



## **THREAT ASSESSMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: EFCC IN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyse the correlation between threat assessment and national security in Nigeria with reference to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) as well as assess the changing nature of threats in order to determine the applicability of current assessment frameworks. This research used a qualitative research approach and interviewed twelve EFCC officers from six divisions purposively. The methods used in data collection include interviews and field observation, with data analysis done using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software through content and narrative analysis. The result of the study demonstrates that threat assessment and national security are closely related and that contemporary security threats cannot be limited to traditional military-based views. The research has also found some new threats, such as cybercrime, terrorism, and financial crimes, and therefore called for improvement in technological support and institutional capacity in threat assessment methods. Therefore, the study finds that there is need to enhance the efficiency of threat assessment in the fight against financial crimes and economic sabotage. The research concludes that assessment methodologies should be adapted as a fluid process and recommends that technology support should be enhanced, capacity development should be strengthened, and inter-agency cooperation should be improved in order to respond to current and future threats in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Threat Assessment, National Security, Economic Crimes, Security Management, Financial Sabotage

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Assessment of threats and national security in Nigeria has become imperative given the existing trends of the security environment in the country. In a survey conducted by Aleyomi and Nwagwu (2020), the complex nature of the link between threat assessment and national security in defining the best security management approach in developing countries cannot be overemphasised. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, as one of the chief security organisations in Nigeria, has the important role of assessing threats to national security through regular assessment procedures (Jamo, 2021).

This paper identifies threat assessment and national security as two interrelated concepts based on principles of preventive security. According to Dawodu, Omotosho, Akindote, Adegbite and Ewuga (2023), threat assessment can be described as a model that helps security organisations assess threats to the nation's interest while national security is the protection of a nation's sovereignty, economic values and population. According to a brief from the CLEEN Foundation (2023), the application of threat assessment has led to a decrease in the incidence of security threats in Nigerian institutions between the years 2020 and 2023.

Security threats in Nigeria in the contemporary world take different forms and therefore pose several interrelated threats to the security of the nation. A study from Sibe (2024) shows that cybercrime is the biggest threat and losses incurred are about \$500 million annually. In the same way, Rosenje, Onyebuchi and Adeniyi (2022) noted that terrorism and insurgency remain rampant; 1,200 security incidents were reported in 2023. This is where the EFCC's threat assessment framework has come in handy in identifying these new threats, mainly in the financial sub-sector. The current threats are complex and tangled, therefore calling for an effective security management approach. In the above context, Iwuamadi, Ngwu and Onyemaobi (2021) note that the correlation between threat assessment and national security could be seen in the fact that initial threat identification leads to policy formulation in the security field. For instance, the EFCC's threat assessment practices have ensured the recovery of embezzled funds amounting to NGN 248 billion in 2023, hence making threat assessment a reality in protecting national security (Onje, 2024).

The dynamic nature of security risks calls for regular review of assessment techniques. Research by Olumide (2023) shows that the traditional threat assessment models are being improved through the integration of technologies as a way of improving the ability to predict and prevent security threats. The current work by Ononiwu, Onwuzulike and Shitu (2024) shows that the implementation of advanced threat assessment tools by the EFCC has increased threat detection rate. Thus, it is crucial to sustain good threat assessment systems for the protection of the nation. The systematic identification of threats cannot be overemphasised, as can be seen in the EFCC framework of operations in relation to the protection of Nigeria's national security in a fast-evolving security environment, hence this study.

#### Statement of Problem

National security threat assessment as a concept has remained a critical issue in Nigeria's modern society. Nevertheless, the country has a number of security agencies, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), but it still has a problem identifying and combating various threats. According to Efcc News (2023), the lack of proper threat assessment measures has been seen to have led to a 70.5% rise in complex financial crimes in the period between the years 2021 and 2023, thereby contributing to the identification of a major weakness in security management.

The task is further complicated by the fact that threats are no longer static and are increasingly emerging in cyberspace. In the view of Aminu (2024), Nigerian security agencies are still struggling with the challenge of ensuring that their assessment methods are suitable for the

new generation of threats, where only 30% of agencies have adequate threat detection mechanisms. According to the Bureau of National Statistics (2023), these have led to substantial financial impacts since approximately \$500 million has been lost to poorly evaluated security incidents in the previous year. This systemic weakness has therefore rendered gaps that have dented the efficiency of national security strategies, especially in the area of financial crimes and economic sabotage.

## **OBJECTIVE**

- a. Establish the conceptual relationship between threat assessment and national security in Nigeria.
- b. Identify the possible issues of threats to national security in Nigeria.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research used a qualitative research design to assess threat assessment and national security from the EFCC's viewpoint. The data were collected through interviews and observation from the EFCC in Abuja. The study employed purposive sampling to select twelve officers across six divisions: two officers each from Cadets, Certificate Courses, Research and Publication, Networking and Collaboration, Capacity Development and Administrative section.

This means that data were collected through interview guides and field memos, and observations were documented on memo pads where possible. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed, and the related data were analysed by Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software by employing content and narrative analysis. For the purpose of presentation of the findings, the raw data were in the form of illustrative quotations, which were analysed systematically. The study also recognised that there were limitations in terms of trust and honesty from the respondents and to overcome this, the researcher sought to gain the trust of the participants before conducting the observation. All participants gave their oral assent after explaining the purpose of the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Thematic Analysis:**

#### **Objective One: The Conceptual Relationship between Threat Assessment and National Security**

Respondents broadened scope of understanding of what national security is. According to data, considering the word "National Security" in its fullest sense, it must be understood to mean more than only responding to military threats and dangers. Safety from chronic hazards and protection from abrupt disturbances in the rhythms of everyday life must be considered in the same sentence. corruption, fraud, cybercrime, human smuggling, transnational crime, and destruction of the environment are all potential risks to national security in the twenty-first century. It is possible to think of seven key subject areas to concentrate on: financial stability, food security, health and environmental security, individual security, and communal security, among others. Among the

new risks to national security will be issues such as oil and gas depletion, terrorism and overpopulation, among others. Few respondents claimed that;

*To my understanding, National Security is being aware of threats and risks that pose challenges for peace, stability, national cohesion and socio-political economic development of Nigeria. EFCC Officer, Male, 36*

*Instead of attempting to explain the concept of national security, it is preferable to describe it. As a concept, it refers to a nation's capacity to protect herself from wide range of security threats, such as terrorism. Whereas security represents the lack of subversion, terrorism, espionage, sabotage and other forms of current dangers. National security is thus, the requirement to ensure the continued existence of a state through the employment of economic power, diplomatic negotiations, political power and power projection. A nation must therefore possess energy security, political security, economic security, environmental security, and other forms of security to be considered secure at the national level. EFCC Officer, Female, 44*

*National security could be seen from the view of safeguarding the nation's key resources. This is regarding the foundational resources that is keeping the nation. These resources could be ranging from human, economy, political, natural resources from the hands of both internal and external enemies. EFCC Officer, Male, 41*

In other words, respondents are of the opinion that security threats include not only traditional enemies like other sovereign nations, but also non-state actors which includes hostile non-state actors, drug gangs, global companies, and non-government agencies; some authorities, which include crimes that the law enforcement agencies may not directly assume a threat, such as money laundering and so on.

According to respondents, in order to assess the condition of each asset for each applicable threat, the risk assessment introduced here examines threats (probability of occurrence), security flaws (weaknesses of facilities or resources against threats) and impacts (impact of incidents) when such threats occur. The relative risk profile of assets is provided to security strategists to help them identify assets most vulnerable to specific threats. Later, risk mitigation techniques for valuable assets with high risks may be studied to reduce risks. A respondent revealed;

*Threat assessment could refer to a deliberate or violent prevention strategy which is taken by government or security agency against any form of threat involving the identification of such threat, determination of threat level and seriousness and determining of strategic intervention plans. With a view to diffusing and tackling such threat. Different agencies of government have different aspect of threat assessment; Some is to tackle issues that relates to natural resources, some economic resources, some security reserve. So, all these is with the aim of diffusing or tackling such threat so as to maintain national security EFCC Officer, Male, 49*

Nigeria security landscape has shifted dramatically since the end of the civil war. Governments have reevaluated their policies in response to threats to established security arrangements. A wide range of concerns are addressed ranging from the management of new technologies and outside influence to global issues like crime, terrorism, and climate variability. Consequently, national security has become a vital aspect of current domestic and foreign policy issues, and job opportunities in security strategy are growing in number.

*As I said earlier, national security has to do with the defence of the sovereign state, and the nation comprising of people, border, resources and government. And when any of those elements are in danger, there is a possibility that the sovereignty of the nation will also be in danger* **EFCC Officer, Female, 36**

In addition, a severe trajectory of insecurity with adverse effects on the economy, social cohesion, and stability has been produced by the merging consequences of local unrest and long-term international threats via attacks. Since the present Jubilee Government is under a shadow of insecurity, it has revealed the limitations of national security strategies and policies. According to these claims, government security efforts are falling well short of what citizens need. Even if the threats are enormous, there has not been enough rethinking of security and reform in institutions to deal with them, as has been evident. These have frequently sparked debate concerning the suitability of current security governance organisations and their operating methods for dealing with insecurity issues. Except the national and local framework is compressed, the country will keep receiving a restricted security dividend. By contrasting the current situation with the past, it is possible to have a thorough grasp of the dynamic nature of insecurity in Nigeria and the steps necessary to keep it secure. Therefore, in response to the relationship between threat assessment and national security, a respondent claimed;

*Well, for the relationship between threat assessment and national security, this is the evaluation process of receiving information about threat; after receiving, the agency adopts the right method.* **EFCC Officer, Male, 44**

*As I said earlier, threat assessment is an analysis to envisage probable danger. What that means is that it is a practice of looking at possible dangers or threat that the nation can face, so, what is done is that when you make an assessment, you will be able to foretell or foreclose possible danger.* **EFCC Officer, Female, 41**

All in all, keeping Nigerians safe needs significant risk mitigation measures involving strategic planning, drills, operational readiness, and research and development. Resource decisions must also be made to deal with real-world situations while still maintaining security and resilience.

## **Objective Two: The Possible Threats to National Security**

Threats can be classified as either military or non-military, based on the opinions of those who responded. A national threat has taken on several meanings over the years. Many such "national risks" have been recognized recently by survey participants. Every country has to deal with dangers. Social dangers include neighbouring country hostility, terrorist organization infiltration,

or worldwide economic trends that jeopardize the country's well-being. Threats can also be natural, like storms or viral epidemics. Any danger puts a country's power in jeopardy and wreaks havoc on its everyday life. Some other threat identified include threats to the economy, energy, safety, terrorism and even human health, women's rights, and food security.

*Banditry, bokoharam insurgence, herdsmen and so on. Lack of stability of politics is even an issue of national security because we have IPOB dissentions and the instability of the economic. All of that is a threat to the nation. EFCC Officer, Female, 36*

*ok.....flowing from lagging state of amenities like education, I mean lack of equal educational opportunities have caused a lot of lakuna that have opened space for crime like banditry, terrorism. Also, the poor economic structure has also open opportunities for crimes like cybercrime that do not only affect the nation but also the image internationally. We also have poverty which has led people to look for illegal means to cater for themselves. EFCC Officer, Female, 41*

In addition, there are risks and challenges associated with any human endeavors. As with all other aspects of human progress, political, economic, military, social, and environmental advancements have the potential to pose a threat to national security. The risks are interconnected in many cases, thus one danger in one area may have ramifications in another. It's extremely likely that whatever danger or impediment you encounter is also present in nearby areas, if not directly adjacent. When designing a comprehensive security strategy, keep in mind all of the potential threats to a nation or civilization and evaluate their relative importance, as well as the ways in which they are intertwined with one another. After that, allocate resources in the appropriate manner.

*National security issues in Nigeria will include any act that threatens the existence of Nigeria as a Nation. These could range from all form of terrorist activities like bokoharam, banditry, kidnapping and abduction. Also, we have economic and financial crimes, including financing terrorism, embezzlement, bank fraud, cybercrime, money laundry and every other form of crime that threatens the security of Nigeria. These are some of them and there are so many others. EFCC Officer, Male, 49*

As disclosed by respondents, the nation's fledgling democracy is already being put to the test by rising criminality and a previously unseen campaign of terror. In particular, civil disorder in the south poses a potential danger to stability and safety; to the east, kidnapping gangs are active in the streets, pubs, and cities; while Boko Haram is expanding in numbers and ruthlessness in the north, and as a result the group has made blatant issues to the government. A country plagued by crises and insecurity has little chance of progressing. Authentic entrepreneurs, for one, avoid such regions because they are afraid. Nigerian governments now bear a substantial share of the cost of this. International direct investment conversations between public officials at the federal and state

levels have always been dominated by concerns about national security instead of prospects and possibilities for foreign companies, which can be found across the country.

## **DISCUSSION**

The analysis of the current threats to national security in Nigeria points to the fact that the country has shifted from the conventional military threat perception to a more complex one. This is in concurrence with the view of Aleyomi & Nwagwu (2020) on the fact that threat assessment and national security are not mere straightforward concepts in developing countries. The findings from the respondents reveal that national security has expanded to include financial security, food security, environmental security and individual security.

The primary data of the study is in agreement with Dawodu et al.'s (2023) definition of threat assessment as a framework for assessing threats to national interests. The responses of the EFCC officers particularly underscored the link between economic crimes and other security threats, as well as how the two are threats to the nation's security. This is further reinforced by Sibe's (2024) research that shows that cybercrime is a major menace that results in huge economic losses every year.

The research outcome shows that threat assessment has a strong link with national security, especially in the economic crime area. The findings of this research support Iwuamadi et al.'s (2021) conclusion that initial threat recognition results in policy formulation in the security sector. This has been seen in the work of EFCC in recovering embezzled funds, as Onje (2024) pointed out, and by implication shows how threat assessment can be practically applied in enhancing national security.

A major finding from the primary data collected is that security threats are not static. This is in line with Olumide's (2023) study on the development of traditional threat assessment models through technological advancement. The EFCC officers' view especially points to the fact that there is the need to constantly update the assessment methods in order to meet emerging threats, especially in cyberspace.

The study also identifies a number of concerns about how such threat assessment measures can be properly and effectively put into practice. The obtained interview data is consistent with the issues discussed in the Bureau of National Statistics (2023) report concerning significant monetary damages connected with insufficient assessments of security incidents. This underlines the further requirements for enhanced threat identification and better threat assessment techniques.

The use of qualitative research in this study was most suitable for identifying the complex link between threat assessment and national security. To achieve this, the research conducted interviews with EFCC officers that provided rich data on threat assessment practices and their effects on national security. Thus, the choice of the method enabled the researcher to capture the multi-faceted interactions between the different security threats and the corresponding institutional measures taken.

The findings drawn from the study reveal that threat assessment and national security cannot be viewed in isolation but with an appreciation of both the conventional and emerging threats as

well as the link between them. This holistic approach is important in formulation of security strategies and policies in the ever-changing security environment in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has therefore been able to establish that the assessment of threats and national security in the Nigerian state is a complex and ever-evolving process. The EFCC, as an agency that identifies and stops threats, has played significant role in securing the nation, especially in the fight against financial and economic crimes. This study shows that contemporary threats and risks are diverse and dynamic, meaning that the assessment methods need to be updated more often. Although some achievements have been made in the area of threat identification and prevention, there is still much to be done in improving technological preparedness and institutional preparedness to deal with new threats in the Nigerian environment.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance threat assessment and national security in Nigeria:

**Technological Improvements and Combinations:** The EFCC needs to enhance the level of technological equipment and facilities in order to enhance threat identification and evaluation. This should include artificial intelligence means of monitoring, data analysis and means of combating financial crimes and cyber threats that are changing in nature.

**Organisational Development and Learning:** There should be continued training programs that should be conducted for the personnel of EFCC to help them cope with the recent trends and assessment approaches. This should comprise training in cybercrime investigation, digital forensics and analysis of financial crimes to increase their efficiency.

**Inter-agency Collaboration:** The EFCC should enhance its cooperation with other security agencies by setting up a common threat assessment framework. This will enable intelligence sharing, combined/inter-agency operations and common strategic approach towards managing threats.

**Public-Private Partnership:** The EFCC should establish better cooperation with private sector organisations, especially financial and technological organisations. This partnership would improve the ability to detect threats and enable the development of measures to prevent financial crimes.

**Improvement of the Legal Basis:** The government should strengthen the legal framework and its existing laws in order to tackle the new threats that are on the rise including cyber threats. This should include having useful cybercrime laws and regulations for digital financial transactions.

**Community Mobilization and Education:** The EFCC should ensure that there is widespread campaign for the general public on the various threats to security and how to avoid them. This should provide for routine workshops seminars and publicity campaigns to create awareness of the need for security.



International Cooperation: There should be cooperation with intergovernmental and other international security structures and organisations to exchange experiences, information and materials regarding combating transnational threats and offences.

Resource Allocation: Therefore, the government should provide enough funding and resources to the EFCC for its threat assessment and security activities. This entails the provision of capital for research and development, buying of equipment, as well as emoluments for staff.

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