zone is dominated by the Yoruba, the south-East zone is dominated by the Igbo and the south-south zone is mixture of several minority ethnic groups. The implication of this arrangement is that the majority ethnic groups tend to dominate and marginalise the smaller ethnic groups whenever there is any recruitment exercise in any governmental institutions including the NDA.

It has been established that the respondents would want a proportional representation that is based on the population size of each of the 36 states of the federation, taking into consideration the state's religious and ethnic groups' number and population sizes. By doing this proportionality state by state therefore, it is guaranteed to have a national representation proportionally on the bases of state, religion and ethnicity and this proportional representation system could reduce if not alleviate the feeling of marginalisation and domination across the country as depicted by figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Proportionality Appeal



Source: Nvivo 10 Output Generated from Interviews, 2015

The views expressed below depict the perceptions, views and the appeal of proportional representation in military recruitment exercise as expressed by the informants.

Well I think when you look at the NDA recruitment you find that there are some states which predominantly belong to one tribe. At the other side we have other smaller tribes situated in that same state as the minority tribes. Also when you take a state like Bayelsa which has about 8 local governments, and then Kano which has about 44 local governments and then with Kaduna about 23 local governments. However, when it comes to the issue of NDA admission, I think the policy is that each state will have about 10 or 12 slots for its candidates. So if you look at the population of Kano which is more than 9million and compare it with Bayelsa with a population of less than 2million, definitely there is no equitable distribution considering the population of Kano state which is much bigger (Informant 4-Deputy Director I).

The military do claim to comply with the federal character in their recruitment exercise but when you go to the reality on ground, you find that they don't. I will give you one example from my state which is Katsina with a population of about 6million. In the NDA and Deport Zaria in the year 2012, they recruit about 4000 intakes in Zaria alone. But at the end of the day Katsina state only got 10 slots. And if you talk about the NDA, you will find that it is cadets from other state that are representing us. So it is just rubbish and it is just a mere saying officially that every state is given certain number of slots. That is not what they are supposed to do because it does not reflect the reality on ground (Informant 1-Member House of Representatives I).

You see the NDA recruits according to the federal character but like I told you, not only in NDA, recruitments generally in the country like in 2012 there was a recruitment in the Nigerian Army and it was discovered that in the northern part of the country, majority of the people that were recruited even though were bearing Muslim, Hausa-Fulani names but in reality they are Christians and not Hausa-Fulani. So the federal character is only restricted to state but it doesn't go down to expatiate on the issue of religion and that's why there are a lot of complains in recruitment exercise of the military to the extent that some people had to petition the president especially from Kaduna state that almost 90% of the people that were recruited in to the Nigerian Army in 2012/2013 were Christians even though the state is a predominantly Muslims state (Informant 2-Member House of Representatives II).

Informant 13 from the Federal Civil Service Commission also shares similar view on the NDA recruitment exercise. To further confirm what the above respondents expressed, a state coordinator of the federal character commission explained how the exercise is conducted as depicted below.

If you look at the way the exercise is conducted, the military will allocate a certain number of slots to all the states. So it is up to the state to see that the slots are shared in an equitable manner to all the local governments in the state so as to ensure wide spread. But the federal character only pays emphasis on representation of the states and we don't go down to local governments. But the states can do that in terms of sending their people and say okay this one should come from this local government, this one from this religion, this tribe there and then send their names. But we the federal character commission, we only monitor states to see that each state has a representation as mandated by the constitution (Informant 10-State Coordinator).

Informant 12 who is also a staff of the FCC portrays poor monitoring of the military by the commission due to financial constraints as one of the challenges faced by the commission in ensuring adequate representation of all groups. In an attempt to provide solution to the problems enumerated above, the following respondent has this to say.

There is no any religion or tribe in this country that has the monopoly of knowledge. You will find people of all kinds of knowledge, merit and integrity from all sections of the country. So give this people the opportunity to go in, then when they go in whether into the NDA, police or whatever, their ability to contribute to the system and their capability should determine how far they will reach in the system. But that initial chance of selection, give everybody the opportunity proportionally. So if any tribe, a group of tribes decided not to present any candidate then it's their choice or if they decided to present a weak candidate compared to the others then it's their choice also (Informant 8-Air Commodore).

There is no justice in allocating equal number to the states because you cannot compare Kano with Bayelsa or Akwa Ibom state with Katsina. You cannot do that but I think it is something they have done long time ago which they have not changed up to this time. And there is need for that to change. Because I personally don't feel comfortable with that because if you give Bayelsa 15 slots for example, then Kano should have 45 slots based on the population size of the states. So we may not really have a true reflection of each of the state or true representation because of the size. I mean they are given the same number to each of the states and that is just the tradition and the tradition can be changed, it can be amended (Informant 5-Deputy Director IV).

Informants 3, 6, 11, 14, 15 all expressed similar view where they felt that due to the varied population sizes of states, the allocation of slots in the NDA should at least reflect the actual population size of the states. Failure that do this left the populous states with huge number of unemployed youth and hence the cries and feeling of marginalization as they are not happy. However, the following respondent was of the opinion that proportional representation in Nigeria is not appealing and informant 9 also shares similar view as depicted below.

Proportional representation will create problem because at the moment we are dealing with states and not the population of the states. That is what is in the federal character principle at the moment. However, we don't know, may be in future the government may decide to adjust it. But at the moment we are dealing with states only (Informant 7-Group Captain).

It should be emphasised here, that from the above responses, it has been established that the neglect of proportional representation in the military recruitment exercise is creating a feeling of marginalisation and domination especially from the most populated states. Also, the federal character principle which serves as the guiding principle of recruitment for the military does not recognise proportional representation of states according to their population. Therefore, the military in compliance with the federal character principle treat all the states as equals by allocating the same number of vacancies and slots to them.

Consequently, it should also be highlighted here, that with the neglect of religion in the federal character principle, allocation of such vacancies, slots and appointments does not reflect the religious composition of the country which has been established by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Worldfact book (2015), that Muslims constitute about 50% and Christians about 40% of the country's total population. Conversely, such figure hardly reflects on governmental appointments both political and bureaucratic as well as admissions into

public institutions (Asaju & Egberi, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion/implication

Normatively, supporters of consociational democracy claimed that ethnic diversity is rather resilient and not rapidly or easily fade or dealt with which must be acknowledged rather than ignored (McGarry and O'Leary 1995). They further argued that it is not likely for the main groups to dissolve, fuse or assimilate into one united identity at any anticipated time (1993). Thus, it is the responsibility of each government to study its socio-political environment and designed its own system that can guarantee peaceful, stable and harmonious relationship between the various segments of its society.

It has been established by this study, that there is no equity or justice in the treatment of two un-equals equally. Governmental institutions such as the NDA regard or treat states in Nigeria equally regardless of the population sizes of those states. The drafters of the Federal Character Principle (FCP) do not consider population sizes of states in the allocation and distribution formula of the FCP. As such, in the allocation and distribution of posts and vacancies in public institutions, population density of states is not given any consideration.

In the same vain, it has been revealed that the country with about 371 different ethnic groups does not deemed it fit to consider this factor in the allocation of slots in its institutions including the NDA. The Hausa-Fulani of the northern part of the country constitutes about 29% of the country's population, the Yoruba of the south-west constitutes about 21% while the Igbo of the south-east constitutes about 18% and the remaining 368 ethnic groups constitutes 32% of the country's population. Constitutionally, the country is divided into 6 geo-political zones. The north-central zone, the north-east zone and the north-west zone are all in the northern part of the country which is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The south-west zone is dominated by the Yoruba, the south-East zone is dominated by the Igbo and the south-south zone is mixture of several minority ethnic groups. The implication of this arrangement is that the majority ethnic groups tend to dominate and marginalize the smaller ethnic groups whenever there is any recruitment exercise in government institutions.

It has been highlighted by Dill (2010), that systematically drawing and applying proportionality on the standard of military requirement in the assessment and conduct of warfare operations endures significant potential. Both for commanders and for those who evaluate military operations for civil societies, the courts, or news room and a fixed standardized question about reducing collateral damage provides a starting point for enquiry on proportionality. Consequently, the failure to incorporate proportional representation into the FCP has been identified as one of the main course of the feeling of marginalization and domination that the FCP was created to alleviate. To effectively achieve this responsibility therefore, the FCP must ensure that governmental institutions allocate slots to states in proportion to their actual population sizes. This proposition is viewed as fair, impartial and equitable which the government can easily implement and defend where necessary.

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