# Concerns over southeast Nigeria’s military recruitment and political representation deepen national question



Two recent developments have brought renewed focus to Nigeria's national question and the complex geopolitical tensions within its federation. These events, notable for their selective approach in federal government engagements, underscore deep-rooted contradictions and raise significant concerns about inclusivity and equitable representation, particularly regarding the southeastern region.

The first issue emerged amid the 2025 Nigerian Army recruitment exercise, where authorities expressed alarm over a marked decline in applications from youths in the five states of southeast Nigeria. Brigadier-General Chima Ekeator, leader of the 2025 Army Recruitment Enlightenment Team, highlighted a worrying trend: while Kaduna State recorded over 3,000 applicants, Enugu State struggled to attract even 100, despite being allocated about 200 slots. This phenomenon extended across the southeast region, raising concerns about youth disengagement from military service.

Enugu State Commissioner for Youths and Sports Development, Barrister Lloyd Ekweremadu, expressing regret over this persistent problem, emphasised the need to revamp the promotion of army recruitment opportunities and provide detailed information about the benefits of military service. Meanwhile, a spokesman for the enlistment team in Abia State lamented similar shortages, observing that in the previous year, only 53 out of nearly 200 allocated army recruitment slots were taken up. Comparable patterns were reported in other southeastern states.

The low enlistment figures have prompted the Nigerian Army to take these patterns seriously, acknowledging that the situation could portend risks to national security. The army’s leadership has committed to expanding sensitisation efforts and considering other remedial measures. However, it recognises that the causes are complex and extend beyond simplistic explanations, such as the influence of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Instead, there are deeper, systemic issues dating back decades, including historical marginalisation.

The roots of this military disengagement trace back to post-civil war Nigeria when an expected affirmative policy for the southeast was largely absent. Instead, there was a reduction in Igbo representation within the armed forces and military-industrial complexes largely excluded the region. Professional development for officers from the southeast was reportedly hindered, with a lack of advancement opportunities compared to counterparts from other regions. Anecdotal evidence points to premature retirements affecting southeast officers without influential sponsors, contributing to a sense of alienation. Additionally, many soldiers of southeast origin are seen as disproportionately tasked with counter-terrorism operations in northern Nigeria, with morale further eroded by perceptions that captured insurgents are often released without consequence.

While the Nigerian Army’s efforts to rebuild trust and acceptance in the southeast are welcomed, observers emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach addressing these systemic grievances. This challenge extends beyond military affairs, encompassing broader governmental and social spheres where exclusion appears entrenched.

The second event heightening tensions was the federal government’s establishment of a seven-member presidential committee on census and housing on 17 April 2025, which notably excluded representatives from the southeast and southsouth geopolitical zones. The committee’s composition included five members from the southwest, one from the northwest, and one from the north central zone. The absence of input from the southeast and southsouth provoked significant outcry.

The apex body of Igbo lawyers, Otu Oka – Iwu, condemned the committee’s makeup as “a clear and calculated act of marginalisation,” highlighting it as part of a broader pattern of systemic discrimination against the Igbo people and their neighbours in the southsouth. Speaking to The Punch newspaper, the lawyers emphasised that a national census transcends technical considerations, being inherently political, economic, social, and cultural. It directly impacts political representation and the allocation of resources, effectively determining "who counts and who is counted" within the federation.

Despite public disquiet, the federal government has maintained silence on criticisms regarding the committee's regional imbalances. Attempts to justify appointments based on technocratic criteria have done little to assuage concerns. Furthermore, the concentration of key federal offices within one or two regions remains a critical point of contention.

Historical marginalisation of the Igbo population has been documented since the end of the civil war in 1970. Although the current government cannot be held responsible for past injustices, it faces scrutiny over ongoing inequitable distributions of appointments and resources. Official disclosures released in November 2024 and March 2025, covering military, paramilitary, and political appointments, reveal skewed allocations heavily favouring the southwest and northwest zones. From 20 key security positions, the northwest held 8, the southwest 5, while the southsouth and southeast had only one each. In a broader list of appointments, the southwest occupied 29 positions, the northwest 36, the southsouth 22, and the southeast 16.

This persistent pattern of exclusion threatens to deepen feelings of alienation, particularly in the southeast, and poses challenges for efforts—such as those by the Nigerian Army—to engage the population constructively.

Taken together, these developments expose significant tensions around regional representation, inclusiveness, and national unity. The Nigerian Army’s recognition of these issues marks a proactive stance, but sustainable solutions may require wider government reforms to address systemic inequalities. The recent events also highlight the continuing complexities within Nigeria’s federal structure and the importance of equitable participation of all geopolitical zones in national affairs.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://punchng.com/south-east-youths-shunning-military-recruitment-army-reveals/> - This article supports the claim about low numbers of applications from youths in Southeast Nigeria for the 2025 Nigerian Army recruitment drive, with Brigadier-General Chima Ekeator highlighting the disparity between Kaduna and Enugu States.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-7isI40v7k> - This video corroborates the Nigerian Army's concern over the lack of recruitment from the Southeast, highlighting historical contexts and reasons behind this trend.
* <https://punchng.com/nigerian-army-denies-ongoing-recruitment-exercise/> - Although the article contradicts the ongoing recruitment activities, it does not directly support the specific claims about the Southeast but is relevant to Nigerian Army recruitment issues.
* <https://dailypost.ng/2025/04/10/only-53-abia-youths-applied-for-200-army-recruitment-slots-awareness-team/> - This article supports the low enrollment figures from the Southeast, specifically mentioning that only 53 youths from Abia applied for 200 slots.
* <https://www.nairaland.com/8396363/nigerian-army-worries-south-east> - This forum post discusses the Nigerian Army's worries about recruitment from the Southeast, echoing the concerns of low application numbers.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - As the original source article, it outlines multiple issues affecting Nigeria's national unity and regional representation but does not provide direct URLs to specific news articles corroborating each claim beyond this summary.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMilgFBVV95cUxQUUJqY3JjeVpHR2tfc0E3b0RrbTdLZ3I1bzk4ZG5Yc3hvYkYxa2JTaGhFZlVOdEk0VzFxM2hGWmwxcXVVVkRBNXd3d0hQVTJ2NU9Ld25JVWhuZXBfZnJ4bmpvY3ZxQjhLdF8ydVUwTHFkaXJfQmxQa29uQmtHdFFxdXA0Njdna1h6WXlucmFXQWpjRmdRNlE?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data