

From Threat Assessment to Territorial Security: Navigating Nigeria's Evolving Defence Planning Framework

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1008010781>

Received: 09 September 2026; Accepted: 14 September 2026; Published: 24 September 2026

ABSTRACT

For much of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria's defence establishment has planned reactively: budgets, force postures, and procurement decisions have tended to follow crises rather than a shared, standing assessment of threats. In August 2026, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu directed the immediate preparation of a National Threat Assessment and a rolling five-year Strategic Defence Operations Plan, tasking an eleven-member committee of service chiefs and intelligence heads to produce, within ninety days, a unified framework linking threat identification to force generation, capability gaps, and procurement. This revised article situates that directive within the longer arc of Nigeria's security architecture, verifies its terms against primary government sources, and clarifies its legal relationship to Nigeria's existing suite of strategy instruments. It uses Russia's State Armament Programme as a comparative case, not as a model of geopolitical alignment but as an illustration of a mature, threat-informed, cyclical planning process anchored in law and budget, and it is explicit about where that comparator's own oversight and transparency record is itself contested. It then examines Nigeria's most persistent territorial security problem, its porous and largely undemarcated land borders, as the test case against which any new planning framework must prove itself, reconciling the divergent border-length figures found in the literature. The article argues that Nigeria's central deficit is not doctrinal ignorance but institutional follow-through: chronic underfunding, procurement corruption, weak legislative oversight, inter-agency rivalry, and fragile multinational coordination arrangements have repeatedly hollowed out well-designed strategies. It distinguishes empirically documented patterns from the anticipatory institutional risks raised by Nigeria's simultaneous defence partnerships with Russia, the United States, China, the United Kingdom, France, and others, and closes with implementation-focused recommendations for the 2026 Strategic Defence Operations Plan.

Keywords: Nigeria; national security; defence planning; border security; Multinational Joint Task Force; Russia; threat assessment; civil–military relations; legislative oversight

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's security establishment has spent much of the last two decades responding to threats rather than anticipating them. Successive administrations have launched named military operations, stood up new army divisions, and increased security votes in response to specific crises, from the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East to farmer–herder violence in the Middle Belt and kidnapping-for-ransom in the North-West and South-West (Nairametrics, 2026a). What has been comparatively absent, according to the government's own account of the problem, is a single, shared national threat assessment against which these individual responses could be judged, sequenced, and resourced. On 19 August 2026, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu sought to close that gap. At a Federal Executive Council meeting in Abuja, he approved the immediate preparation of a comprehensive National Threat Assessment and a rolling five-year Strategic Defence Operations Plan, and constituted an eleven-member committee, coordinated by his Special Adviser on Homeland Security, Major General Adeyinka A. Famadewa, and comprising the National Security Adviser, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of State for Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff, the three service chiefs, and the Directors-General of the Department of State Services and the National Intelligence Agency (State House, Abuja, 2026). The

committee was given ninety days to deliver both documents for presidential consideration and approval (State House, Abuja, 2026).

The presidential directive is notable less for its content, which is broadly consistent with standard defence-planning practice elsewhere, than for what it implicitly concedes: that Nigeria's operational requirements have, in the President's words, “often” been “considered individually, without sufficient reference to an agreed national threat assessment or unified medium-term plan” (State House, Abuja, 2026). This article treats that admission as the starting point for a broader inquiry, now revised to (a) verify the directive's terms directly against primary government and parliamentary-adjacent sources rather than relying solely on news paraphrase, (b) situate the new planning exercise within the crowded field of existing Nigerian strategy and policy instruments and clarify its legal standing relative to them, (c) sharpen the comparative treatment of Russia's State Armament Programme by engaging independent scholarly and institutional assessments of its performance and oversight record, (d) reconcile the inconsistent land-border figures that have circulated in Nigerian policy commentary, (e) add a dedicated treatment of legislative and democratic oversight of Nigerian defence planning and financing, and (f) distinguish, throughout, between findings that rest on documented evidence and risks that are properly characterised as anticipatory or hypothetical.

The article's central argument is unchanged in substance: Nigeria's recurring security failures are less a product of poor doctrine than of weak institutional follow-through. Nigeria has not lacked strategy documents — indeed, as section 4 details, it currently has at least a dozen overlapping ones — it has lacked the budgetary discipline, legislative oversight, inter-agency coordination, and procurement integrity needed to convert strategy into capability. Any assessment of the 2026 National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan must therefore be as attentive to implementation mechanics, funding architecture, and oversight as to the substantive threat picture it produces.

METHODOLOGY

This article is a documentary, qualitative policy analysis rather than an empirical study based on interviews, fieldwork, or primary data collection. Its evidentiary base combines three tiers of sources, selected and weighted according to a clear hierarchy. The first tier is primary government documentation: the State House press statement of 19 August 2026 announcing the directive (State House, Abuja, 2026), retrieved directly from the Presidency's official website rather than from secondary paraphrase, together with subsequent official confirmation of the committee's inauguration and terms of reference reported through the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (as reproduced in Daily Trust, 2026). Where a claim about the directive's content, committee membership, or timeline could be checked against this primary material, the primary source is cited in preference to news aggregation, and discrepancies between secondary reports (for example, differing counts of committee membership) are resolved in favour of the State House text. The second tier is the existing corpus of Nigerian statutory and policy instruments — the 1999 Constitution, the Armed Forces Act, and the National Security Strategy, National Defence Policy, and adjacent documents — used to establish the legal and institutional context into which the 2026 initiative is inserted. The third tier is the secondary scholarly and think-tank literature on Nigerian civil–military relations, defence procurement corruption, border security, and multinational peace-support coordination, together with independent (non-Russian-state) assessments of the Russian State Armament Programme, used to build the analytical and comparative arguments.

The choice of Russia's State Armament Programme as the comparative case is a most-different-systems design, not a plausibility-matched one: Russia and Nigeria differ sharply in regime type, fiscal capacity, and strategic orientation, and no claim is made that the two states' planning systems are otherwise comparable. The case is selected specifically because it is among the most extensively documented examples in the open literature of a long-cycle, rolling, ostensibly threat-derived national armament planning process operating under legal and budgetary anchoring — the same structural features that Nigeria's own directive explicitly invokes (a threat assessment preceding capability planning, a rolling multi-year horizon, and an intended linkage to a multi-year procurement and expenditure plan). The comparison is therefore used strictly to isolate transferable procedural lessons about how a threat-derived planning cycle can be structured, sequenced, and

reviewed, and, symmetrically, to draw out the limits and oversight weaknesses of even a mature system of this kind, rather than to endorse Russia as a security partner or governance model. This scope condition is stated explicitly wherever the comparison is invoked, and section 5 now draws on independent assessments — including the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Chatham House, and the Swedish Center for Eastern European Studies — rather than relying only on the Russian state's own descriptions of the programme.

Nigeria's border security problem is selected as the principal territorial test case for three reasons that are made explicit here rather than left implicit: it is the dimension of territorial security most directly implicated in almost every threat category the National Threat Assessment is expected to rank (insurgency, banditry, arms trafficking, and irregular migration); it has been the subject of a substantial, if geographically uneven, body of Nigerian empirical research spanning two decades; and it has already been the object of at least one major, evaluable federal policy intervention (the 2019 border closure) whose documented aftermath offers a concrete benchmark against which the new plan's likely effectiveness can be assessed. The article does not claim that border security is the only, or even the most lethal, territorial security problem Nigeria faces — the North-West banditry crisis and the Lake Chad Basin insurgency both generate higher casualty figures in most reporting periods — but rather that it is the problem most diagnostic of whether a new planning architecture can convert threat assessment into sustained inter-agency governance reform, as distinct from additional troop deployment alone.

A methodological limitation should be stated plainly. Because the National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan were, at the time of writing, still within their ninety-day drafting window and had not been published, this article evaluates the directive that commissions them and the institutional record that will govern their implementation, not the substantive content of the documents themselves, which did not yet exist in the public domain. Claims in this article are correspondingly framed as either (i) empirical findings, drawn from documented past events and verifiable current statements, or (ii) forward-looking institutional risks, whose likelihood is argued from precedent but whose realisation cannot be confirmed in advance; the two are flagged separately wherever the distinction matters, most explicitly in sections 9 and 10.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article draws on three overlapping bodies of security studies literature. The first is the traditional state-centric conception of national security, in which the state is the principal referent object and the armed forces the principal instrument of defence against external and internal threats (Buzan, 1991). Nigeria's own strategy documents have historically adopted this framing while broadening it to include economic, environmental, and human security dimensions, consistent with the wider post-Cold War expansion of the security studies field (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

The second is the literature on defence planning as an institutional and bureaucratic process rather than a purely technical exercise. Defence planning, in this view, is the process by which a state translates a threat assessment into force structure, capability requirements, and budgetary allocations over a defined planning horizon, and its success depends as much on bureaucratic coordination, civilian oversight, and resourcing discipline as on the analytical quality of the underlying threat assessment (Connolly & Boulègue, 2018; Cooper, 2018). This framing is useful precisely because it resists treating a threat assessment document as self-executing; a threat assessment is only the first stage of a planning cycle that must also encompass force generation, procurement, legislative appropriation, and periodic review.

The third is the specifically Nigerian literature on civil–military relations, defence governance, and security sector corruption, which has repeatedly identified a gap between strategic intent and operational delivery in the Nigerian case. Scholars working on Boko Haram-era military reform have argued that corruption in arms procurement, patronage-driven personnel decisions, and inter-service rivalry have systematically degraded the Nigerian armed forces' capacity to execute even well-designed operational plans (International Crisis Group, 2016; Ojo et al., 2020). This literature, together with the emerging literature on legislative oversight of Nigerian security spending discussed in section 8, provides the analytical lens through which the 2026

National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan is assessed in this article: not as a text to be read on its own terms, but as an institutional undertaking whose success will be determined by factors that lie substantially outside the document itself.

Nigeria's Security Architecture: Historical Development and Legal Standing

Nigeria's formal security architecture is constitutionally grounded. Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution establishes the Armed Forces of the Federation, comprising the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and assigns them responsibility for defending Nigeria's territorial integrity; the Armed Forces Act (Cap A20, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004) is the primary statute governing the organisation, administration, and operational employment of the military, while the National Security Agencies Act establishes and delimits the mandates of the State Security Service, the National Intelligence Agency, and the Defence Intelligence Agency. This architecture has been periodically reorganised through non-statutory strategy documents that reflect the dominant security concerns of their time. President Olusegun Obasanjo's 2000 Grand Strategy for National Security was issued in response to unrest in the Niger Delta, while President Goodluck Jonathan's 2014 National Security Strategy was developed against the backdrop of the escalating Boko Haram insurgency (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2019; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Crucially, the 2014 document was not Nigeria's last word on the subject, and clarifying its successors matters for situating the 2026 initiative correctly. A 2019 National Security Strategy superseded the 2014 version, and it sits alongside a considerably larger family of still-current instruments: the Nigerian National Defence Policy of 2017 and its 2019 Implementation Guidelines; the National Counter Terrorism Strategy of 2016; the 2017 Policy Framework and National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism; a 2025/2026 National Framework and Strategy for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration; the 2021 National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy; a National Counter-Terrorism Centre Strategic Plan for 2025–2030; a National Strategy for Combating Organised Crime for 2027–2031; and a Defence Sector Capital Requirements Plan for 2026, in addition to joint and single-service doctrines, strategic directives, and theatre operational plans maintained internally by the services (Daily Trust, 2026). None of these documents is itself a statute; they are executive policy instruments issued under the President's constitutional authority as Commander-in-Chief and the Minister of Defence's statutory functions, and none establishes a binding, judicially enforceable obligation on the Executive to fund or implement its contents. This is the central legal fact that frames the entire debate examined in this article: the 2026 National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan will occupy the same non-statutory status as its predecessors unless it is deliberately anchored to something with harder legal force.

Nigerian commentary on the 2026 initiative has already identified this gap. An editorial assessment published shortly after the committee's inauguration argued that translating the plan's recommendations into durable practice will require “the deployment of the political and fiscal will” to carry them out, “using both administrative directives and required amendments including the Armed Forces Act” (Daily Trust, 2026). In other words, the plan's authors and independent commentators alike recognise that a Strategic Defence Operations Plan approved by presidential fiat, however comprehensive, does not by itself alter statutory procurement rules, appropriation procedures, or inter-agency mandates; those changes require either budgetary discipline sustained across successive annual appropriation Acts passed by the National Assembly, or amendment of the underlying statutes themselves. The plan's legal relationship to Nigeria's existing instruments is therefore best described as coordinating rather than superseding: it is intended to function as the connective document that sequences and prioritises across the pre-existing family of sectoral strategies listed above, not as a new law that repeals or formally subordinates them.

Nigeria's approach to external defence has historically been shaped less by fear of conventional interstate invasion than by internal fragility and unresolved border geography, a point developed further in section 6. Nigeria's earliest formal external security arrangement, the 1958 Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact, is instructive by contrast. Negotiated as a condition of independence, it provided for a British military base in Nigeria and British training of Nigerian officers, but was abrogated in 1964 following sustained domestic opposition to what was widely viewed as a neo-colonial arrangement (Global Security, n.d.-a). The episode illustrates a

recurring dynamic in Nigerian defence policy: externally anchored security arrangements have tended to generate domestic political resistance when they are perceived to compromise sovereignty, a dynamic with clear relevance to the contemporary debate over multi-power defence diversification discussed in section 10.

More recently, the Tinubu administration has pursued a parallel track of institutional expansion, increasing the number of army divisions from eight to twelve and raising military personnel wages, alongside operational successes such as the rescue of pupils and teachers abducted in Oriire Local Government Area of Oyo State, which the President cited directly, in the same 19 August statement that announced the threat-assessment directive, as evidence of what coordinated inter-agency action can achieve (State House, Abuja, 2026). Analysts examining the army expansion have cautioned that the value of new divisions depends heavily on basing decisions driven by strategic necessity — threat concentration, border vulnerability, and terrain — rather than political or regional considerations, and on organising the new formations as combined-arms units capable of integrating intelligence, engineering, artillery, air defence, and logistics rather than as homogeneous infantry formations (TheCable, 2026). This is precisely the kind of capability-sequencing question that a properly resourced Strategic Defence Operations Plan is designed to answer, and its absence to date is one measure of the coordination gap that Tinubu's August 2026 directive is intended to close.

A Comparative Lens: Russia's State Armament Programme as a Threat-Informed Planning Process

Comparative defence-planning literature is used here strictly as a source of process lessons, not as an endorsement of any state's foreign policy or of Russia specifically as a security partner for Nigeria, and every source relied on in this section is an independent scholarly or institutional assessment rather than a Russian government description of its own performance. Russia's defence-planning architecture is useful for this purpose precisely because it is one of the most extensively documented examples of a long-cycle, threat-informed, centrally coordinated national armament planning process. Since the early 2000s, Russian defence policy has been organised around a rolling State Armament Programme (Gosudarstvennaya Programma Vooruzheniya, GPV), a long-term planning document governing the development, production, and maintenance of weapons and military equipment for the armed forces and other security agencies (Cooper, 2018). Structurally, the programme is approved by the president approximately every five years and runs for a ten-year horizon, so that each successive programme overlaps with its predecessor, creating continuous rolling coverage rather than planning cliffs at the end of each cycle; the Kremlin's own account of the 2027–2036 cycle describes it as intended to remain “the key benchmark for the development of weapon systems” across the armed forces and associated security agencies for the following decade (President of Russia, 2025). This is the same rolling logic that Nigeria's own five-year Strategic Defence Operations Plan is explicitly designed to adopt (State House, Abuja, 2026).

Independent scholarly analysis converges on several structural features worth isolating. First, the programme is intended to be threat-derived, with force-development priorities drawn from projected future combat requirements rather than simply from existing equipment inventories (Connolly & Boulègue, 2018). Second, it is fiscally anchored in principle: its funding envelope is meant to be based on a long-term budget forecast reconciled with the finance ministry, tying procurement ambition to macroeconomic reality rather than treating the two as separate exercises (Cooper, 2018). Third, it is meant to synchronise research and development, procurement, and sustainment infrastructure across a weapon system's full life cycle rather than funding acquisition in isolation from the bases, depots, and training facilities needed to sustain it (Connolly & Boulègue, 2018).

Independent assessment also documents where the programme has fallen short of that design, and this evidence is what disciplines the comparison from becoming an endorsement. Chatham House's detailed review of the 2018–2027 programme found that even under favourable fiscal scenarios, the extent to which the programme would be fully funded depended heavily on the political leadership's willingness to sustain a high defence burden, and that earlier iterations had repeatedly missed delivery targets for armour modernisation and naval shipbuilding, a pattern the authors attributed partly to the programme functioning, in practice, as an aggregation of individual service-branch requirements shaped by bureaucratic and industrial interests rather than as a fully integrated strategic assessment (Connolly & Boulègue, 2018). The Stockholm International

Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), whose long-running work with Professor Julian Cooper is the standard international reference on Russian military expenditure, has similarly noted a persistent “discrepancy between announced levels of modernization and what can be accounted for by independent observers,” and records that “many major armament programmes have not reached their assigned targets”, with procurement plans delayed or downsized even in years of strong nominal budget growth (SIPRI, 2020). SIPRI's most recent budget analyses continue to track the programme's successor, the 2027–2036 GPV, whose “key parameters” were finalised in late 2025 (Cooper, 2026; President of Russia, 2025).

The transparency and oversight dimension of the Russian case is a further, largely negative, lesson that a purely process-focused reading of the GPV would otherwise obscure. Independent analysis of the Russian federal budget documents that large portions of national-defence-related expenditure are classified and not made publicly available, and that even SIPRI's own reconstructions “lack detailed information on each spending category”, meaning it is not always possible to confirm that spending under nominally military headings is in fact military in character (SIPRI, 2020). A detailed data-driven review of Russian budget secrecy similarly finds that the domestic Russian legislative debate over defence expenditure is confined to a relatively narrow, aggregated budget chapter, with the State Duma's own defence committee reviewing draft budget law but doing so against a backdrop of extensive classification that limits genuine *ex ante* scrutiny of programme-level allocations (Swedish Center for Eastern European Studies, 2024). The GPV is consequently not a model of democratic or legislative defence-budget oversight; it is a model of executive-branch planning discipline operating with comparatively weak parliamentary and public visibility. This distinction matters directly for section 8 below, where Nigeria's own, differently structured but similarly limited legislative oversight of defence spending is examined; the two cases share a weakness in transparency even though they differ sharply in regime type and in the degree of executive planning discipline achieved.

The transferable lesson for Nigeria's Strategic Defence Operations Plan is therefore narrower and more qualified than a first reading of the GPV might suggest. It is procedural, not institutional wholesale: a credible national defence plan needs (a) an explicit and updatable threat assessment that precedes and structures capability decisions, (b) funding parameters reconciled with realistic fiscal forecasts rather than aspirational figures, (c) synchronisation of procurement with the infrastructure, logistics, and training investments needed to sustain new capability, and (d) a rolling review mechanism that prevents the plan from becoming a static, one-off document. It is emphatically not a lesson that classification and executive concentration of planning authority are themselves desirable; the Russian case demonstrates that even a rolling, overlapping, and fiscally anchored planning cycle can miss its own targets and can do so with limited independent or legislative visibility into why. Nigeria's own directive already gestures toward the positive lessons, most explicitly the instruction that the National Threat Assessment provide the basis for a corresponding multi-year defence expenditure and procurement plan (State House, Abuja, 2026). Whether this connective tissue between assessment and budget is genuinely built, and sustained through subsequent budget cycles and subject to meaningful legislative scrutiny, is the central implementation question this article returns to in sections 8 and 11.

The 2026 National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan

The immediate policy trigger for this article is the directive issued by President Tinubu on 19 August 2026, approving the preparation of a comprehensive National Threat Assessment and a rolling five-year Strategic Defence Operations Plan intended to strengthen coordination across Nigeria's defence, intelligence, and security capabilities. This section relies, wherever possible, on the State House's own press statement rather than on secondary paraphrase, both to verify the directive's exact terms and to correct a minor discrepancy that appeared across early news coverage, where committee membership was variously reported as nine or eleven; the primary text confirms eleven members (State House, Abuja, 2026).

The President framed the initiative as a direct response to a structural weakness he identified in the existing system: operational requirements had, in his words, often been “considered individually, without sufficient reference to an agreed national threat assessment or unified medium-term plan,” a gap that had made coordination more difficult and limited the efficient deployment of resources (State House, Abuja, 2026).

Institutionally, the initiative is anchored in the eleven-member committee coordinated by the Special Adviser on Homeland Security, Major General Adeyinka A. Famadewa, who also provides secretariat support. The committee's other members are the National Security Adviser, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu; the Minister of Defence, General Christopher Musa; the Minister of State for Defence, Alhaji Bello Muhammad Matawalle; the Chief of Defence Staff, General Olufemi Oluyede; the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Waidi Shaibu; the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke; the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Idi Abbas; the Director-General of the Department of State Services, Tosin Ajayi; and the Director-General of the National Intelligence Agency, Ambassador Muhammed Muhammed (State House, Abuja, 2026). The committee is empowered to consult or co-opt officials from other ministries, departments, and agencies where necessary.

The committee was formally inaugurated a week later, on 26 August 2026, by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, George Akume, acting on the President's behalf. Reporting on the inauguration provides the fullest public account yet of the committee's terms of reference, which are to: review Nigeria's principal and emerging security threats and assess their relative urgency and strategic implications; define operational priorities and the capabilities required in each theatre to achieve clearly established national security objectives; identify existing capability gaps and the equipment, logistics, infrastructure, technology, personnel, and other support requirements needed to close them; identify procurement priorities aligned with the assessed threats, on the explicit premise that procurement decisions should be driven by strategic necessity rather than institutional preference; establish implementation steps and realistic timelines, including monitoring and outcome-assessment measures; and make any further recommendations needed to facilitate the plan's formulation and effective implementation (Daily Trust, 2026). The Secretary to the Government of the Federation summarised the intended logic succinctly: the committee's task is to establish “a clear path from threat to objective, from objective to capability, from resource capability, and from resource to measurable outcome” (as quoted in Daily Trust, 2026).

Substantively, the two documents are designed to be sequential and complementary. The National Threat Assessment is intended to identify Nigeria's principal security threats, determine their relative urgency, and establish operational objectives for addressing them. The Strategic Defence Operations Plan is then meant to translate that assessment into concrete operational priorities, including the forces and capabilities required across different theatres of operation, existing capability gaps, equipment and logistical needs, and an implementation timetable. Critically, the initiative is explicitly designed to feed into budgetary planning: once approved, the plan is intended to “provide the basis for preparing a corresponding multi-year defence expenditure and procurement plan, ensuring that resources are directed towards agreed operational priorities and critical national security requirements” (State House, Abuja, 2026). The President further directed the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and the Office of the National Security Adviser to take all necessary steps to give immediate effect to these directives (State House, Abuja, 2026).

This design closely tracks the positive structural features identified in the Russian comparative case in section 5: an explicit threat-derivation stage preceding capability planning, an intended linkage to multi-year budgeting, and a rolling five-year horizon rather than a single static document. What the public record does not yet show, because the process was only weeks into its ninety-day window at the time of writing, is how the committee will resolve inter-service prioritisation disputes, how the threat assessment will be reconciled with Nigeria's existing multinational commitments such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, what legislative role, if any, the National Assembly will play in reviewing or appropriating against the resulting multi-year procurement plan, and what review mechanism will govern the plan once approved. Nigerian commentary published as the committee began work was candid about the risk this ambiguity creates, warning that the exercise could become “another document” in “the crowded field of materials on Nigeria's national security strategy” unless it is accompanied by clear “institutional clarity” on which office holds “hierarchical superiority in the coordination of National Security Strategy matters” (Daily Trust, 2026). These are precisely the questions on which the literature reviewed in sections 6 through 9 suggests Nigeria's defence planning has historically struggled.

Territorial Security: Nigeria's Border Security Challenge as a Test Case

If the Strategic Defence Operations Plan is to be judged by results rather than intentions, Nigeria's border security problem is the most exacting test case available, both because it has proved resistant to two decades of policy intervention and because it sits at the intersection of nearly every threat category the National Threat Assessment is expected to rank: insurgency, banditry, arms trafficking, transnational organised crime, and irregular migration.

Reconciling the Border-Length Figures

Nigerian policy commentary has circulated a range of figures for the total length of Nigeria's land borders, from approximately 4,000 to 4,900 kilometres (Business Day, 2025; Global Security, n.d.-a). This spread partly reflects differences in measurement methodology (straight-line versus meandering-river distance), differences in whether short maritime or lacustrine sections of the Chad boundary are included, and the general imprecision that attends citing a rounded, frequently repeated figure rather than returning to a primary boundary survey. For consistency, this article adopts the reconciled figure most commonly reported by national statistical compilations that aggregate the individual bilateral boundary lengths: a total land border of approximately 4,477 kilometres, comprising the Benin–Nigeria boundary (809 km), the Niger–Nigeria boundary (1,608 km), the Chad–Nigeria boundary (85 km), and the Cameroon–Nigeria boundary (1,975 km) (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Individual segment lengths are themselves drawn from the International Boundary Study series and subsequent boundary literature and can differ modestly between sources depending on whether river-course boundaries are measured along the channel or as a generalised line; the Cameroon–Nigeria segment in particular is reported at figures ranging from roughly 1,690 to 1,975 kilometres depending on source and vintage. The wider figures found in some Nigerian policy and journalistic sources (up to 4,900 km) likely reflect either the inclusion of the full historical Bakassi-era boundary length before the 2002 International Court of Justice ruling and subsequent 2006 Greentree Agreement handover, or simple imprecision in secondary reporting. For the purposes of this article, what matters substantively is not the precise figure but the shared and undisputed characteristics of the boundary across all reported measurements: it runs almost entirely through terrain — forest, desert, riverine floodplain, and lake-bed — that is difficult to patrol, is only partially demarcated on the ground despite being legally delimited on paper, and traverses colonial-era lines, most notably the 1889 Anglo-French line that still defines the Benin–Nigeria frontier, that took little account of pre-existing settlement, kinship, or trading patterns (Odey et al., 2022, as cited in RSIS International, 2025).

Documented Consequences of Border Porosity

The security consequences of this porosity are well documented in the Nigerian border security literature. Terrorist and insurgent groups, including Boko Haram and its offshoots, have been shown to exploit porous border areas to traffic weapons, establish training camps in neighbouring Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, and move fighters and logistics across frontiers largely beyond the reach of Nigerian security agencies (RSIS International, 2021). A study focused on the North-East found that the porosity of Nigeria's border with Cameroon in particular has facilitated Boko Haram's access to weapons and cross-border sanctuary, undermining counter-insurgency efforts that are otherwise confined within Nigerian territory (RSIS International, 2021). Beyond insurgency, researchers examining small arms and light weapons proliferation have found that porous borders and a flourishing arms-trafficking trade are a principal contributor to Nigeria's wider security crisis, with firearms smuggled across land and sea borders ending up in the hands of non-state armed actors, including bandit groups operating in the North-West (RSIS International, 2025).

Nigeria's policy responses to date illustrate the coordination failures identified throughout this article. The 2019 land border closure, intended to curb smuggling and protect domestic agriculture, has been shown by subsequent research not to have disrupted or destroyed smuggling networks but instead to have reorganised them, multiplying illegal crossing routes and intensifying what researchers term “checkpoint politics”, the informal, often corrupt negotiations between state agents and border users over who and what is permitted to pass (Modern Ghana, 2026). A related study of oil smuggling across Nigeria's borders similarly found that

border-policing strategies alone cannot prevent cross-border fuel smuggling in the absence of accountability for the relationships between smuggling networks and compromised border officials, pointing to corruption rather than purely technical or resource gaps as a central driver of border insecurity (Adeyemi, 2024, as cited in African Identities, 2024).

Studies of the institutional side of border management identify a consistent set of limiting factors: insufficient personnel relative to the scale of the border, much of it in difficult terrain including forests, deserts, and riverine areas; poor funding and outdated equipment; corruption and disunity among the multiple agencies with border responsibilities, including the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Nigeria Customs Service, and the armed forces; and the abuse of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, which permits visa-free travel for West African citizens but has in practice been exploited to facilitate irregular and undocumented crossings (RSIS International, 2025). A 2016 study focusing on the Nigeria–Cameroon border in Adamawa State found that even routine, economically motivated cross-border movement, such as weekly market visits by residents of both countries, occurs largely outside formal migration control, illustrating how thoroughly informal cross-border life has outpaced the state's capacity to monitor it (RSIS International, 2021).

For the Strategic Defence Operations Plan, the border security literature yields a specific implication: border insecurity in Nigeria is not primarily a capability gap that can be closed through additional force generation alone. It is a governance deficit spanning at least five agencies with overlapping and sometimes competing mandates, compounded by corruption at checkpoints and chronic underfunding of surveillance infrastructure. A threat assessment that treats border insecurity as a subset of the counter-insurgency or counter-banditry mission, to be addressed through troop deployment alone, is likely to reproduce the pattern documented after the 2019 border closure: displacement of illicit activity rather than its reduction (Modern Ghana, 2026).

Institutional and Resource Constraints: Funding, Procurement, and Corruption

Nigeria's difficulty has rarely been the articulation of strategy; it has been converting strategy into sustained capability. This section examines the specific institutional constraints that have historically undermined implementation, with the financing analysis strengthened to distinguish nominal from real changes in defence resourcing and to separate documented figures from estimates.

Funding volatility, currency exposure, and the nominal–real gap

Nigeria's defence spending has fluctuated significantly relative to gross domestic product, from roughly one per cent in 2010 to considerably higher nominal allocations in the 2020s, without a correspondingly consistent improvement in security outcomes (Global Security, n.d.-b). The 2024 federal budget allocated approximately four billion United States dollars, or twelve per cent of total federal spending, to defence and security, the largest single sectoral allocation; independent analysts noted at the time that successive years of increased nominal military spending had not translated into commensurate improvements in citizen safety, attributing the gap principally to weaknesses in accountability and performance monitoring rather than to the nominal size of the budget (VOA, 2023). Because a naira-denominated appropriation figure is not, by itself, informative about acquisition capacity, this nominal figure must be read alongside Nigeria's currency exposure. Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff has publicly acknowledged the structural mechanism at work: because Nigeria does not manufacture most of its own military hardware, procurement is conducted substantially in foreign currency, so that naira-denominated budget increases are eroded by exchange-rate depreciation before they translate into delivered equipment (Aina, 2026). Given that the naira depreciated sharply against major reserve currencies over 2023–2024, a headline year-on-year increase in the naira defence budget can coexist with a flat or declining real acquisition capacity; the Strategic Defence Operations Plan's forthcoming multi-year expenditure component will need to report and plan in a way that makes this distinction visible, rather than relying on naira totals alone, if its five-year projections are to be a credible planning tool rather than a nominal figure vulnerable to erosion.

Procurement corruption

Procurement corruption forms a second, and arguably more corrosive, constraint. A joint investigation by the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre and Transparency International UK, titled “Weaponising Transparency”, found that former Nigerian military chiefs diverted an estimated fifteen billion United States dollars through fraudulent arms procurement deals, a sum equivalent to roughly half of Nigeria's foreign currency reserves at the time, with the report attributing the scale of the diversion to long-standing “military exceptionalism” that has historically shielded security-sector spending from the oversight applied to other parts of government (Daily Trust, 2017). Academic research examining the Boko Haram-era procurement scandals has similarly found that the principal mechanism for diverting arms procurement funds was alliance formation between political elites and serving and retired senior military officers, and that the persistence of the insurgency itself created ongoing opportunities for the diversion of state resources into private accumulation, generating a perverse institutional incentive that worked against the swift resolution of the very conflict the funds were nominally intended to address (Ojo et al., 2020). More recent reporting indicates the problem has not been resolved: civil society groups marking UN Anti-Corruption Day in December 2025 stated that security funds continue to disappear through inflated contracts, questionable procurement deals, and outright diversion of money meant for operations and equipment, undermining every layer of the security architecture from recruitment through intelligence sharing to frontline welfare (AllAfrica, 2025).

Comparative research on defence corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa situates the Nigerian pattern within a wider regional problem, arguing that opacity and the high transaction values characteristic of international arms deals create conditions that are especially conducive to corrupt practices, and that donor initiatives focused narrowly on recipient-country governance reform, without addressing the supply side of the international arms trade, have had limited success in curbing it (Willett, 2009). This comparative literature suggests that a Nigerian threat assessment and defence plan that does not explicitly build in procurement transparency and independent audit mechanisms is planning around, rather than into, one of the most consistently documented failure points in Nigerian defence policy implementation.

Finally, a 2016 International Crisis Group assessment of Nigerian military reform identified equipment and logistics deficits, personnel and training gaps, and poor civil–military relations as compounding, mutually reinforcing weaknesses, and recommended strengthening leadership and oversight, improving and sustaining funding predictability, and improving staffing and training arrangements as priorities for reform (International Crisis Group, 2016). Nearly a decade later, the same categories of weakness recur in the literature reviewed above, which suggests that the core institutional obstacles facing the 2026 initiative are long-standing rather than novel, and that a new planning document, however well designed, is unlikely by itself to resolve them.

Legislative and Democratic Oversight of Defence Planning

A gap in the earlier treatment of this subject was insufficient attention to the National Assembly's formal role, and lack of formal role, in shaping and scrutinising the very budgetary process the Strategic Defence Operations Plan is meant to feed. Sections 88 and 89 of the 1999 Constitution empower the National Assembly to conduct investigations and summon witnesses on any matter within its legislative competence, including national security and defence, and the House of Representatives maintains a standing House Committee on Defence with a formal remit covering the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces, defence procurement, and military cooperation with foreign partners. On paper, this gives the legislature both an investigatory and an appropriations lever over defence policy: no federal expenditure, including defence expenditure, is lawful without an annual Appropriation Act passed by the National Assembly.

In practice, however, the exercise of this authority over the security sector has been consistently constrained, and this constraint is empirically documented rather than merely alleged. Nigeria's Public Procurement Act 2007 established the Bureau of Public Procurement as the regulator of public procurement generally, but a 2025 assessment cited in Nigerian financial press found that the National Assembly's own procurement processes operate outside Bureau of Public Procurement oversight and lack comparable transparency (Nairametrics, 2025), illustrating a wider pattern in which security- and defence-adjacent procurement in

Nigeria has often proceeded with less independent scrutiny than procurement in other sectors, a pattern consistent with the “military exceptionalism” identified in the Weaponising Transparency investigation discussed in section 8 (Daily Trust, 2017). Independent budget-transparency research further finds that Nigeria's wider public budgeting process suffers from limited public participation and delayed publication of in-year and mid-year fiscal reports, contributing to a decline in Nigeria's score on the international Open Budget Survey (Capital, 2026); defence and security votes, which are frequently classified as sensitive on national-security grounds, are typically the least transparent line items within an already opaque overall budget process. Civil society groups working on defence governance have accordingly called for Nigeria to adopt internationally recognised standards — comparable to the Tshwane Principles on national security and the right to information — that would define a narrower, more defensible set of exceptions for defence and security disclosure, rather than treating the sector as categorically exempt from the transparency and procurement-oversight rules applied elsewhere in government (AllAfrica, 2025).

This has a direct bearing on how the multi-year defence expenditure and procurement plan that the Strategic Defence Operations Plan is meant to generate should be evaluated. A plan produced entirely within the executive branch, however well sequenced internally, does not by itself close the oversight gap documented above; it will still require Legislative appropriation year by year, and the National Assembly's committee structure remains the principal formal venue through which Nigerians' elected representatives could, in principle, test the plan's priorities against competing claims on the federal budget and audit whether disbursed funds were applied as planned. Whether the 2026 committee's terms of reference, which are confined to the Executive's own security and intelligence leadership (section 6), include any mechanism for briefing or engaging the relevant National Assembly committees during drafting, rather than only after the plan's completion, is not addressed in any of the primary or secondary sources reviewed for this article; its absence from the public record is itself notable, given that the plan's central innovation, tying procurement to an agreed threat assessment, can only bind future budget cycles if the appropriating body is engaged in, or at minimum briefed on, the resulting priorities. This is treated in this article as a documented gap in the public record of the 2026 process, not as a settled judgement that no such engagement will occur; the recommendations in section 12 address it accordingly.

Multinational Coordination: Lessons from the Multinational Joint Task Force

Because much of Nigeria's most acute territorial insecurity, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, is transnational in character, the Strategic Defence Operations Plan cannot be designed as a purely national exercise. Nigeria's principal existing vehicle for multinational security coordination, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), offers an instructive case study in both the value and the fragility of regional coordination arrangements, and therefore a useful comparator for what the new national plan will need to interface with.

The MNJTF originated in a 1994 Lake Chad Basin Commission arrangement targeting cross-border banditry, became fully operational by 1998, and was substantially restructured and expanded in 2014 and early 2015 in response to Boko Haram's rapid territorial expansion, receiving authorisation from the African Union Peace and Security Council in January 2015 (International Crisis Group, 2020; ISPI, 2022). Comprising troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, joined by Benin as the only non-Lake Chad Basin Commission member, the force reached an authorised strength of roughly 8,700 to nearly 14,000 personnel at various points, coordinated through sector headquarters in Mora, Baga Sola, Diffa, and Baga (Amani Africa, 2025; ISPI, 2022). Independent assessments credit the force with substantially degrading Boko Haram's conventional territorial control, disrupting bases, arms caches, and weapons-manufacturing workshops, and enabling the gradual return of economic activity to towns including Monguno, Mallam Fatori, and Banki (ISS Africa, 2025).

Despite these achievements, the MNJTF's record illustrates precisely the coordination fragility that a national threat assessment cannot simply assume away. International Crisis Group analysis has found that participating states have brought different, sometimes conflicting expectations to the force: Nigerian officials have tended to view the arrangement as a face-saving mechanism for accommodating the operations of other countries' forces,

particularly Chad's, on Nigerian soil, while still guarding jealously against deeper integration that might compromise operational primacy, whereas Cameroonian, Chadian, and Nigerien officials have in different ways favoured only light-touch coordination for what they regard as fundamentally their own national offensives (International Crisis Group, 2020). These tensions have produced concrete disruptions. Chad's unilateral withdrawal of more than a thousand troops in December 2019, undertaken without fully informing partner capitals, significantly weakened the force at a critical juncture (International Crisis Group, 2020). More recently, Niger's suspension of participation following the 2023 coup and subsequent ECOWAS sanctions left the force operating for much of 2024 without one of its four core Lake Chad Basin contributors, before a bilateral memorandum of understanding between Niger and Nigeria in August 2024 restored Nigerien participation (Amani Africa, 2025).

Chronic underfunding has compounded these political tensions. Analysts have estimated the force's operating requirements at roughly seven hundred million United States dollars, a figure that contributions from member states, the African Union, the European Union, and bilateral donors including the United Kingdom and the United States have consistently failed to meet in full, constraining planning, communications capacity, intelligence-sharing, and civil–military coordination (International Crisis Group, 2020; ISPI, 2022).

For Nigeria's Strategic Defence Operations Plan, the MNJTF experience carries a direct implication, and it is an empirically grounded one rather than a speculative risk: any national threat assessment covering the North-East theatre must explicitly account for the documented political fragility of multinational coordination arrangements, rather than treating regional partner contributions as a stable, assumed input. A national plan calibrated to an optimistic assumption of continuous four-country cooperation would have been badly exposed by both the 2019 Chadian withdrawal and the 2023–2024 Nigerien suspension — both of which are matters of settled record, not projection; a more resilient plan would build contingency capability for scenarios in which one or more regional partners reduce or withdraw their contribution, consistent with the general defence-planning principle, illustrated in the Russian case in section 5, that credible plans must be stress-tested against plausible adverse scenarios rather than built solely around the most cooperative case.

Diversification or Fragmentation? Revisiting the “Russian Model” Question

Nigerian policy commentary has increasingly framed the country's simultaneous pursuit of defence partnerships with the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, India, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye, often within overlapping time frames, as a strategy of diversification intended to reduce dependence on any single external supplier or patron (Ikiebe, 2026). This section addresses that debate directly, because it bears on how the National Threat Assessment should characterise Nigeria's external defence relationships, and because the phrase “Russian model of security pact” that frequently appears in this discussion conflates two analytically distinct things this article has treated separately: Russia's domestic defence-planning methodology, examined on its own, narrower terms in section 5, and the transactional, arms-for-access security-partnership model Russia has extended to several Sahelian states.

On the empirical record, Nigeria's engagement with Russia has been driven substantially by frustration with the conditionality attached to Western arms sales. Senior Nigerian military officials have argued that difficulties in obtaining weapons from Western states, which frequently condition or suspend arms sales on human-rights grounds, amount to a double standard, and that this frustration has driven increased Nigerian arms purchases from Russia (ORSAM, n.d.). The same dynamic has been more starkly visible elsewhere in the Sahel, where military governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger have terminated security cooperation with France and the United States in favour of deepened Russian engagement, part of a wider Russian strategy of expanding influence across the Sahel–Sahara belt following regional coups (ORSAM, n.d.). This much is documented fact. Nigeria's own engagement with Russia, while real, has so far remained one strand among many rather than a wholesale realignment of the kind seen in the central Sahel, and no evidence reviewed for this article indicates that Nigeria's civilian or military institutions have fractured along the lines of competing external patrons.

What follows in the remainder of this section, by contrast, is squarely in the domain of anticipated institutional risk rather than documented outcome, and it is labelled as such here to avoid the earlier draft's blurring of the two registers. One Nigerian analysis has argued that great powers, by virtue of stronger institutions, can absorb the shocks of playing what it terms “multi-board games” simultaneously with several rival external partners, whereas a state with weaker institutions and more contested internal loyalties risks losing the capacity to see, let alone control, the resulting web of overlapping commitments (Ikiebe, 2026). The same analysis warns, prospectively, of a specific fragmentation risk: that external hedging, layered onto Nigeria's existing internal fragmentation, could see different domestic security factions or units become associated with different external patrons — an American-aligned elite unit here, a Russian- or Chinese-leaning cluster there, with religious and cultural affinities separately drawing other units toward Gulf, Pakistani, or Turkish partners, and historic educational ties sustaining British links for still others (Ikiebe, 2026). No source available to this article documents that this fragmentation has actually occurred within Nigeria's security forces; the claim is a warning about the plausible institutional consequences of multi-directional external pressure under weak coordinating institutions, consistent with the historical pattern noted in section 4, in which externally anchored security arrangements, from the 1958 Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact onward, have tended to generate domestic friction when sovereignty concerns arise (Global Security, n.d.-a), not a claim about the current state of Nigeria's civil–military institutions.

For the 2026 National Threat Assessment, the implication is correspondingly modest: Nigeria's array of external defence partnerships should itself be treated as an object of strategic assessment and institutional risk management, precisely because the risk in question is anticipatory rather than already realised and is therefore still preventable through coordinated management, rather than as a set of procurement or training relationships to be pursued independently by whichever agency initiates them. A defence plan that coordinates threat assessment and capability planning domestically while leaving external partnership management uncoordinated across ministries and services would only partially address the fragmentation problem this article has identified as a risk, not a fact, throughout this section.

DISCUSSION

Navigating from Threat Assessment to Territorial Security

Bringing the preceding sections together, this article's central claim is that the 2026 National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan represents a structurally sound response to a genuine and long-standing coordination deficit in Nigerian defence policy, but that its ultimate success will be determined by factors that lie substantially outside the assessment and plan documents themselves. The Russian comparative case in section 5 demonstrates what a mature, rolling, threat-informed planning architecture can look like procedurally, while independent assessment of that same case also documents that even well-resourced systems remain vulnerable to bureaucratic fragmentation, service-interest capture, and weak transparency. Nigeria's own legal architecture, detailed in section 4, shows that the new plan will sit as a coordinating instrument atop an already crowded, non-statutory family of strategy documents rather than as a legally binding successor to them, which raises the implementation stakes rather than lowering them.

Nigeria's border security literature in section 7 demonstrates that Nigeria's most persistent territorial security problem is substantially a governance and corruption problem rather than a pure capability gap, meaning that force generation alone, however well sequenced, is unlikely to resolve it, whatever the precise total length of the boundary in question. The funding and procurement literature in section 8 demonstrates that Nigeria's historical pattern has been one of strategy documents outrunning sustained, corruption-resistant, currency-resilient implementation. The legislative oversight analysis in section 9 adds a dimension largely absent from the earlier treatment: even a well-designed executive planning process cannot, by itself, close the accountability gap documented in Nigeria's defence procurement and budgeting practice, because that gap is substantially a legislative and transparency problem rather than an executive-planning one. The Multinational Joint Task Force case in section 10 demonstrates, on the documented record, that any threat assessment touching the North-East theatre must plan around the periodic fragility of multinational coordination rather than assuming its stability. And the diversification debate in section 11, properly read as an anticipatory risk

rather than a documented outcome, demonstrates that Nigeria's external partnership strategy carries institutional risks that a purely domestic threat assessment could easily overlook, precisely because those risks have not yet crystallised into visible harm and are therefore easy to discount.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the most important test of the 2026 Strategic Defence Operations Plan will not be the sophistication of its threat ranking, but whether it is accompanied by five specific institutional commitments: a credible, protected linkage to multi-year budgeting that reports in terms that survive naira depreciation rather than in nominal figures alone; an explicit, independently monitored anti-corruption mechanism embedded in the procurement plan rather than treated as a separate governance initiative; a formal inter-agency coordination protocol for border security that goes beyond the defence and security committee's membership to include the Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigeria Customs Service; a defined channel of engagement with the relevant National Assembly committees during, not only after, drafting, sufficient to give the plan's priorities some legislative durability beyond a single budget cycle; and a periodic, genuinely rolling review mechanism that updates the threat assessment as regional conditions, including the status of multinational partners in the Lake Chad Basin, change. Absent these commitments, Nigeria risks producing another well-crafted strategy document that joins the already crowded shelf of its predecessors: a coherent statement of intent that struggles to survive contact with underfunded, corruption-prone, weakly overseen, and inter-agency implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the preceding analysis, this article offers seven recommendations directed at the committee tasked with finalising Nigeria's National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan.

First, the Strategic Defence Operations Plan should formally adopt a rolling review cycle, updated at minimum annually, rather than functioning as a static five-year document, mirroring the overlapping-cycle logic used in the Russian State Armament Programme so that force-generation priorities can be adjusted as threat conditions, including the status of regional partners such as those in the Multinational Joint Task Force, evolve (Cooper, 2018; President of Russia, 2025).

Second, the plan should be given the clearest available legal anchoring short of primary legislation — for example, formal Federal Executive Council ratification and gazetting, alongside any Armed Forces Act amendments needed to bind procurement rules to its priorities — so that it does not simply join the existing shelf of non-statutory strategy documents catalogued in section 4 (Daily Trust, 2026).

Third, the plan's procurement component should include an independent, published audit mechanism, potentially involving civil society organisations with an established track record in this area, to address the specific pattern of procurement diversion documented in the Boko Haram-era scandals, rather than relying solely on internal military oversight structures or on National Assembly procurement processes that themselves currently sit outside Bureau of Public Procurement oversight (Nairametrics, 2025; Ojo et al., 2020; Willett, 2009).

Fourth, border security should be treated as a distinct, standing pillar of the plan rather than a subset of counter-insurgency or counter-banditry operations, with formal, resourced coordination mechanisms linking the armed forces to the Nigeria Immigration Service and Nigeria Customs Service, given the consistent finding in the literature that inter-agency rivalry and disunity, not merely troop or equipment shortages, have undermined border management (Business Day, 2025; RSIS International, 2025).

Fifth, the plan should explicitly model contingency scenarios for reduced multinational cooperation in the Lake Chad Basin theatre, drawing directly on the 2019 Chadian withdrawal and 2023–2024 Nigerien suspension as planning precedents, rather than assuming continuous four-country participation in the Multinational Joint Task Force (Amani Africa, 2025; International Crisis Group, 2020).

Sixth, Nigeria's external defence partnerships, including but not limited to its engagement with Russia, should be brought within a single coordinated framework, ideally overseen by the National Security Adviser's office in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so that procurement, training, and basing arrangements pursued by different services with different external partners do not proceed on uncoordinated, potentially conflicting tracks, addressing the anticipatory institutional risk identified in section 11 before it can become a documented one (Ikiele, 2026).

Seventh, given the demonstrated exchange-rate exposure of foreign-currency-denominated procurement and the documented weakness of legislative and public oversight of security-sector budgeting, the multi-year defence expenditure plan called for in the presidential directive should include explicit currency-hedging or phased-disbursement provisions informed by the Chief of Defence Staff's own account of naira depreciation's effect on procurement (Aina, 2026), and should be accompanied by a defined, published protocol for briefing the relevant National Assembly committees on its priorities during formulation, consistent with the narrower, more defensible disclosure standards civil society groups have urged for the security sector (AllAfrica, 2025; State House, Abuja, 2026).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's decision to prepare a National Threat Assessment and a rolling Strategic Defence Operations Plan addresses a coordination deficit that the government has itself identified as long-standing: the absence of a shared, agreed basis on which individual defence and security decisions could be evaluated, sequenced, and funded (State House, Abuja, 2026). Examined against a comparative case of mature, threat-informed national defence planning, verified against the primary record of the directive itself, and set within the specific literature on Nigeria's most persistent territorial security problem, border insecurity, this revised article has argued that the planning architecture Nigeria is now building is procedurally sound but faces implementation risks that are well documented in Nigeria's own defence policy history: chronic underfunding compounded by currency exposure, procurement corruption, weak legislative and public oversight, inter-agency rivalry, and the periodic fragility of multinational coordination arrangements in the Lake Chad Basin. None of these risks is intractable, but none is addressed by the existence of a threat assessment document alone, and none is resolved simply by the document's legal ancestry being clarified, however useful that clarification is for understanding what the plan can and cannot do on its own authority.

The article has also sought to disentangle two ideas that Nigerian public discourse has sometimes run together: learning from the procedural architecture of another state's defence-planning cycle, and aligning with that state as a security partner, and it has been explicit that the Russian comparator's own oversight and transparency record is itself a caution rather than a model to emulate. It has, in addition, sought to keep documented findings and anticipated risks in separate registers throughout, most visibly in treating the fragmentation risk associated with Nigeria's multi-power defence diversification as a plausible but as-yet-unrealised institutional hazard rather than a description of current civil–military reality. Ultimately, whether Nigeria's 2026 National Threat Assessment and Strategic Defence Operations Plan succeeds in navigating the country from fragmented, reactive security responses toward genuine territorial security, most visibly along its long and porous land borders, will depend less on the analytical quality of the threat ranking it produces than on whether Nigeria's institutions — executive, legislative, and civil society alike — can, this time, sustain the funding discipline, procurement integrity, legislative engagement, and inter-agency coordination that previous strategy documents were unable to secure.

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