

Local Government Administration and the National Counter Terrorism Strategy in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria, 2016-2022

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Abstract

This study presents a case for the nexus between the implementation of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) by the local administration and the curtailment of banditry attacks against farmers in the rural communities of Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state. Extant analyses of the relative repression of domestic insurgency in rural communities revolve around three broad explanations: the legitimacy and local ownership, the cultural and contextual understanding, and the effectiveness and sustainability debates. Drawing from the ex-post facto research design, a purpose interview of twelve (12) communal stakeholders selected from the traditional rulers, youth leaders, and leaders of community security arrangements in the rural communities Nkpologwu, Opanda, Adani, and Ogurugu were utilized to assess the seeming success in local administration's intervention in the repression of internal terrorism in rural communities. Using the informal security theoretical frame of analysis, the study found out that the local government authority has supported informal security structures in mainstreaming the youth into the grassroots security apparatus, assigned certain stipends to the members of the local community who volunteered for the community security and incorporated the traditional rulers in the security governance of the local communities, thereby enhancing the repression of Fulani herdsmen in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state. The study recommends a bottom-up approach in security governance as a panacea to the insecurity in rural communities.

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Background to the Study

The National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) was introduced by the Nigerian government in 2016 as a national action plan that focuses on addressing the direct threats of terrorism, including the prevention of attacks, responses to terrorist incidents, and reducing Nigerians' vulnerability to terrorist attacks. Developed by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), the plan emerged as a response to the growing threat posed by terrorist organizations, with special emphasis placed on the activities of Boko Haram insurgencies and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (ONSA, 2016). Over time, the principles embodied in NACTEST have come to apply in dealing with the threats of the herders-farmers conflict. The evolution and inauguration of NACTEST in 2016 drew inspiration from both domestic and international experiences on the most effective ways of countering domestic insurgencies. Its emergence was therefore a product of widespread consultations with different kinds of stakeholders, such as government agencies, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and partners from international communities (ONSA, 2016). While NACTEST emphasized the use of a military approach in neutralizing domestic terrorism, there is also a provision for the grassroots stakeholders to participate in countering the menace of terrorism. This is because it is believed that all terrorism is local. Given this awareness, the International Association of Chiefs of Police Officers in their 2005 annual meeting remarked that "local authorities, not federal power, have the local solution to countering terrorism and have the primary duty for preventing, responding, and assisting the rural communities recover from terrorist attacks" (Dalh, 2014:82).

As a stakeholder in the collaboration against domestic terrorism, local government administration in Nigeria plays a critical role in supporting the implementation of NACTEST by providing support infrastructure for the military in the offensive measures adopted to prevent, deter, preempt, and respond to terrorism. They have also played a post-conflict function of re-ordering a local community affected by the waves of terrorism. The implementation of NACTEST by the local authorities appeared to have found fulfillment in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state, a community engulfed by the menace of Fulani herdsman since 2016. According to the Guideline for Local Government Reform 1976, local government administration is conceptualized as "government at the local level exercised through the Representative Council, established by the law to exercise specific powers within defined areas. These powers should give the Councils substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial power to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement budgetary allocations to complement the activities of the state and federal government in their areas and to ensure through the devolution of functions to these Councils and through active participation of the people and the traditional institutions that local initiative and responses to local needs and conditions are maximized" (Local Government Reform, 1979:2).

Over the years, especially in 2010, Nigeria joined the league of those countries that experience terrorist attacks, and ever since then, the trajectories of terrorist attacks have

grown in bundles. The trends have included the violent attacks on Eagle Square in October 2010. This was followed by the bombing of the Police Headquarters on June 16, 2011, and the attack on the United States building on August 2011, as well as the Yadi killings in conjunction with the abduction of Chibok school children in 2014, which drew international condemnation (Mantzikos, 2014; Awortu, 2015). By 2015, the latent tension between farmers and herders in West Africa had exploded to the extent that it became part of the terrorist activities that the Nigerian state was handling. Between 2010 and 2018, more than 15,000 individuals lost their lives in the West African sub-region in matters related to the farmers-herders conflict (Brottem, 2021). To counter the terrorist activities, the Nigerian state adopted from the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) the constitutive elements of terrorism. According to the international instrument, terrorism refers to “the criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or a group, or a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act” (NACTEST, 2016, 1). After a while, the activities of Fulani herdsman against the farmers constituted and came into the orbit of terrorist activities.

Due to the spiraling of violent extremist activity of the Fulani herdsman against the farmers and the Boko Haram activities in Nigeria, the Nigerian state inaugurated the first edition of the National Counter-terrorism Strategy in 2014. In 2016, it reviewed its constitutive elements and stakeholders involved in its implementation. The 2016 edition of NACTEST identified both the civil society organizations, private sectors, Parastatals, Ministries, Departments and the local authorities across the Nigerian federation under the leadership of the National Security Adviser as the pillars of support in realizing its goals of preventing, deterring, preempting, and responding to terrorism at the local as well as serving as a rallying point in reordering a local community that has been engulfed by terrorism. The NACTEST is organized around five streams, which are: the response, the forestall, the secure, the identify, and the prepare (NACTEST, 2016:2-6). The response mechanism strives to dissuade individuals from their communities from joining terrorist organizations. By forestalling, the NACTEST empowers the stakeholders to be proactive in deradicalizing individuals headed towards the terrorist organization. The securing stream deals with the capacity of the state actors in safeguarding the citizens' infrastructure by reducing the vulnerability of the civilian population to attacks. The identification axis deals with disrupting the terrorist activities before they get fully developed.

In Enugu State, the rural communities that have been affected include Okpebe Amodu, Ajuona-Ogbo in Uzo-Uwani LGA, and Ohani Amofu Nkerefi in Nkanu East LGA. All these areas have experienced their share of herders-farmers clashes, and the stories of these events are still widely recounted. This situation has also hindered socio-economic development in the affected rural areas. The challenges that impede the progress of rural development in these communities because of herders-farmers conflicts highlight the

necessity of this research aimed at finding lasting solutions and enhancing the socio-economic conditions of rural communities. It is crucial to note that before the invasion of these rural areas by the violent Fulani herdsmen, the communities enjoyed a significant degree of peace. Local herders who kept livestock managed any stray animals by taking them to village leaders or the Local Government Areas, paying fines to retrieve them. This system caused no harm or disturbances, fostering a harmonious coexistence between local herders and crop farmers. However, this peaceful coexistence has been threatened by the Fulani pastoralists and herders. In Nimbo, Enugu State, the entire community faced near destruction due to attacks from herders. This has led to instability in the rural community, which has been struggling to recover since then, having suffered significant casualties. The repercussions have been detrimental to the socio-economic conditions of the affected rural communities, disrupting farming and agricultural activities, which are vital to their livelihoods. Additionally, markets and educational activities have also been impacted, further straining the socio-economic lives of these rural areas. To ease the hardships of those affected, the government and relevant authorities have established internally displaced persons camps and increased police and military presence in these rural communities, though this has come at a cost to the residents who endure the resulting inconveniences. Therefore, this research, which seeks to investigate these issues, is both timely and necessary.

Ever since the massacre of the Nimbo community in Uzo-Uwani local government area in Enugu state, the community has persistently experienced the orgy of clashes between farmers and Fulani herdsmen (Uche and Iwuamadi, 2018, Anyanwu, 2019, Odalonu, 2020, Obi et al, 2020). Extant literature show that before the 2016 attack on the people of Nimbo in 2016 by the Fulani herdsmen, Uzo-uwani local government area was adjudged one of the most relatively peaceful communities in Enugu state but beginning from 2016, there was a beehive of violent activities that characterized the series of clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers that have wreaked havoc on the stability of the Uzo-Uwani rural communities, affecting its socio-economic and cultural activities (Iheanocho et al, 2022). The challenge to stem the tides of clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has its causative factors to include weak institutional structures in the Uzo-Uwani local government area and Enugu state as a whole, high unemployment rate, an increase in small weapons and arms among the youths in Enugu state, Nigeria.

In recent years, Nigeria has observed a fiery rise in local administrators as a key factor in the management of the activities of farmers-herders, countering violent extremists, and on the communal agenda in general. This is a noteworthy political, economic, and social development. Within the traditional areas of encounter between the State and the people, the local administrators are asserting themselves with increasing activities in countering violent extremism and the development of reordering the local communities affected by the terrorist issues in the entire Nigeria. The idea of grassroots governance is not new to Nigeria. Communities in Nigeria had developed local and indigenous strategies for organizing development activities at the various levels of society to reduce poverty before independence was achieved in Nigeria. Application of various development concepts

and growing interests aimed at achieving greater planning efficiency and ensuring better results, particularly for the rural population of the developing world. In these developing countries, the rural areas are characterized by low state presence, acute poverty, low access to production resources; acute shortage of social, physical and institutional infrastructure, increasing rural-urban drift, general marginalization of the rural economic base (Madu, 2010, Egbe, 2014), with poor security of communities and rural dwellers.

To rectify these challenges and ensure improved living standards among the populace, the government, international organizations, and groups in various communities are putting efforts in search of better alternative development strategies, which will evolve in various communities across the country (Tobi and Ayodeji, 2023; Iwuozor and Akintunde, 2025). One of the major concerns of any grassroots-oriented administration is to reflect the realities, identify the needs and aspirations of the community people, and not individual needs. Therefore, long before the introduction of the science of development planning and studies, many communities in Nigeria had learned to pool their resources to provide for their needs. Today, many communities in Nigeria have constituted themselves into farmers' cooperatives, cultural unions, security unions, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to pool resources together to improve their social, economic, security, and cultural well-being (Agbaje et al, 2023). Against the above, there has been an increased recognition among researchers, especially in the last six to seven years, of the importance of local administrations in countering the clashes between farmers and herders and the entire violent extremism in Nigeria.

According to Hunter et al (2025), when local authorities at the grassroots level are provided with the ability to respond promptly and efficiently to the security needs of their citizens at the local level, it tends to reduce the incidences of domestic terrorism and create a proactive measure in dealing with the issues the moment it arises in any community. The involvement of the local administration in the management of domestic insecurity shares a boundary with the community policy phenomenon. Its major aim is the promotion of organizational strategies that support the intentional partnership and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that gave rise to public safety issues, such as crime, and social order. It embraces the idea of community partnership and collaborative partnership between the government and the local people, and is geared toward the decentralization of the governance system. It has something in common with the contemporary practice in police democratization, emphasizing community engagement, cooperation, accountability, transparency, and shared responsibility for effective public safety management. Contemporary grassroots countering of domestic terrorism incorporates a proactive component that complements the traditional reactive model, fostering innovative solutions to crime and promoting safer communities. It is therefore a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with the residents of the community. Scholars (Hunter et al, 2025, Aneke and Fayomi, 2024, Waugh and Sylves, 2022, Rascoff, 2009) have argued that it is important to counter violent extremism from the grassroots level to reduce the rapidly growing spate of suicide attacks on soft targets in communities in Nigeria with the intention to rescue the members of the

society from the scourge and anguish of internally displaced persons (IDP's), enhance farmers' access to their farmlands and promote food security. It is therefore unsurprising that the local administration-led security initiatives against the menace of the herders-farmers conflict have focused on providing community-level interventions to tackle the elementary desires of people who are highly vulnerable to recruitment by extremists. Since the implementation of NACTEST in Nigeria, scholars appear to have given scant attention to the roles of the local administration in its implementation of the five streams that constitute its core mandate. This study aims to examine the responses of the local administration to the recurring attacks by the Fulani herdsmen in the Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state, analyzing variations in repression, resistance, and the efforts of the local authority in reordering the local communities affected by the activities of the Fulani herdsmen.

Statement of the Problem

In 2015, the report from the Institute for Economics and Peace in its Global Terrorism Index (GTI) placed Fulani extremists at 172 spots as the 4th most deadly militant group in the world. The violence unleashed by the militants is an outcome of clashes with rural farmers, ethnic militias, and other affiliated criminal organizations such as cattle-rustling gangs. A more recent GTI report noted that not least 33 notorious criminal affiliates are supporters of either of the farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Nigeria (GTI, 2017). By 2023, the United States Development Program reports indicate that "Sub-Saharan Africa has become the global epicenter of violent extremist activity" (UNDP, 2023:14). In 2024 alone, 60,000 individuals lost their lives and unquantified property in the clashes between farmers and herders in the various farming communities in Nigeria (Nextier, 2024). One of the victims of farming communities in rural areas that have borne the brunt of the attacks of Fulani herdsmen in Enugu state is the Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state. At the onset of farmers' clashes with Fulani herdsmen at Nimbo in 2016, about 40 lives and properties of different kinds were lost (Akerjiri, 2018). Subsequently, the dynamics of the conflict have taken the shape of disappearances of individuals, kidnapping for ransom, coordinated attacks on the villages, and blockage of public roads, thereby constituting a serious security concern both in the local community and the Nigerian state at large.

This development has generated robust academic debate among the scholarly community. Three bodies of thought have shaped these conversations: the legitimacy and local ownership, the cultural and contextual understanding, and the effectiveness and sustainability debates (Galula, 2006; Army and Corps, 2014; Gwathorpe, 2017). The legitimacy-oriented scholars contend that legitimacy is central to Western scholarship on local governance and the countering of internal terrorism. According to the USA capstone military theory, counterinsurgency is placed in the same orbit with "irregular warfare", which it conceptualizes as "a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population" (Gwathorpe, 2017, 840). The position implies that the fundamental driver of insurgency campaigns is to ensure that the government wields its authority and control over its population and to ensure that its

erosion by any group is properly checkmated. This proposition presents the pursuit of legitimacy as a key differentiating factor between counterinsurgency and regular war fighting, noting that the achievement of counterinsurgency may not be counted from the position of defeating the insurgents entirely, but on the strength of the legitimacy according to the struggle to neutralize the insurgency movement. The theme of legitimacy is also implied in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) definition of counter-terrorism. According to them, counterterrorism means “all preventive, defensive and offensive measures taken to reduce the vulnerability of forces, individuals and property against terrorist threat and or acts to respond to terrorist acts. In the frame of the NATO comprehensive approach, this can be combined with or followed by measures enabling recovery after terrorist acts” (Ozdemir, 2024:18). By emphasizing the prevention, defensive and offensive measures, the doctrine ensures that the vulnerability of NATO members to the terrorist acts is mitigated and by so doing reemphasize the capacity of the state actors for maintaining an exclusive possession of fire arms.

The second group of scholars insist that the rationale for advocating for the localization of counterinsurgency is because in numerous occasions, terrorist issues remain a local affair and that while one village might be in the kits of the insurgents, its neighborhood might feel the presence of government institutions and that given the foregoing scenario, it might be challenging to identify the territories occupied by the insurgents unless an individual where the terrorist actions are taken are involved in its neutralization (Chesney, 2005, Byman, 2007, Carter and Carter, 2009, Comiskey, 2010, Terrall, 2022, Eme, 2024, Njoku et al, 2025).

With specific reference to the effective and sustainability rationale as undergirding the adoption of local infrastructures in the counterterrorism campaigns, Ezeanyika et al (2025) hold that efforts to counter domestic insurgency in Sub-Saharan Africa have shifted substantially from the coercive angle to include the involvement of the local population in the combat against the menace, thereby ensuring a comprehensive and methodical approach. While the military approach remains in vogue (Okoyo and Tsado, 2020), attention is presently being shifted to non-kinetic approaches and the local communities in framing the strategies needed to combat local terrorism. The Lake Chad Basin Commission's Regional Stabilization typifies this shift from the dominance of military to civil-military partnership in countering extremism, especially in a local setting. This also manifested in the regional partnership between the Multi-National Joint Task Force in northeastern Nigeria, which has strengthened and fostered as well as democratized the institutions of the security apparatus (Chidozie et al. 2024). The major aim of these local approaches is to close the gaps in fundamental social, economic, and ideological issues that trigger extremism. Defenders of this position believe that it can lead to an effective and sustainable fight against the insurgents, given that the recruiters are from the local environment and may have access to the recruiting network of the insurgents.

While these analyses hold promising and rewarding insights, they tend to unwittingly neglect what the local administration as a tier of government, has done in countering the

domestic insurgencies in the rural communities. Most importantly, scant attention has been accorded to what the local authorities have done to reorder a society that has been victimized by farmers and herders' conflict in the rural communities. To address these gaps, the study, therefore, raises the following two research questions: Has the local administration's empowerment of grassroots-based social structures enhanced the repression of Fulani herdsmen in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state? Has the provision of infrastructural interventions by the local administration impacted the reordering of the communities affected by the farmers-herders clashes in Uzo-Uwani local government areas?

Literature Review

The following themes guided the literature review: grassroots-based social structures and the repression of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria, and post-conflict infrastructural interventions and the reordering of the communities affected by insurgency.

Grassroots-Based Social Structures and the Repression of Terrorist Activities

Grassroots-based social structures have been regarded as the game-changer and served as a pillar of support in the combat against domestic insurgency. According to Pilisuk et al (1996), a public policy action directed toward social structures is a social action that tilts toward grassroots based and is oriented toward organizing aggrieved communities toward taking action for themselves for the solution of a societal ills that directly affect their lives whether on individual bases or a collective basis since their survival is at hand. The expected benefits include participatory decision-making in the issues that affect the community and the use of government intervention to address societal ills. Research conducted over the past twenty years regarding what has been proposed as the preventive socialization of violence has primarily concentrated on teenagers and young adults, affirming that peers act as significant socializing influences, often having an equal or greater impact than family members (Vallas et al, 2008). This body of work suggests that there exists a dominant coercive narrative prevalent in mainstream media and social platforms, which operates in interaction spaces frequented by youth, coercively socializing many young individuals towards an inclination for violence (Puigvert et al, 2019). With this prevailing socialization experienced by numerous youths, they are increasingly exposed to violent circumstances and peer dynamics, which may account for their growing desensitization to violence in general.

Literature on violent radicalization has also revealed the fundamental importance of friendship connections and peer interactions. In this context, the 'bunch of guys' theories of terrorism, promoted by Sageman (2011) and supported by empirical studies, indicates that the catalyst for joining a terrorist organization is grounded in existing friendship bonds, and that the developing group of potential perpetrators resembles these networks more than a structured terrorist cell with a defined hierarchy and division of responsibilities. In this respect, Sageman's findings demonstrate that the choice to affiliate with a terrorist group is not an individual decision but a collective one, rooted in childhood friendships. He also discusses the allure associated with terrorist groups,

which can lead some young individuals to join these groups to enhance their status. Other empirical research has highlighted the crucial role of social networks, which can either push or pull individuals towards violent radicalization. A study by the United Nations found that a third of the respondents indicated they were encouraged to travel to Syria by a friend or family member (El-Said and Barrett, 2017). Additional studies have shown that friendships or connections with out-groups serve as a protective factor against joining radicalized organizations (Van Bergen et al, 2015), while having more homogenous social networks is positively linked to radical beliefs and attitudes. Consistent with the aforementioned studies, the research conducted by Gill, Horgan, and Deckert (Gill et al, 2014) on the sociodemographic network characteristics and prior behaviors of lone-actor terrorists offers significant insights. Lone actors do not fit a singular profile, and during the timeframe leading up to most lone-actor terrorist incidents, others generally knew about the grievances that would eventually lead to the terrorist scheme or action. This indicates that for a substantial majority of lone-actor individuals, those close to them were aware of their commitment to a particular extremist ideology. Likewise, family and friends were cognizant of the individual's intention to participate in activities related to terrorism, as the perpetrator had communicated this to them verbally.

Ultimately, in the majority of situations, the perpetrator of terrorist activities had created letters or other forms of public declarations before the incident to convey his or her beliefs, though not revealing violent intentions. Overall, what researchers highlight is that individuals who were aware of the person's desire to commit violence, despite having crucial information in advance, did not inform the appropriate authorities. Additional characteristics noted in the existing literature indicate that many of these offenders were socially isolated and frequently participated in noticeable and observable activities with a broader pressure group, social movement, or terrorist organization. Moreover, incidents involving lone-actor terrorists were seldom spontaneous and impulsive; instead, they were typically premeditated. As noted, social circles of potential offenders receive cues that may help them recognize the individuals' intentions to carry out violent acts. Nevertheless, in numerous instances, they hesitate to report these potential offenders, partly out of fear of repercussions or due to concerns about harming their relationships with them (Williams et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to increase awareness of the significant role that the social networks of potential offenders play as bystanders who can actively assist in preventing possible attacks. Hence, it is assumed that terrorist networks emerge from the communities and are also well recognized by the residents of rural areas. Consequently, a more pragmatic approach to counterterrorism will take these factors into account to achieve effective results.

Most of the extant literature that focuses on communal effort in the degrading of domestic terrorism approaches the matter from the perspective of self-help mechanisms. This is mostly reflected in the communal counterterrorism measures adopted against Boko Haram in north eastern Nigeria, especially drawing from the experiences in the implementation of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). This initiative for self-help emerged from a pressing need, initially in Maiduguri, and subsequently expanded to

other areas within the region. Agbiboa (2018, 2020, 2021) noted that the influence of self-help initiatives by local youth in diminishing the Boko Haram extremist threat is evident throughout northeastern Nigeria. It is a clear reality that with enhanced economic activities in key towns, the susceptibility of youth to violent extremism has significantly decreased. A study conducted by Gana (2020) indicates that over the last five years, the Northeast region of Nigeria has undertaken ambitious and challenging programs related to self-help, aimed at forming and promoting efforts to counter violent extremist organizations or those that address community needs while operating effectively and efficiently in line with democratic principles. Gana (2020) points out that challenges such as insufficient capacity, lack of expertise, and resistance to change have hindered the implementation of the community security concept, particularly in the absence of a robust framework for effective community engagement, training, technical assistance, and welfare support. Consequently, the establishment of a civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) as a self-help initiative exemplifies a citizen-led response to a community safety issue and highlights how extremism can be mitigated in the societies of northeastern Nigeria. Due to their deep understanding of the local context and their active participation in the local socio-cultural fabric, the civilian JTF has frequently succeeded in capturing hundreds of Boko Haram extremists, thwarting their attacks, and liberating several towns, communities, and villages previously under the control of the extremist group (Hassan, 2015). The self-help initiative arose as a reaction to the security threats posed by extremist activities in parts of northeastern Nigeria. It was established as a community-based security organization (CJTF), primarily composed of young men and women. The CJTF originated out of necessity, first in Maiduguri, Borno State, and later the concept spread to other regions (Umar, 2018). Bamidele (2017) identified the self-help efforts of the northeastern populace as a voluntary movement predominantly consisting of men and women who pledged by the Holy Qur'an to combat Boko Haram extremists to the death. The wording of their oaths reflects a community committed to "fighting the immoral actions of Boko Haram." Taking the debate further, Omenma and Hendricks (2018) dwell on the gains that the civilian partnership with state actors could yield in the course of the collaborations.

Connecting terrorism with local administration, Hunter et al (2025) believe that if the local government administration, which is closer to the people, pursues good governance, it would be possible to eliminate the growth of terrorism at the regional level. This body of work focuses on assessing the standard of public services within a country and the implications of policy results. It pays particular attention to health metrics, political engagement indicators, and governance benchmarks (Bovaird and Löffler 2003). A significant hurdle in the good governance discourse is the precise definition of these variables. Fukuyama (2013) posits that the information regarding good governance is inadequate due to the literature's failure to delineate essential concepts that constitute quality governance. He advocates for an emphasis on procedural or bureaucratic factors (i.e., Weberian characteristics of rational bureaucracy), capacity indicators, output metrics, and bureaucratic independence (Fukuyama 2013). In our research, we concentrate on the bureaucratic aspects of the good governance discourse by analyzing

the impact of public administration quality on the critical issue of domestic terrorism. The public administration literature has faced challenges in articulating the impacts of pivotal theoretical frameworks, such as New Public Management, on the quality of public services and policy results (Lapuente and Van de Walle 2020).

Nonetheless, it has been established that the quality of public services is significantly influenced by the “administrative, political, and policy context” surrounding public administration (Lapuente and Van de Walle 2020). This raises the question: What are the key characteristics of the administrative and political context? Rothstein and Teorell (2008) highlight the significance of “impartiality” in evaluating good governance. Suzuki and Demircioglu (2019) expand this emphasis on impartiality in government by underscoring the value of a professional bureaucracy, showing that this combination fosters innovation within countries. Consequently, we maintain this focus on the quality of public administration by examining impartiality, professionalism, and competence within bureaucracy. From this perspective, the quality indicators of public administration that we incorporate into the study, which we will elaborate on from a methodological viewpoint later in the paper, encompass levels of corruption, bias, professionalism, efficiency, impartiality, and overall effectiveness within a nation's administrative framework (Coppedge et al. 2021). It is crucial to recognize that the quality of public administration can influence democratic governance and is influenced by it in return. Numerous cross-national democracy assessments often center around elections and voter participation. A smaller yet significant number of cross-national democracy indicators consider aspects related to democratic governance concerning whether governments operate democratically. This research centers on the quality of public administration. While public administration is a vital component of democratic governance, it is frequently not scrutinized to the same extent as other democracy-related factors (such as executive limitations, political rights, civil rights, and civil liberties). Thus, although this study emphasizes public administration rather than democracy specifically, we argue that the quality of public administration both influences and is influenced by democratic norms and institutions. Studies on the quality of public administration have revealed that corruption impacts the distribution of public resources, including the allocation of public spending across all levels of government (Sevüktekin et al. 2010).

Other scholars have associated the ineffectiveness of the local authority in delivering public goods as a factor in building grievance of the youth who have found succor in the terrorist act at the local level. Earlier studies indicate that governmental corruption can influence terrorism (Meierrieks and Auer 2024). Similarly, past research has shown that discrimination and political marginalization can impact terrorism (Gleditsch and Polo 2016). Corrupt officials and administrators frequently foster conditions that are more conducive to terrorism (Meierrieks and Auer 2024), as studies have revealed that corruption may heighten terrorism by worsening economic disparity, fueling economic discontent, and undermining the efficiency of counter-terrorism efforts (Meierrieks and Auer 2024). The underlying logic is that increased corruption typically favors certain individuals and groups financially, while adversely impacting others. As economic

inequality and grievances rise, the likelihood of terrorism increases. In such contexts, frustration is often aimed at governmental institutions perceived to be accountable for the corruption and uneven resource allocation. Moreover, terrorist organizations frequently point to governmental corruption as a justification for their actions (Meierrieks and Auer 2024). Previous investigations also discovered that corruption undermines citizens' beliefs in the legitimacy and trustworthiness of their government institutions (Dimant and Tosato 2018). Furthermore, corruption impairs governments' capacity to ensure accountability, transparency, and the fair application of laws (Anderson and Tverdova 2003).

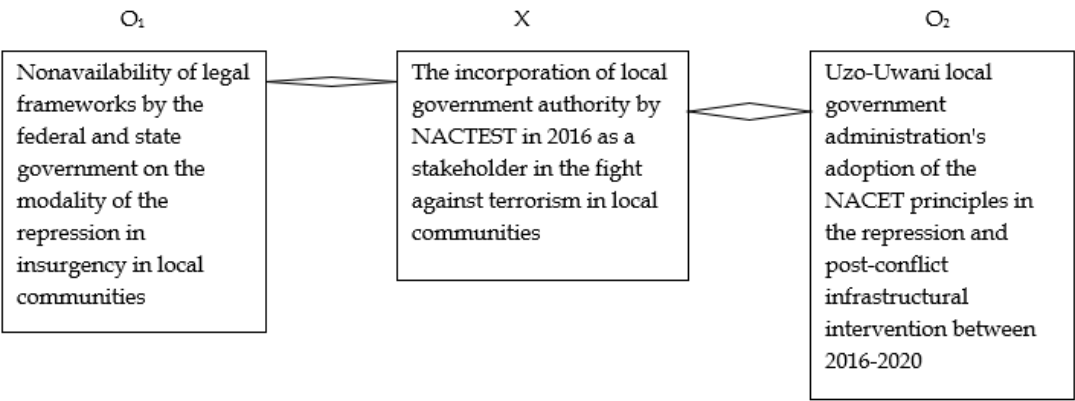
Research Design

The study focuses on how the local administration in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state complemented the NACTEST policy of the federal government of Nigeria in the repression and reordering of the communities affected by the attacks of Fulani herdsmen against the farmers. The study therefore adopted the ex-post facto research design or a single-case design. This design explains what happened before the time of the study, taking cognizance of the prevailing first observation (O_1) and then what happened after the introduction of the independent variable (X), taken to be the test tool on the second observation (O_2). This is represented in the diagram below.

$O_1 X O_2$

where:
 O_1 = first observation
 X = independent variable and
 O_2 = second observation

This was applied in the study as follows:



Method of Data Collection

The study utilized a multi-method approach of data collection techniques. This approach involves the use of documentary and primary data collection. The documentary approach

entailed the collection of data from the secondary source. This method involves eliciting information contained in the works of authors both published and unpublished, journals, periodicals, government publications. For instance, data on the empowerment of the grassroot-based social structure and the infrastructural interventions by the local authority were obtained from documentary evidence from the local government gazette. According to Chawla and Sondhi (2016: 97-98), some of the advantages associated with this approach are:

- i. Accessibility of data: Once the information has been collected and compiled in a structured form as a publication, accessing it for research becomes much easier.
- ii. Accuracy and stability of data: When data is collected by reliable and recognized body, its accessibility becomes predictable.
- iii. Assessment of data: The information collected can be used to support the primary data.

Although it has some drawbacks, given that the applicability of the outcome cannot be absolute in all circumstances, and sometimes the accuracy of the data collected may be questioned because of who, why, and the issues involved or that prompted the research in the first instance. Nevertheless, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. This method was complemented with Key Informant Interviews of some of the stakeholders who were engaged by the local authority for the repression of the Fulani attackers between 2018 and 2022. For the repression of the Fulani herdsmen, the data generation was generated from a focus on stakeholder interviews of selected traditional rulers, youth leaders, and leaders of community security arrangements in Nkpologwu, Opanda, Adani, and Ogurugu that were inaugurated between 2018-2022 for the sole aim of implementing the NACTEST in Uzo-Uwani local government area. These communities were mostly affected by the activities of the farmers/herders' conflict. Numerical data was analyzed with simple descriptive statistics, while logical arguments, inferences, and content analysis were used in processing qualitative data.

Empirical Analysis

Informal security providers and Community Security

In the social contract parlance, it is the prerogative of the state to provide security for the masses. Despite this acknowledgement, there have been various organized efforts by the communities outside the intervention of the state or in partnership with the state towards providing security for the general well-being of the masses. As noted by Bruce Baker (2008), organized efforts, whether initiated by government entities or non-governmental groups, aimed at maintaining community order, safety, and tranquility in Africa through strategies of prevention, deterrence, investigation of violations, and punishment deserve scholarly focus. His research indicates that policing in Africa is not solely the domain of state law enforcement. Rather, in Africa, policing is executed by both formal and informal organizations beyond the scope of the police and often outside governmental authority. This type of informal security provision, which Baker refers to as 'non-state policing' (Baker, 2008:14), serves as a crucial resource for enhancing safety and security among impoverished populations, particularly since these communities frequently find

themselves marginalized from formal security services. Indeed, when it comes to safety, African citizens have a variety of options and stakeholders (both state and non-state, lawful and unlawful) that they must navigate to achieve their daily protection. Furthermore, evidence suggests that African individuals seldom perceive formal and informal security measures as mutually exclusive. For instance, Baker (2008) contends that as individuals go about their daily activities or as the time-of-day shifts, they transition from one type of security provider to another that may be more suitable for their protection at that particular moment. In this way, formal and informal security providers form a complex web of overlapping actors that, from a citizen's perspective, engage with and support one another rather than being seen as conflicting choices. In this context, it is intriguing to examine the conditions under which people prefer one option over another.

The Westphalian conception of the contemporary state system vested the state actors and their institutions with the prerogative of delivering security to the general public (Sperling, 2009, 2013; Newman, 2009). However, relying solely on this prescription to assess security provision in many African countries that still depend on informal networks for security provisions risks oversimplifying the intricate power dynamics in rural communities across post-colonial African settings. It can be argued that in African nations, as in various other regions of the non-Western world, official state structures and institutions may often represent only one of the significant players in a multi-actor, multifaceted security landscape. Indeed, both state and non-state actors may jointly participate in the distribution of 'public goods.' As Baker points out, within this framework, the state "must share authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other entities." The major reason that prompted Africans to rely on informal security provision is the failure of the formal security network to provide security to the teeming masses at the right time. There is an agreement among scholars that once the state loses the capacity to provide security for the generality of the population, it has lost the most cardinal thing that makes it a state (Ibaba, 2013). Although failed states share some commonalities with fragile states, all point to the inability of state actors to provide public goods to the people. See Table 1 on the difference between fragile and failed states.

Table 1: The difference between a Fragile state and a failed state

S/N	Fragile state	Failed state
1	Weak, unstable, ineffective political institutions and bad governance	Loss of physical control over territory or monopoly on the legitimate use of force.
2	Inability to exercise jurisdiction over its territory	Erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions
3	The crisis arising from the acceptability of state actors by the people	Inability to provide reasonable public services
4	Divisive population	Inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community
5	Weak institutions of conflict management and resolution, including credible judicial structures	Deteriorating and destroyed infrastructure;
6	endemic corruption, poverty, and low levels	Flourishing Corruption

Source: Ibaba (2013:5)

The foregoing description of fragile and failed states aptly captures the crisis of governance in Nigeria. In the second description of the fragility of a state, it indicates that a state that is unable the police its territory suffers from fragility. This is also manifested in the failed state index, which shows that once a state is unable to hold an exclusive monopoly of the arms, such a state has lost it. There are numerous gory stories of the alleged complicity of Nigerian security officers in the attacks of Fulani herdsmen against the farming communities. For example, according to Amnesty International (2018), on January 24, 2016, 65 residents, comprising 54 men and 11 women, along with a police officer, lost their lives when alleged Fulani gunmen launched an assault on the villages of Koh, Ndikajam, Tabongo, Balawo, Dyemsare, and Noine within the Girei local government area of Adamawa State. As reported by witnesses who communicated with Amnesty International, the assaults began around 6 am in Koh Village and persisted for a minimum of five hours. Observers noted that a pick-up truck carrying eight policemen, led by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), first reached Koh at approximately 10 am, followed half an hour later by two trucks with 17 soldiers. However, the police and military retreated after about an hour, following the death of the DPO and a soldier being shot in the leg during a firefight with the suspected Fulani assailants. By the time security forces returned to Koh around 2 pm, the attack had concluded. Amnesty International reached out to the Chief of Army Staff and the Inspector General of Police concerning this incident, but no reply was received (Amnesty International, 2018).

Further investigations by Amnesty International indicate that this and later assaults might have been averted if law enforcement had acted on the intelligence they received. Tensions escalated between the Fulani herders and the Njiya-Goron farming communities in November 2015, following a violent confrontation that resulted in the death of a 12-year-old Fulani boy. Leaders from both communities informed Amnesty

International that the police declined to make any arrests, forcing them to transport the suspects to the local police themselves. "The police were unable to detain anyone, and even some individuals we helped them arrest were released," (Amnesty International, 2018:54), a village leader told Amnesty International. In December, a farmer from Koh Village was attacked with an arrow while working on his farm and later succumbed to his injuries. Fulani leaders in the region brought suspects to the local police, but they were released shortly after, inciting anger among the residents of Koh. In early January 2016, a group of young men believed to be from Koh retaliated by attacking cattle belonging to the Fulani community near Koh, including the slaughter of a cow owned by a prominent local Fulani politician. A letter addressed to the DPO of Girei local government area, which was reviewed by Amnesty International, revealed that the elders urged the DPO to apprehend the young men responsible for the cow's slaughter. "You will recall that when the Koh Elders Forum met with you, after you failed to send your men for the arrests on January 11, 2016, you apologized and promised to go to Koh and detain the suspects on January 12, 2016. We wish to remind you to fulfill your promise to arrest the suspects as a deterrent to others," the letter, dated January 12, 2016, and signed by five village leaders, as reported by Amnesty International. However, according to a community leader, the DPO did not respond or dispatch his officers to execute the arrests.

In a similar case, on April 25, 2016, the Nimbo community experienced a brutal incursion and slaughter of residents by suspected armed herdsmen. The seven villages in Nimbo (Nimbo Ngwoko, Ugwujiro, Ekwuru, Ebor, Enugu Nimbo, Umuome, and Ugwuachara) were the hardest hit. The initial assault targeted Ngwoko village, prompting young boys to flee the area. Before this, rumors had circulated that herdsmen were planning to attack the Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, causing significant anxiety among the residents of Nimbo. Reports indicated that herdsmen from Adani had allegedly brought in 500 reinforcements from Nassarawa State over the weekend to assist in the invasion of the Nimbo community (This Day, 2016). Additionally, increasing complaints of rape and kidnapping along the Adani-Umulokpa Road raised further alarm. A warning about a potential herdsmen attack was quickly communicated to the Governor of Enugu State and the Commissioner of Police. A meeting with local Fulani leaders was held just two days before the armed assault. These leaders acknowledged attempts to recruit mercenaries from Nassarawa as a response to the killings of their people in the vicinity of Nimbo and Abbi communities. It was agreed during the meeting that the Fulani leaders would discourage their followers from engaging in violent actions; however, this did not materialize. Just two days afterward, a large group of armed men stormed Nimbo in the early hours of Monday, April 25, leaving behind horrific carnage and extensive property destruction. This tragic incident occurred merely 30 minutes after security personnel assigned to the community reportedly abandoned their posts (Nimbo town union leader, personal communication, May 4, 2017). As per the Memorandum submitted by the Nimbo community to the Judicial Panel of Inquiry established by the Enugu State Government, at least 13 individuals lost their lives, and approximately N100 million (US \$279,000) worth of damage occurred, including the destruction of ten buildings, vehicles, motorcycles, and slaughtered livestock, in addition to numerous individuals suffering

severe injuries and deep machete wounds while attempting to escape from the attacking herdsmen. In addition to the deteriorating security situation in Nimbo, economic activities plummeted significantly. Residents, particularly women and children, could no longer venture to their farms freely unless accompanied by strong men or local vigilantes. The rural markets – Eke Nimbo, Afor Ukpabi, and Opanda, once bustling with affordable farm produce and commercial activities, faced near extinction. The threat of further retaliatory attacks transformed the community into a desolate area. It was only through the assurances from the Enugu State Government and a significant police presence along the Enugu-Kogi border that the community's confidence was restored, allowing displaced individuals to return to Nimbo.

As noted by Uche and Iwuamadi (2018), there are two interrelated factors that accounted for the inability of the security system to live up to its responsibility. One, the state government was accused of developing a complacent attitude towards the lives of the people. Second, there appears to be a premediated collaboration between the security apparatus and the Fulani herdsmen. Despite the ongoing violence perpetrated by herdsmen and its classification as the fourth most lethal terrorist organization globally in 2014, Nigeria's administration struggled to effectively address the escalating security crisis as of July 24, 2018. Many speculated that President Buhari's notable silence on the issue stemmed from his business connections, having previously been associated with the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBA) Uche and Iwuamadi (2018). Oyeyipo et al (2016) observed that the authorities viewed the violence as simply an internal security problem with ethnic undertones. Arrests and prosecutions of herdsmen were rare, even in the face of widespread killings and the destruction of communities. It was only through public outcry that President Buhari issued his first condemnations of the ongoing conflict. Consequently, there were few, if any, concrete strategies implemented to address the crisis. The dismissive attitudes of certain ruling class members, many of whom own livestock, further exacerbate the situation. Additionally, the differing ethnic and religious backgrounds of those involved in the conflict, mainly Muslim Fulani herders versus predominantly Christian crop farmers from various ethnic groups, contributed to the politicization of the violence. Gradually, the disturbing crisis escalated sentiments of division and security concerns, leaving the Governor of Enugu State seemingly powerless when the violence erupted there.

Another area that showed the failure of the state in the management and protection of Uzo-Uwani community is the alleged collusion of the security forces. The incident in Nimbo serves as a stark illustration of preventable violence resulting from negligent behavior and manipulation within the security framework. Following the receipt of intelligence regarding the Nimbo situation, Governor Ugwuanyi called for an urgent security council meeting that included the heads of various security agencies. The Police Commissioner assured the deployment of personnel from the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU), the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), and the Police Mobile Force (PMF) to Nimbo, and the Garrison Commander claimed military forces would also be sent to the area to prevent the attack. The Governor recounted that “the State Government provided

logistics for these deployments” and that “after receiving these assurances of deployments to Nimbo, I felt quite confident that we had done everything possible to prevent an attack on Nimbo” (Vanguard, 2016). Evidence from local residents suggested that prior to the assault, a combined team of soldiers, police, and Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) personnel was stationed in the community (The Guardian, 2016). However, suspicions arose when security agents abandoned their posts, allowing armed attackers to descend upon the community within less than an hour. To this day, no high-ranking officials within the security agencies have been held accountable for the alleged complicity. The Police Commissioner was swiftly reassigned to another state, despite the loss of lives. Who gave the order for the security personnel to vacate Nimbo? (Uche and Iwuamadi, 2018).

Nevertheless, since the introduction of the grassroots oriented vigilantes otherwise known as informal security providers, there was a relative calm when compared with the events leading to 2016. See Table 2:

Table 2: Timelines of Fulani attacks on farmers in Uzo-Uwani local government area, 2016-2022

Year	Communities	Individuals lost	Properties destroyed	Impact on the communities	Sources
15 February, 2016	Abbi-Ugbele	2 dead, 19 missing	7 houses and several motorcycles were burned down	Fleeing of the residents to Opanda	Vanguard, February 16, 2016
25 April 2016	Ukpabi-Nimbo	46 persons killed	7 villages, 11 houses and 2 churches were burnt	Fleeing of the residents to Uvuru Agada/Nsukka	Iheanacho et al, 2025
25 April, 2016	Ukpabi-Nimbo	recovery of 6 dead bodies in the bush and 14 in the hospital	discovery of different vehicles burnt at Ukpabi Nimbo	Fleeing of the residents to Uvuru Agada/Nsukka	Wikipedia
March, 22, 2019	Umulokpa	Dr. Nnamdi Ogueche, Secretary of Uzo Uwani LGA, was killed after a peace meeting between farmers and herders	No property lost	fear of settling down in the community of Umuluokpa	Thisday Live Ng of Thisday, March 22, 2019
March 29, 2021	Adani, Uzo Uwani	8 people were killed	Burning of the house and properties worth millions of naira	People abandoned their shops and fled to the neighboring communities	Anyanwu (2021) in The Sun of 30th March 2021
July 22, 2021	Obie-Aku, Opanda, Nimbo Community, Uzo Uwani LGA	4 killed, 10 missing after Fulani Herdsmen attack	The destruction of farming settlements in these communities by the Fulani herdsmen	While others fled the community, 10 people were declared missing	Ede (2021) in Punch Ng of 27 July 2021
October 2021 18,	Ugwujoro Nimbo, Uzo Uwani	Mrs Cordelia Utazi was killed on her farm	destruction of cash crops on the farm	Fear gripped the community	Odu(2021) in Vanguard Ng of October 21, 2021

Source: Compiled by the author from news media

The data in Table two shows that between February and April 2016, when the communities mostly relied on the formal security system to offer exclusive protection to them, the communities experienced unimaginable terror. It was also worrisome that the Fulani headsmen came and attacked the communities and made away through a track road heading towards Kogi state, and no individual was apprehended. However, as the local government authority resumed duty in 2018 and inaugurated a grassroots-oriented security outfit in the entire rural areas, the mayhem abated. These security men were recruited from willing individuals from the villages who know every detail about the community. A closer appraisal of the table shows that from 2019 to 2021, it was only a fraction of just 14 individuals who died in the hands of the Fulani herdsman. While the loss of these lives is regrettable, it is worth noting that they did not occur accidentally; rather, the protection of the majority of these rural communities is attributed to the gallant works of these informal security men. Apart from the youth of the villages, other community members, such as the traditional leaders of the community, are also involved. The belief is that security matters should not be left in the hands of the few. In contradistinction to the modus operandi of the formal security system, their activities entail patrolling of the neighborhoods and the market to deter crime. They also collaborate with the formal security system to share intelligence and support law enforcement. They also provide security services for community events and the markets. In most cases, they resolve conflicts arising from classes in various communities, and if it involves any clash with the Fulani-herdsmen, they are mandated to lead them to the traditional rulers of the community for amicable resolution of the conflict.

Conclusion/Recommendations

This work set out to ascertain the role of the traditional authority in the implementation of NACTEST, legal framework introduced by the office of the National Security Adviser towards checkmating the spread of terrorism. The introduction is predicated on the ground that every terrorism is local. We observed that while extant scholarship has given more than usual attention to the support accorded to the local security outlets from both the federal government and the state government, virtually little attention has been paid to the role of the local administration in stemming the tide of terrorism by providing support the grassroots structures. Using the experience of Uzo-Uwani local government area, a community engulfed by the incidences of terrorism since 2016 as a typical example, we observed that the local government authority in that areas has supported informal security structures in the following ways: One, the local government authority took imitative in mainstreaming the youth into the informal security networks. Two, the grassroots security apparatus was empowered to patrol all the bushes within the jurisdiction of the local authority and by so doing nipping the crises in the bud. Three. the local government authority assigned certain stipends to the members of the local community who volunteered for the community security. Four, even though the traditional rulers are not constitutionally captured in the tiers of governance in Nigeria, the local authority co-opted them into intelligence gathering and, by so doing, leveraged the capacities of the youth in the local community. In light of the foregoing analysis, our hypothesis, which states that the empowerment of the grassroots structures enhanced the

repression of Fulani herdsmen in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state, is upheld.

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