Examining Ligphart's Favorable Conditions for Consociational Democracy in Nigeria

Nasir Haruna Soba   Dr Mohd Fitri Bin Abdul Rahman
School of Government, Collage of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia.
06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah

Abstract
The examination of favorable factors for establishing and maintaining consociational democracy is essential in order to assess the probability that consociational model will be successful in diverse societies. However, previous studies on Nigeria have not adequately dealt with these factors. So, attempt has been made on this paper to examine the absence or presence of those favorable factors for consociationalism in Nigeria. It was revealed that the country scored about 67% in these factors. So, the assessment of favorable factors appears to suggest that consociationalism could be realistic choice for Nigeria in managing its diversity.
Keywords: Favorable factors, Consociational democracy, Heterogeneous society, Federal Character, Nigeria

1. Introduction: Nigeria's political environment

Nigeria is located on the western shores of Africa on the Gulf of Guinea. Its population is estimated at 169 million (World Bank 2012) consisting of about 371 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990). These ethnic groups are generally divided into Major ethnic groups and minority ethnic groups. The majority ethnic groups are the fused Hausa-Fulani from the north with 29% of the total population, the Yoruba of the southwest with 21%, and the Igbo of the southeast with 18% (CIA, 2014; Mustapha, 2007). These three major ethnic groups combined together, accounted for about 68% of the countries' total population. Other large ethnic groups include Tiv, Ibibio, Ijaw, Nupe, Idoma, Gwari, Igala, Jukun, Fulani, Kanuri, Edo, and Urhobo. The statistical and hegemonic power of these 3 major ethnic groups within the country's federation means that a tripodal ethnic structure is what obtains in the country with each of the 3 majority ethnic group organizing a thrilling struggle for the control of political and economic resources.

Nigeria gained independence from Britain on the 1st of October 1960 as a federation consisting of 3 regions namely, the Northern region, Eastern region and the Western region. Figure 1below, shows the geographical map of Nigeria as at that time.

Figure1. Map of Nigeria as at 1960 with 3 regions. Source: Lahistoriaconmapas.com. (2015).

On October 1, 1963 the country became a Republic and the Midwestern region was sliced from the Western region and therefore the country turned into a federation made up of 4 regions. In the early hours of 15th January 1966, quoting a laundry list of grievances against the political class, a military rebellion led by group of Majors who were mainly of eastern origin took place. The Prime Minister, 2 regional premiers of the North and West, a federal minister along with top Army officers and a number of civilians were brutally assassinated. The President, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who is from the Eastern region, had left the country in late 1965 after allegedly being tipped off by one of the masterminds of the coup, his cousin, Major Ifeajuna. Interestingly, Azikiwe failed to alert his coalition partner, the Prime Minister, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa. The majority of those murdered were from the North, few from the West and 2 Midwesterners. Nobody lost his life from the entire eastern region. The coup eventually failed in Lagos which was the seat of government and in Ibadan which was the capital of western region, and barely took place in Benin and Enugu which are the capitals of Midwestern and Eastern capital respectively (Omoigui, 2004).

On the 16th of January, a day after the failed coup, Nwafor Orizu, the acting President, also of eastern origin, instead of approving the appointment of Zanna Bukar Dipcharima who was a politician of northern origin that was unanimously nominated, as acting Prime Minister, the acting President decided to hand over power to Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, also of eastern origin. On the 17th of January, Major General Ironsi constituted the Supreme Military Council and declared Decree No. 1, which effectively suspended the constitution. On the same day, Major Nzeogwu who was the leader of the rebellion in the northern region negotiated a provisional submission in which General Ironsi approved not to bring the insurgents to face military trial (Omoigui, 2004).

Northern civilian orators used emotional warfare and worked diligently to provoke the northern military. They kept hammering on it that northern leaders had been killed but because the military personnel of northern origin are cowards, they are not doing anything about it. Another cause of mistrust in the Army had to do with the promotion exercise that was carried out in May that allegedly favored Igbo officers and consolidated their control in the military. In July 1966, several northern recruits were turned away and preference allegedly given to southerners at the Army depot in Zaria. For example, the complete batch from Sokoto province was disallowed. It is completely possible that the rejections were carried out on principle but due to the prevailing atmosphere of suspicion, the allegations were alarming. It has been revealed that these and other certain events combined to drive northern troops over the edge (Atofarati 1992).

On the 29th of July 1966, rebellious soldiers on a revenge mission, eventually surrounded and arrested General Ironsi in Ibadan with his host Lt. Col. F.A. Fajuyi, took them away and shot them in the bush. At the end of the July mutiny, not less than 213 predominantly Igbo officers lost their lives including other ranks. Eventually, Lt. Col. Y. Gowon, the Army Chief of Staff who is of northern origin, was brought in to shoulder the responsibilities of the country and the armed forces with the approval of the majority of the Supreme Military Council members. However, Lt. Col. C. O. Ojukwu, who was the Governor of the then eastern region, separately announced a mourning period in the whole East. A move that was regarded as suspicious and also as an act of disobedience against the new government of General Gowon. As a means of keeping the country together, it was divided into 12 states carved out from the original 4 regions in May 1967. Lt. Col. Ojukwu, and the Eastern region, saw this act by decree "without consultation" as the unfair (Omoigui, 2004).

Ultimately, the civil war of 1967 was the result of ethnic, religious and cultural tensions between the various groups of Nigeria. The southeast military governor who is an Igbo in an Igbo dominated area, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, citing large scale murder of Christian Igbos that were living in the Muslim north due to the counter coup of 1966. This led Col. Ojukwu to declared separation and creation of the Republic of Biafra from Nigeria. The Federal Government under Lt. Col. Y. Gowon saw this declaration as an act of secession and therefore illegal. A number of meetings were held to remedy the issue peacefully but all without success. In order to avoid breakup of the country, the central government was only left with one choice of bringing back the region by force. Eventually, on the 10th of January 1970, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, the appointed leader of Biafra, on realizing the impossibility of the situation, handed over the leadership of Biafra to the Commander Biafran Army Major General Phillip Effiong and flew out of the region. Major General Effiong after much consultation surrendered to the federal government and the war that was fought between the Eastern region against the rest of the country was officially over on the 15th of January 1970 (Atofarati, 1992). In 1976, the regime of the military regime of Murtala/Obasanjo that took over from General Gowon in 1975 after a coup, created additional states that brought the total of states in Nigeria to 19 and a federal capital territory at Abuja. The aim was to reduce the cries of domination and marginalization by the minority groups (Aghalino, 2006).

Nigeria has seen various systems of governments from civil to military rule since independence with the Military dominating the scene of governance for about 30 years between 1960 to date. General Babangida came to power after a palace coup in 1985 and one of the first steps he took was to create additional states. Following a recommendation of political bureau that acknowledge the necessity of creating additional states in order to have a more balanced and stable federation, 2 additional states were created in 1987 bringing the total to 21 states. Although the administration of General Babangida warned that it will not tolerate any more agitations on state creation, it succumbed to pressure in 1991 and another set of 9 additional states were created. This brought the total number to 30 states. The military regime of General Sani Abacha that came in to power after a palace coup in 1993 happens to be the last administration that created additional state in Nigeria. The administration in 1996 created additional 6 states that constituted the current 36 states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Figure 2 below shows the current geographical map of Nigeria.

Figure 2. The current Map of Nigeria showing 36states and the FCT. Source: Muse, 2009

Several military regimes have sought to restructure the country by dismantling the regional structure that was so central to ethnic political contestation. Clear efforts were also made to address minority complaints. The result has been a continued process of state creation, from 4 regions in 1963, to 12 states in 1967, to 19 states in 1976, to 21 in 1987, to 30 in 1991 and finally to 36 states in 1996 which was the last time a state was created in Nigeria. During the same period however, the local government which is the 3rd tier of governance in the federation, increased from about 330 to 775. However, the cries and feelings of marginalization lingers.

2. Calls for National Unity and Power Sharing

Nigeria is a pluralist country that adopts power sharing in its operations. Before the attainment of independence in 1960, the wish of various Nigerians was to ensure a country with no injustice, where all citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, class, cultural membership, religious affiliation or sex will enjoy the privileges, rights and prospects that the country may offer. On the other hand, as the outcry for independence expanded, the anticipation for an equal opportunities Nigeria was far from being attained. Over time, numerous citizens and different sections of the country started to feel marginalized, left out and overlooked in the arrangement of things in the country (FCC, 2012).

In an attempt to address these problems, emphasis on representation and power sharing was given constitutional backing in 1979 beneath the Federal Character Principle. Drafters of this constitution felt that the fear of domination or exclusion were salient aspects of Nigerian politics, and therefore it was essential to have a specific provision that will guarantee there was no majority of people from a limited states or even from a few sectional or other ethnic groups in the configuration of the government and its agencies. The National constitutional conference organized by Abacha regime in June 1994 went even further in promoting concessional power sharing in Nigeria and eventually concluded that a Federal Character Commission was to be established, to monitor and enforce the application of Federal Character and proportional representation (FCC, 2012).

Federal Character Commission (FCC) recognized by Act No 34 of 1996 is a Federal Executive body charged with the responsibility of implementing the Principles of Federal Character to ensure fairness and impartiality in the dispersal of public posts and other socio-economic infrastructure between the various federating units that constituted the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FCC, 2012). The requirements of Sections 14 and 153 of 1999 Constitution consolidated the launch of the Federal Character Commission for operation under a democratic system of Government.

3. Favorable factors for Consociational Democracy

1.   Absence of a solid majority: that consociationalism or power sharing could be best applied to a society in which none of the various segments of the society can claim majority. In a society were a particular group has the absolute majority, majoritarian democracy shall understandably be preferred. The failure of consociationalism in Cyprus could be attributed to this.

2.   Balance of power among the segments: that it is best applied to a society where the segments are about the same size in population.

3.   The existence of external intimidations that is common to all the segments: because external danger will surely promote internal unity among the segments.

4.   Overarching loyalties to the state: where the various segments uphold a national loyalty rather than particularistic loyalty.

5.   A tradition of elite accommodation and compromise: the elites of the various segments must be willing to come together, discuss, make sacrifices and stick to the outcome of whatever is finalized.

6.   Socio-economic inequality: that there should be disparity in terms of socio-economic development of

the various segments.
7.   A relatively small population size: so as to able to establish a less complex decision making process.
8.   Geographic concentration of segments: so as to be able to promote group autonomy.
9.   Small number of segments: that the different segments should not be so large so as to ease decision making.

4 The Nigerian situation with regard to the factors
4.1 Absence of solid majority segment
As emphasized by Lijphart (1996), the presence of a solid majority is the most important impediment to power sharing in divided societies. This is because the dominant group will prefer a pure majoritarian rule than consociationalism. In Nigeria, about 371 different ethnic groups have been identified (Otitte, 1990) but no ethnic group enjoys a majority today. The majority ethnic groups are the fused Hausa-Fulani from the north with 29% of the total population, the Yoruba of the southwest with 21%, and the Igbo of the southeast with 18% while the remaining groups accounted for about 32% of the country's total population. The absence of an ethnic majority is likely to permanently remain in Nigeria's population make-up. Thus, the Nigerian society can be defined as plural society with balanced competition between at least, the 3 major ethnic groups. This factor is therefore achieved for consociational democracy to be successful.

4.2 Balance of power among the segments
In a situation whereby the different groups enjoys almost equal population size, then power will be most likely balanced among the groups (Lijphart, 1996). Thus, the various parties are more likely to seek compromises and cooperate than in situations with unequal segmental sizes. In Nigeria, there are about 371 different ethnic groups with the Hausa-Fulani leading with about 29% of the country's total population followed by the Yoruba with about 21% and then the Igbo with about 19% (Mustapha, 2007; CIA 2014). Nigeria therefore enjoys this factor of consociational democracy.

4.3 The existence of external intimidations
Dangers from outside, promote internal unity. Historically, such threats have prompted the country's political leaders to seek national unity. Nigeria's successful pursuit of its territorial integrity, however, since its independence from Britain in 1960 has to a considerable degree reduced the danger these threats pose. Danger from across its borders hardly features on the country's national perception and political agenda. External threat as a factor favoring consociational democracy is weak in Nigeria's case.

4.4 Overarching loyalties to the state
Overarching loyalties reduce the strength of particularistic loyalties. The only serious challenge came from the declaration of Biafra republic in 1966 which was eventually nullified and re-integrated back to Nigeria. There has not been any threat like that ever since as all the segments are determined to stay as one indivisible country. Nigeria's score on this consociational democracy factor is therefore favorable.

4.5 A tradition of elite accommodation and compromise
A good place to measure the extent of elite accommodation and compromise in Nigeria is in the formation of political parties and the subsequent fielding of presidential and vice presidential candidates. Nigeria is divided into 2 regions, the northern region dominated by Hausa-Fulani Muslims and the southern region dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group which is about 50% Muslims and 50% Christians and then the Igbo ethnic group which is predominantly Christian. However, recent happening shows that none of these 3 major groups can successfully field a candidate without forming an alliance with another. In 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan of the south-south, formed alliance with the Yoruba of the south-west to ensure his successful re-election. In 2015, an alliance between 6 political parties led to the emergence of the APC which through compromise and accommodation fielded president Buhari of the north and vice president Osinbanjo of the south-west. This alliance led to the success of the APC in the national election. Nigeria on this consociational factor scores favorably.

4.6 Socio-economic inequality
Social and Economic inequality between the southern and the northern Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Southern Nigeria is much wealthier and boasts of much better socio-economic indicators compared to the North. Abundant and extensive oil reserves are situated in the Niger Delta area of the South with Lagos as the media and commercial center of the country. The population of northern Nigeria is larger but it is much poorer compared to the southern part, with some of the worst health as well as economic statistics in the world. The North has feared domination for long by the much more advanced Southern part and was therefore not

enthusiastic about independence (Campbell, 2011). Statistical figures showed that the GDP per capita in northern Nigeria stood at $718 while that of the southern part stood at $4,379 (Akambi, 2011). Because the two regions share dissimilar socio-economic conditions, Nigeria scores very low on this favorable factor.

4.7 A relatively small population size
Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with about 173.6million people (World Bank report 2013). The country's score on this factor is therefore not favorable.

4.8 Geographic concentration of segments
The two most important segments in Nigeria are religion and ethnicity (Mustapha, 2007). It has been estimated that Muslims constitute about 50% of the country's 173.6million while the Christians constitute 40% and traditional religion 10% (World Bank, 2013). Figure 3 below, shows the geographical location of the major ethnic groups and their overall population in the country.
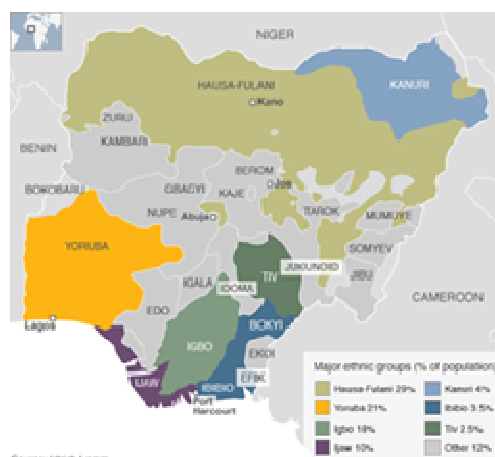

Figure 3. Geographical location of major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Source: Lamm, 2011

The northern part of the country is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani and the Kanuri ethnic groups which are predominantly Muslim. Both Christians and Muslims reside in the middle belt with approximately equal numbers, and the same with the southwest, which is dominated by the Yoruba ethnic group. Even though the Yoruba majorly practice either Islam or Christianity, some continue to practice Yoruba traditional religious beliefs. The south-eastern part of the country is a predominantly Christian and of Igbo ethnic group. The Niger Delta area which is the south-south region of the country is dominated by the Ijaw and the Ogoni ethnic groups which are predominantly Christians with only about 1% Muslims (Global Security, 2015). Nigeria's score on this factor therefore is high.

4.9 Small number of segments
Nigeria has about 371 ethnic groups with just about three religions of Islam, Christianity and traditional religion practitioners. However, antagonism is mainly played out among the religious groups of Christians and Muslims. On this note therefore, Nigeria enjoys this favorable factor.

5 The way forward
Consociational theory attempts to give an explanation on the probability that power sharing could be introduced and sustained in heterogeneous societies in relation to the above 9 background factors which may hinder or favors it. Nigeria enjoys 6 of the 9 factors identified which represent about 67%. Furthermore, according to Lijphart (1977), even the factors are not sufficient in themselves. In essence, one most not possesses all the factors before consociational democracy could be a success or failure (Lowe, 2013). On this juncture with this high score on the factors by Nigeria and also being segmented society, it is believed that consociational democracy could go along away in enhancing the effectiveness of the federal character principles in the country whose main responsibility is to ensure there is no dominance of one section or group in the country on others.

6. Conclusion
The identification of these favorable factors has tremendously enhanced the predictive power of the consociational model. The probability for consociational model to be successful in a particular society as argued could be assessed through analysis of the favorable factors in that society. With this suggestion, an attempt was made to examine the relevancy of consociational democracy in a heterogeneous society of Nigeria through the

analysis of the favorable conditions for consociational model. It was revealed the country scored about 67% in these factors. So, the assessment of favorable factors appears to suggest that consociationalism could be realistic choice for Nigeria in managing its diversity.

Power sharing has come to stay in Nigeria and to be able to do that effectively and more efficiently, consociationalism comes in handy especially with its system of proportional representation where each and every segment or group will be represented in proportion to its actual population sizes. This effort will ensure that there is indeed equitable representation of all groups in all the sectors of government.

References

Aghalino, S.O. (2006). Dynamics of constitutional development in Nigeria, 1914-1999. Indian journal of politics. XL no. 2

Akambi, F. (2011). Income disparity between North and South widens, articles | THISDAY LIVE. Thisdaylive.com. Retrieved from http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/income-disparity-between-north-and-south-widens/91392/

Atofarati, A. (1992). The Nigerian civil war, causes, strategies and lessons learnt. Retrieved from www.africamasterweb.com/Biafrawarcauses.html

Campbell, J. (2011). Why Nigeria's North South Distinction Is Important. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/amb-john-campbell/why-nigerias-north-south-_b_817734.htm

Cia.gov,. (2014). The World Factbook. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html

FCC (2012). Federal character commission. Retrieved from www.federalcharacter.gov.ng

Lahistoriaconmapas.com,. (2015). *Nigeria Capital Map*. Retrieved from http://www.lahistoriaconmapas.com/atlas/map-capital/Nigeria-capital-map.htm

Lamm, U. Map showing ethnic groups of Nigeria. Africa Security Brief, Africa Centre for Strategic Studies 14 (July 2011). Retrieved from http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdf/Africa-Security-Brief/ASB-14.pdf

Lijphart, A. (1996). The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation. The American Political Science Review, 90(2), 258.http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2082883

Lijphart, A. (1977). Democracy in plural societies. New Haven [u.a.]: Yale Univ. Press.

Lowe, S. (2013). Examining Lijphart's favourable factors for consociational democracy: Guyana. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, *51*(3), 362-376. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2013.805541

Mustapha, A. R. (2007). Institutionalizing ethnic representation: How effective is the federal character commission in Nigeria? Oxford United Kingdom: Centre for research on inequality, human security and ethnicity, CRISE, (43).

Muse, N. (2009). ARCHIVAL INFO – On the Matter of Maps of Ethnic Groups in Nigeria [For the Record]. Nigerian Muse. Retrieved from http://www.nigerianmuse.com/20090804062112zg/nigeria-watch/archival-info-on-the-matter-of-maps-of-ethnic-groups-in-nigeria-for-the-record/

Mushtaq, M., Muhammad, A., & Khawja Alqama, S. (2011). Examining the Favourable Factors for Consociational Democracy in Pakistan. *European Journal Of Social Sciences*, *Volume 20*(2). Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/994419/Examining_the_Favourable_Factors_for_Consociational_Democracy_in_Pakistan

Omoigiu, N. (2004). Operation "Aure": The Northern Military Counter-rebellion of July 1966. Retrieved from www.africamasterweb.com/countercoup.html

Otite, O. (1990). Ethnic pluralism and ethnicity in Nigeria. Ibadan, Nigeria: Shaneson.

Pike, J. (2015). Nigeria - Religion. Globalsecurity.org. Retrieved from http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/nigeria/religion.htm

Worldbank.org,. (2012). Nigeria home. Retrieved from http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria