



NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY, KENYA (NDU-K)

RESEARCH PROJECT

DISCURSIVE SECURITY AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN UGANDA

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DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this paper is the result of my Research. The views and/or observations on this issue involved is my own. They do not in any way reflect the official position of the Ministry of Defence or that of National Defence College

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research work is my original work and has not been submitted for a Degree in any other University/learning institution.

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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family especially my late wife, Matilda who didn't live to see the end of this and friends whose unwavering love, support, and understanding have been invaluable throughout this journey

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to determine the role of discursive security in countering violent extremism in Uganda. The discursive approach to security analysis emphasizes the role of language and communication in shaping our understanding of security issues. Globally, discursive security has formed a large part of security narrative related to violent extremism. It focuses on how various forms of communication, both online and offline can either contribute to the spread of violent extremism or be harnessed to counteract it. The study was guided by the following objectives; to analyze and discuss the nature of violent extremism cases in Uganda, to establish how discursive security is perceived in counter violent extremism in Uganda and to assess the challenges and opportunities of discursive security in curbing violent extremism. The research study utilized the constructivism theory which that emphasizes the role of ideas, beliefs, and social interactions in shaping human behavior and the world around us. In the context of curbing violent extremism in Uganda, securitization theory can be applied to understand how the discourse around security and extremism is shaped and how it influences policy responses. This research utilized a descriptive research design, since it seeks to provide answers to the questions on the current status of discursive security and violent extremism in Uganda. The study mainly relied on qualitative secondary data. The study findings show that, the nature of violent extremism in Uganda is multifaceted entailing regional terrorist organizations namely; the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Al Shabaab militia group based in Somalia. Other sources of terrorism in Uganda emanated from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony and also another one named the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) which to a greater extent influenced the security environment of much of Northern and Eastern Uganda. The discursive security in Uganda entails the use of discourse, communication, and narrative strategies to counter various security challenges. It has also formed part of the strategies adopted to counter violent extremism, and plays a significant role in curbing violent extremism, by addressing the ideological and communicative aspects of extremist narratives. Discursive Security therefore, facilitates counterterrorism by debunking misinformation spread by extremist groups. Some of the challenges confronting discursive security in Uganda include; complexity of messaging and cultural sensitivity. This means that different cultural contexts demand nuanced approaches, which implies that; what works in one community might not work the same way in another community, thereby necessitating a deep understanding of local cultures and norms. Further, challenges such as limited access to civic education, widespread misinformation, and the spread of radical ideologies through informal channels like local religious centers (Mosques) or online platforms (social media platforms), pose obstacles to effective communication and information dissemination. However, there also exist several opportunities associated with discursive security in curbing violent extremism in Uganda which include, empowerment through alternative narratives, community engagement and ownership of their security strategies as well as early intervention and prevention. In this regard the study recommends that, there is need to develop a multi-stakeholder approach involving government agencies, civil society organizations, religious leaders, academia, and international partners to address violent extremism comprehensively, invest in community-based initiatives that empower local actors to challenge extremist narratives, promote tolerance, and build social cohesion as well as strengthen education systems to foster critical thinking, media literacy, and intercultural understanding as preventive measures against radicalization.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	-	Allied Defense Forces
AMISOM	-	African Union Mission in Somalia
CSS	-	Critical Security Studies
CVE	-	Countering violent extremism
DRC	-	Democratic Republic of Congo
GoU	-	Government of Uganda
GTI	-	Global Terrorism Index
HSM	-	Holy Spirit Movement
IS	-	Islamic State
IT	-	Information technology
LRA	-	Lord's Resistance Army
NGO's	-	Non-Governmental Organization
UK	-	United Kingdom
UMSC	-	Uganda Muslim Supreme Council
US	-	United States

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one of this research presents the background to the study which contextualizes the concept of discursive security and violent extremism in contemporary security environment. The Chapter also presents the statement of Problem; the study objectives; research questions; justification, significance of the study, assumption/ hypotheses; scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the Study

Discursive security refers to the ways in which security concepts, narratives, and discourses are constructed, communicated, and understood within society. It encompasses the idea that security is not just an objective reality but is also influenced by the ways in which it is talked about, framed, and represented in public discourse, media, policy discussions, and academic research. This concept suggests that the language, narratives, and discourses surrounding security issues can shape public perceptions, influence policy decisions, and even impact the allocation of resources. It recognizes that security is not solely about physical threats, but also about how societies perceive and respond to potential threats, both real and perceived.

The discursive approach to security analysis emphasizes the role of language and communication in shaping our understanding of security issues. It considers how different actors (such as governments, media, non-governmental organizations, and individuals) contribute to the construction of security narratives, which in turn can shape public opinion, policy priorities, and international relations. In essence, discursive security highlights that security is a socially constructed concept that is shaped by the way it is talked about and understood within a given

society. This approach encourages us to critically examine the language and narratives used to discuss security issues and to consider how they influence our perceptions and responses to various challenges.

Globally, discursive security has played a significant role in shaping the security narrative surrounding violent extremism. Throughout history, politicians have used persuasive speeches to solidify their positions and justify their decisions by seeking approval from their audiences. In the Western tradition, language and politics are closely intertwined within linguistic, socio-psychological, and behavioral frameworks. As noted by Balzacq (2011), communication is a core component of political action, as politics often involve engaging and persuading an audience through dialogue. In matters of security, political leaders employ linguistic techniques and discursive strategies to legitimize exceptional measures.

Threat construction is a key concept in discursive security, emphasizing that threats are shaped by the political contexts in which they arise. This perspective highlights that the creation of threats is closely tied to power dynamics, where both state and non-state actors are perceived as threats when they challenge the authority of other states. This process is particularly evident in the context of the War on Terrorism, which reflects a form of security governance. Through discursive politics, a political issue is transformed into a security concern. Discursive security in the context of violent extremism refers to the ways in which language, discourse, and communication impact the prevention, response to, and understanding of violent extremist ideologies and actions. It focuses on how various forms of communication, both online and offline, can either contribute to the spread of violent extremism or be harnessed to counteract it.

Benton Heath (2022) compellingly suggests that if terrorist narratives are effectively spread in schools, religious institutions, and community centers, then teachers, religious leaders, and social workers have a crucial role in preventing individuals from adopting these ideologies. Their role extends beyond conducting risk assessments and involves creating and disseminating "counter-narratives." These counter-narratives aim to address the motivations of vulnerable individuals, such as feelings of alienation, frustration from perceived or actual discrimination, lack of opportunities, and experiences of persistent conflict, thereby helping to curb incitement.

The way extremist ideologies are framed and presented in language influences how people perceive and respond to them. Discursive security involves understanding the linguistic strategies used by extremist groups to legitimize their actions, as well as finding ways to reframe these messages to counter their appeal (Adam Testerman, 2015). This involves highlighting the negative consequences of extremist actions or promoting alternative narratives that emphasize peace, tolerance, and coexistence. Coskun (2011) explains that discursive security involves proactive measures to prevent radicalization by fostering critical thinking and media literacy skills. These efforts help individuals identify and reject extremist propaganda and narratives. Educational programs play a key role in this process, providing people with the necessary tools to critically assess information and recognize the tactics extremists use to manipulate and recruit followers.

Similarly, Holzscheiter, A (2013) asserts that; understanding the narratives and messaging that appeal to individuals vulnerable to recruitment in violent extremism is crucial. Developing counter-narratives that address the specific grievances and concerns of potential recruits helps sway them away from extremist ideologies. These counter-narratives offers alternative perspectives that promote inclusivity, non-violence, and positive social engagement. Cameron,

D. (2001) posits that Communities play a vital role in countering violent extremism. Efforts to engage and involve community members in discursive security initiatives are far more effective. This approach requires active collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders, educators, and other stakeholders to tackle the underlying causes of extremism and promote positive, constructive narratives.

Discursive security in the US is a complex interplay of language, power dynamics, and societal influences. It has the potential to shape public opinion, policy decisions, and even the direction of national security efforts. Different administrations, media outlets, interest groups, and societal changes all influence the nature of discursive security over time. In the U.S, Politicians often use discursive security to advance their agendas. They might emphasize certain threats to justify policy decisions or to rally public support. The language they use influence public opinion and guide policy priorities. Sophie Amalie Eiholm Kjær (2020) conducted a discourse analysis examining the justification for the assassination of Major General Soleimani on January 2, 2020.

According to Sophie Amalie Eiholm Kjær (2020), President Donald Trump sought to justify his decision to order the assassination of Iranian Major General Soleimani on January 2, 2020, through discursive means. Kjær's study analyzes two speeches delivered by Trump within the week following the event, demonstrating how Soleimani was depicted as an irrational terrorist posing an imminent threat to the American people. This portrayal was used to legitimize the assassination as a necessary action against a violent extremist.

In the context of Africa, where violent extremism has been a significant concern in various regions, discursive security approaches play a role in countering this threat. Violent extremist groups in Africa employ persuasive and appealing narratives to recruit and radicalize individuals.

Discursive security involves challenging and countering these narratives by offering alternative narratives that promote peace, tolerance, and coexistence. Governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and community influencers collaborate to develop counter-narratives that resonate with local populations. Discursive security encourages social cohesion and also promotes inclusivity among people.

This is illustrated by Tanzania's domestic discursive context regarding its decision not to join the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). While regional neighbors like Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, and Ethiopia participated in AMISOM, Tanzania chose a different path. According to Stephanie Jaensch (2021), Tanzania's refusal to join AMISOM in 2007 was influenced by its non-military interpretation of "non-indifference," shaped by domestic discourses surrounding its national identity. Jaensch argues that Tanzania framed itself as a nation committed to "peaceful coexistence" and religious tolerance, while also harboring critical views of AMISOM as a tool in the "War on Terror." This narrative partly explains why Tanzania has not been targeted by the Al-Shabaab militant group, which has attacked other East African countries. Overall, Tanzania's non-intervention in Somalia reflects its domestic security discourses and its self-identification as a promoter of regional peace and religious tolerance.

In Uganda, discursive security entails the use of discourse, communication, and narrative strategies to counter various security challenges, including violent extremism. In Uganda, the presence of rebel groups like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Defense Forces (ADF), as well as the broader threat of terrorism, has significantly influenced the discourse around security. Government narratives focus on counterterrorism efforts, while civil society groups emphasize on the impact of conflict on civilian populations. Discussions about security intersects with debates about human rights and governance in Uganda. This includes concerns

about government abuses of power, restrictions on civil liberties, and the balance between security measures and individual rights. Mathias Kamp (2016) argues that; media outlets (both Print and electronic) including social media in Uganda contribute to shaping public perceptions of security issues through their reporting. The way they frame and present security-related news influences public opinion and government responses. Both Social media and mainstream media focuses on particular incidents (agenda setting), highlighting government successes or failures, and contribute to shaping public attitudes toward security matters. Generally, discursive security in Uganda involves analyzing how security challenges are framed, discussed, and understood within the country's social, political, and cultural context. This includes examining government narratives, media coverage, civil society discourse, ethnic and regional dynamics, and the broader international context.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In the context of combating violent extremism, discursive security involves employing communication, dialogue, and narrative strategies to address the underlying causes of extremism and prevent its proliferation. It involves shaping public discourse, countering extremist narratives, and promoting alternative narratives that emphasize tolerance, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence. In Uganda, like many other countries, addressing violent extremism has been a multifaceted challenge that requires more than just military or law enforcement responses. While coercive methods have been deployed severally to curb extremism in Uganda, it is imperative to understand that; they have been counter-productive and it is imperative to devise other approaches to counter the underlying ideologies, grievances, and narratives that drive individuals towards extremism. Notably, on 17th June, 2023, Uganda experienced a terrorist attack targeting Lhubiriha secondary school in Mpondwe, executed by the ADF based in the

Democratic Republic of Congo where 37 students were confirmed to have been killed (BBC News, 2023). This is the second violent extreme terror attack from the same group (ADF) in addition to several others from other groups. This research study is therefore interested in determining the significant role of discursive security in countering violent extremism and terrorism in Uganda.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research study is to; determine the role of discursive security in countering violent extremism in Uganda.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research study are as follows:

- i. To analyze and discuss the nature of violent extremism cases in Uganda
- ii. To establish how discursive security is perceived in counter violent extremism in Uganda
- iii. To assess the challenges and opportunities of discursive security in curbing violent extremism

1.5 Research Questions

This research study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. What has been the nature of violent extremism cases in Uganda?
- ii. How does discursive security form part of a security discourse for countering violent extremism in Uganda?

- iii. What are the challenges and opportunities inherent discursive security in curbing violent extremism?

1.6 Justification of the Study

1.6.1 To the Academia

Previous studies on the prevention of violent extremism have produced inadequate and outdated knowledge on curbing violent extremism. Majority of these studies have focused on hard power methods which have proved unsuitable in the modern age. This research is focused on a communication discourse which incorporates views, opinions and perception of the wider demographic categories in formulating a comprehensive strategy for curbing violent extremism. Scholars and researchers interested in advancing their knowledge on contemporary security matters will find this research study largely useful in their studies. Security studies are evolving with time and therefore, integration of emerging security paradigms such as discursive security enriches modern security discourse which present-day students and scholars can refer to.

1.6.2 Policy Justification

It is factual that; Uganda has faced various internal conflicts and tensions, often rooted in ethnic, religious, or political differences. Security policy-makers need to promote open and respectful dialogue which can address grievances, foster understanding, and potentially prevent conflicts from escalating. Discursive security can help create an environment where conflicting parties engage in peaceful negotiations rather than resorting to violence. This research shall therefore form an integral component of security policy in Uganda and elsewhere, where violent extremism forms a security threat.

Security matters concern and affect each and every one in a society and therefore ownership of security practices is vested on every individual to make whatsoever the contribution. Since the discursive security incorporates the opinions, views and perceptions of the general public, this research study presents a golden opportunity for the general public to obtain information relating to its applicability in a given society. This research study will benefit the general public through inferences to some of the global best practices relating to discursive security and how it has transformed security environment elsewhere. Members of the public are therefore encouraged to read and understand the findings of this research study to enable them appreciate the significance of the discursive security.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Uganda has experienced instances of terrorism and radicalization, including threats from groups like the LRA and, historically, the ADF. A discursive security approach which involves community engagement programs that encourage individuals susceptible to radicalization to express their concerns and frustrations can help identify potential recruits early and address the underlying factors that make them vulnerable to extremist ideologies. This study emphasizes that; discursive security plays an integral role in fostering social cohesion and reconciliation by providing platforms for different groups to share their perspectives, acknowledge historical injustices, and work towards a shared understanding of the past and a more harmonious future. This study also argues that; in the current digital age, disinformation and fake news can exacerbate security challenges by spreading rumors and false narratives that can incite panic or distrust in a community. By encouraging open discussions and promoting accurate information, a discursive security approach can counteract the spread of misinformation and enhance overall societal resilience. This research study advocates for inclusive policy-making to address

socioeconomic disparities and feelings of marginalization, which extremist groups can exploit to further their agendas. This study on discursive security approach towards violent extremism fosters cooperative efforts to address shared challenges, such as transnational crime, refugee flows, and cross-border conflicts, through open communication and collaboration with neighboring countries. By implementing the findings of this discursive security study, it shall be possible to acquire policies that are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs and concerns of various stakeholders.

1.8 Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis tested in this study is as follows:

H₀ Discursive security approach is effective in combating violent extremism in Uganda

H₁ Discursive security forms an integral component of Uganda's Counterterrorism strategy

H₂ Ugandans are experiencing several challenges in mainstreaming discursive security into national counterterrorism approaches

1.9 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope and limitations of a study outline the boundaries and extent of the research project. They help to provide clarity about what the study intends to cover and what it will not cover, as well as the potential constraints that might affect the research (Marilyn K. S, Jim G, 2013). The geographical scope of this study is Kampala City-which is the capital City of Uganda. Kampala is chosen due to its cosmopolitan nature of its population who reside there, from all other regions of the Country. The scope of the terrorist attacks covered in research study entail incidents experienced since 2021. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), Uganda was

ranked Number 45 with a GTI score of 4.106 making it a level three Country on the GTI database (GTI, 2022). Analyzing the scope and limitations of discursive security in Uganda would involve examining how security concerns related to violent extremism (terrorism) are communicated, perceived, and debated within the country's public discourse. This would involve analyzing how these security concerns are discussed in various platforms such as media, social media, political speeches, academic discussions, and civil society organizations.

1.9.1 Limitations of the Study

According to Marilyn K. S and Jim G (2013), the limitations of a study refer to factors or constraints that may affect the research process or the interpretation of results. This study is limited by difficulties encountered during data collection, such as incomplete responses, biased responses, or difficulties in obtaining accurate information. Ethical considerations may limit the quality of data obtained where obtaining informed consent and managing potential biases are not possible. Uganda's diverse ethnic and regional makeup can result in different groups perceiving and discussing security concerns differently. These biases might not always accurately reflect the broader reality.

1.9.2 Delimitations

According to Marilyn K. S. and Jim G. (2013), delimitations in a study are determined by the boundaries set within the scope of the research and by the deliberate decisions made during the planning process. These are distinct from limitations, which are inherent to the methodology and design. Delimitations arise from the specific choices made by the researcher. In this study, the researcher will ensure the confidentiality of participants and will obtain their consent before distributing any data collection tools. Permissions to carry out research would be sought from relevant authorities to enable formalization of the process and diffuse government censorship.

The researcher also focuses on the mainstream media sources which have less biases and offer significant credibility to their news source. Explaining to the respondents the essence and the purpose of this study would diffuse possible biases and apathy associated with provision of security information.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the following sections: empirical literature review, theoretical literature review, theoretical framework, literature gaps, and chapter summary.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

This section reviews the empirical literature previously done on the subject of discursive security deducing key thematic areas which explain this discourse in the present context. The review is drawn primarily from scholarly publications, recorded speeches, academic texts and also from online sites which relates to the subject under study. Specifically, the empirical literature reviews endeavors to explain the role of discursive security in preventing or countering violent extremism.

2.2.1 The Role of Discursive Security in Curbing Violent Extremism

Discursive security plays a significant role in curbing violent extremism by addressing the ideological and communicative aspects of extremist narratives. It refers to the strategies and efforts aimed at countering extremist discourse and narratives through various forms of communication, including media, education, and public discourse (Kjær, S., A. E. (2020). By engaging in discursive security measures, governments, organizations, and communities seek to challenge and counter the ideologies that underpin violent extremism, thereby weakening its appeal and reducing its potential to incite violence. Discursive security offers counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies. As Marcos Cardoso Dos Santos (2018) asserts; discursive security involves developing and promoting counter-narratives that challenge and contradict the extremist ideologies. These narratives aim to provide alternative perspectives, addressing

grievances, grievances, and concerns that extremists exploit to recruit followers. By offering a more balanced and nuanced view, counter-narratives can undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Discursive security helps in debunking misinformation spread by extremist groups. Extremist groups often rely on spreading false information and propaganda to manipulate and radicalize individuals. Discursive security efforts involve identifying and debunking such misinformation through fact-checking, credible sources, and public awareness campaigns. By exposing the inaccuracies and manipulative tactics used by extremists, the credibility of their narratives can be diminished. According to Mahfuh Bin Haji Halimi *et al.* (2021), extremist groups often disseminate false information to further their narratives. By using discursive security, authorities and experts can present verifiable facts and evidence that contradict these claims. For instance, if an extremist group spreads misinformation about a particular event, government agencies or independent fact-checkers can provide credible sources and data to debunk those claims. This can undermine the group's credibility and prevent the spread of false information. Following the 9/11 attacks carried out by Al-Qaeda, distinctive and controversial rhetorical strategies emerged that are still discussed today (Stengel, F.A., 2019). President George W. Bush and his administration employed various linguistic tactics to convey to both the American public and the global audience that military intervention was justified. They framed these actions as essential for protecting Americans and their allies and for preventing future attacks similar to 9/11.

Discursive security is integral in entrenching societal empowerment and education. Educating individuals about the dangers of extremist ideologies and tactics is a key aspect of discursive security. This can involve school programs, workshops, seminars, and online resources that provide accurate information about various ideologies, radicalization processes, and the

consequences of violent extremism. Empowering individuals with knowledge helps them make informed decisions and resist radicalization. Religious extremism, particularly in the form of Jihadist propaganda that has led to terrorism, has intensified over the past fifty years. The situation worsened significantly after the Islamic State (IS) terrorist group declared its intention to establish a caliphate in 2014. This propaganda has largely proliferated online, complicating efforts to contain its global spread. Therefore, discursive security plays a crucial role in countering extremist propaganda by challenging distortions of religious doctrines and supporting new initiatives to fortify community defenses.

Discursive security is essential in promoting tolerance and inclusivity in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society with diverse orientations. Discursive security efforts often focus on promoting tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity. By fostering open dialogues and discussions within communities, societies can strengthen social cohesion and resilience against extremist narratives. Encouraging acceptance of different viewpoints and cultures can create an environment less susceptible to extremist recruitment.

Discursive security facilitates enhanced engagement with online platforms where extremism is propagated. Since the internet and social media platforms have become significant spaces for extremist recruitment and dissemination of propaganda, discursive security involves engaging with online communities to counter extremist content (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2018). This is done through reporting mechanisms, partnerships with tech companies, and the creation of positive online spaces that provide credible information and support. Online engagement is particularly important in amplification of voices. Amplifying the voices of credible and influential individuals who reject violent extremism is an effective discursive security strategy. Community leaders, religious figures, former extremists, and other trusted sources are able to

share personal stories, insights, and messages that discourage engagement with extremist ideologies.

2.2.2 Discursive Security Form Part of a Security Discourse for Countering Violent

Extremism

Understanding discursive security is crucial for tackling the root causes of violent extremism. Efforts in discursive security also address the underlying socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that make violent extremism appealing (Fierke, 2002). By tackling issues such as marginalization, discrimination, and lack of opportunities, societies can reduce the conditions that make individuals vulnerable to radicalization. While addressing the root causes of violent extremism, discursive security also enhances international cooperation aimed at generating mutually agreeable solutions to the security challenges posed by violent extremism. Given that violent extremism often transcends national borders, international cooperation is essential for effective discursive security.

Countries can exchange best practices, resources, and strategies to combat extremist narratives worldwide, leading to a more coordinated and effective response. The "*War on Terror*," initiated by U.S. President George W. Bush, significantly shaped international relations in the decade following the September 11 attacks. In his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, Bush discussed this campaign and introduced the term "*Axis of Evil*," referring to North Korea, Iraq, and Iran as states supporting global terrorism. Bush argued that these states, along with their terrorist allies, formed an "axis of evil" threatening world peace and needed to be addressed (The Washington Post, 2002).

2.2.3 The Challenges and Opportunities Inherent Discursive Security in Curbing Violent Extremism

Discursive security presents both challenges and opportunities in curbing violent extremism. Crafting effective narratives, countering extremist propaganda, and engaging with at-risk communities are vital components of a comprehensive strategy. Balancing these efforts with the principles of free speech and addressing underlying societal issues are essential for achieving long-term success in countering violent extremism. This effort necessitates collaboration among governments, civil society, technology companies, and individuals, all working together to build a more secure and resilient global community.

According to Nicholas G. (2011) discursive security presents opportunities for improving the security environment by shaping narratives. In shaping security narratives, discursive security allows governments, NGOs, and communities to dialogue, from which narratives are formed which challenges extremist ideologies and promote alternative, peaceful perspectives. Similarly, discursive security encourages moderate voices within at-risk communities which create a counterbalance to extremist narratives and ideologies. Balzacq, Thierry (2005) emphasizes that; discursive securitization has three faces which include; political agency, audience and context. In this regard, fostering inclusive and cohesive communities reduces vulnerabilities to extremism by addressing the sense of isolation that extremists often exploit. Discursive security offers international cooperation opportunities as narratives spread and shared. Collaborative efforts among nations enable pooling of resources and sharing of best international practices, and coordination strategies to counteract global extremist threats.

Contrastingly, discursive security presents some notable challenges. Balancing between freedoms of speech and expression is a challenge which can encourage censorship and strict

regulations. According to Frank A. S. (2019), emerging threats can be framed within a broader initiative to establish a new security discourse. An illustrative example is the "war on terror" narrative. This discourse not only depicted terrorism as an existential threat to the United States but also integrated the securitization of terrorism into a broader global discursive transformation, shaping a new U.S. grand strategy. Discursive security is also confronted by the challenge of cultural sensitivity. Crafting counter-narratives that resonate with diverse audiences while avoiding cultural insensitivity or unintended messaging requires a deep understanding of local contexts and values. This challenge was witnessed in Kenya when Somalis residing in the Country were profiled and stereotyped as a community harboring terrorist following several terrorist's attacks targeting Kenya.

2.3 Empirical Theoretical Review

There are several theories that explain discursive security. It is imperative to understand that; discursive security is a concept within the realm of security studies that focuses on how security issues are constructed, understood, and communicated through discourse, language, and narratives. It specifically examines how language shapes people's perceptions of threats, vulnerabilities, and appropriate responses. Discursive security has been explained in six different schools of thought. They include; securitization theory; framing theory and critical security studies.

2.3.1 Securitization Theory

Formulated by the Copenhagen School, particularly by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, this theory highlights how speech acts can elevate particular issues to the status of security concerns (Holger, S. 2014). When a speaker labels something as a "security threat," it

triggers a process of securitization, whereby extraordinary measures and exceptional actions are deemed acceptable to address the threat. This theory highlights how the power to define what is a security concern lies with specific actors, enabling them to legitimize certain policies and actions. Securitization theory can be applied in discursive security where there is identification of an issue as a security threat. According to Sophie Amalie Eiholm Kjær (2020), the process of securitization begins with actors (for instance; politicians, media, institutions) framing a particular issue, such as violent extremism, as an existential threat to the security of a society. This involves using specific language and rhetoric to emphasize the urgency and severity of the issue (in this case-violent extremism).

Securitization theory emphasizes on rhetorical construction. Discursive security involves the strategic use of language to create a narrative that portrays violent extremism as a grave danger. This language can include terms like *terrorism*, *radicalization*, and violent *extremism*, which evoke strong emotional responses and legitimize exceptional measures to address the threat. Securitization theory prioritizes on gaining public and political support. As Holger, S. (2014) posits; once the issue is framed as a security concern, proponents of the securitization process work to gain public and political support for drastic actions, policies, and interventions. This often involves presenting the issue as a matter of collective survival, which justifies the need for extraordinary measures that might otherwise be considered intrusive or disproportionate. Securitization theory is applicable in explaining how the discursive security process influences policy decisions and resource allocation. This school of thought can be integral in the development of counterterrorism strategies, such as; deradicalization programs, international cooperation efforts, and intelligence-sharing initiatives aimed at curbing violent extremism.

The application of securitization theory in explaining discursive security is not without controversy. Critics argue that securitization can lead to the over-prioritization of security concerns over human rights, civil liberties, and dialogue (Rychnovská, D. (2014). The labelling of an issue as a security threat can perpetuate stereotypes and stigmatization of certain groups and therefore policymakers and analysts need to balance the genuine need to address security threats with the potential negative consequences of over-securitization. This includes fostering open dialogue, addressing root causes of extremism, and promoting inclusive policies that counter radicalization while upholding fundamental rights.

2.3.2 Framing Theory

Framing theory is also applicable in explaining the role of discursive security in curbing violent extremism. According to Brent L. Smith, *et al.* (2017) framing theory is a powerful tool for understanding how different stakeholders communicate and interpret the issue of violent extremism. By analyzing the frames used in discourses, researcher can gain insights into how security concerns, policy responses, and public attitudes are influenced and shaped. This entails learning the way issues are portrayed and interpreted in public discourse. In the context of discursive security, framing theory focuses on how different actors frame security issues to influence public perceptions and policy decisions. In the context of curbing violent extremism, framing theory is applied to analyze how different stakeholders, such as governments, media, and civil society groups, frame the issue of extremism in their communication strategies.

Different frames emphasize different aspects of a situation, such as focusing on the dangers of a threat, the need for protection, or the potential for cooperation. These frames shape the ways people understand and respond to security challenges. Different actors choose specific frames to present the issue of violent extremism. According to Snow, D.A (2004) frames are essentially

lenses through which they interpret and communicate the problem. For example, one frame might focus on the socioeconomic factors that contribute to violent extremism, while another might emphasize on religious ideology. Each chosen frame influences how the problem is perceived and what solutions are considered.

Framing theory also explains how certain frames are amplified or attenuated in public discourse. Amplification occurs when specific frames are repeated and reinforced across various communication channels, leading to a greater impact on public opinion (Snow D. A., Byrd, S. W. (2007). Conversely, attenuation occurs when frames are downplayed or suppressed. This leads to a distorted perception of the issue and hinders a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of extremism. The prominence given to particular frames can impact public discourse. Some frames might receive more attention than others, leading to a skewed understanding of the issue. This can affect the allocation of resources and policy decisions. For instance, if the media consistently highlights the religious dimension of extremism, other factors like political grievances might be overlooked.

As Benford, R. D. and Snow, D.A. (2000) posits that; different actors may align themselves with particular frames or contest the dominant frames. For example, a government might emphasize its efforts in countering radicalization, while civil society groups might focus on human rights and social integration. These alignments and contestations can lead to conflicts over the preferred narratives and policy approaches. To address violent extremism, counter-framing can be used strategically. Counter-framing involves introducing alternative frames that challenge extremist narratives and offer more positive and inclusive perspectives. This can help reshape public perceptions and undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies.

2.3.3 Critical Security Studies

One of the main proponents of critical studies theory relevant to the analysis of violent extremism is Michel Foucault. Foucault was a French philosopher, social theorist, and historian who explored the relationship between power, knowledge, and social institutions. His work has greatly influenced critical studies approaches in various fields, including criminology, political science, sociology, and cultural studies. Foucault emphasized that knowledge and power are intertwined, and that dominant groups in society use discourses (systems of thought, language, and representation) to maintain their power. Extremist ideologies often arise in response to perceived injustices or grievances. Critical studies theory helps uncover how these grievances are shaped by existing discourses and how extremist groups challenge or subvert them to gain support.

This approach questions mainstream security discourses and seeks to uncover hidden power dynamics, ideologies, and assumptions within security narratives. Critical security scholars argue that dominant security discourses often serve the interests of specific groups and reinforce existing inequalities. They analyze how language constructs notions of identity, security, and threats, and they aim to expose the biases and limitations of these constructs. For instance; Owen F,Christian Nü,(2015) examine how different actors, such as governments, media, and international organizations, frame the issue of violent extremism. They postulate that; critical studies theory analyzes the language used to describe the phenomenon, its causes, and potential solutions. The critical studies theory questions whether certain frames serve to marginalize certain groups or reinforce stereotypes.

Critical Security Studies encourages examining alternative narratives that challenge mainstream discourses. Scholars might explore how grassroots movements, civil society organizations, or

marginalized communities resist dominant framings and propose alternative ways of understanding and addressing violent extremism. CSS places a strong emphasis on ethics and justice in security matters. Scholars would assess whether the language and policies associated with countering violent extremism are consistent with human rights, social justice, and the principles of inclusivity.

Applying critical studies theory to the study of violent extremism helps uncover the structural and discursive dynamics that contribute to the rise of extremist ideologies. It sheds light on how power imbalances, social inequalities, and historical factors intersect to create an environment conducive to radicalization. By understanding these underlying factors, researchers and policymakers can develop more nuanced strategies to counter and prevent violent extremism, focusing not only on the individuals involved but also on the broader social and political context that shapes their choices.

2.3.4 Literature Gap

Upon the review of literature related to discursive security in curbing violent extremism, this research study has established a number of gaps. First, there exist no literature at relating to the application of the concept of discursive security in Uganda. There is no study on discursive security which focuses on Uganda despite the Country experiencing several violent extremist cases before and recently. This research study is therefore the pioneer project on this subject. Secondly, the available literature does not indicate how discursive security is integrated into the broader security policies and who is responsible for integrating it. Thirdly, in the current digital age of information technology (IT) in communication, violent extremists often exploit online platforms to disseminate propaganda and recruit followers. The available literature does not articulate the measures taken by media outlets and Tech firms to flag out and hinder these groups

from spreading their narratives. Lastly, the available literature does not express how collaboration between governments, tech companies, and civil society can be achieved to regulate content without infringing on privacy and freedom of expression on security matters.

2.3.5 Chapter Summary

This Chapter summarizes discursive security to refer to the strategies and efforts aimed at countering extremist discourse and narratives through various forms of communication, including media, education, and public discourse. Discursive security offers counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies. Since the internet and social media platforms have become significant spaces for extremist recruitment and dissemination of propaganda, discursive security involves engaging with online communities to counter extremist content. Discursive security in curbing violent extremism presents several opportunities which among them include; shaping narratives; education and awareness; fostering international cooperation and also fostering inclusive and cohesive communities by reducing vulnerabilities to extremism by addressing the sense of isolation that extremists often exploit. There are also challenges associated with discursive security. They include; exacerbating cultural sensitivities; inadvertently stifling legitimate debates and criticisms; echo chambers where Online platforms can create echo chambers that reinforce extremist beliefs. Breaking through these echo chambers to engage with potential recruits is a significant hurdle. The Copenhagen securitization theory developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wøever and Jaap de Wilde is utilized to conceptualize this study.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes Constructivist Theory which is a perspective in the field of international relations and education that emphasizes the role of ideas, beliefs, and social interactions in shaping human behavior and the world around us. In the context of international relations, Constructivism suggests that states and actors' actions are influenced by their perceptions of the world and the meanings they attach to various concepts, rather than just their material interests. Proponents of Constructivist Theory include scholars like Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, and Emanuel Adler, among others. These theorists argue that the international system is not solely driven by power politics or economic interests, but also by shared norms, identities, and collective beliefs. They emphasize that states and individuals actively construct their reality through social interactions, and these constructions shape their behavior and decisions. According to Alexander S. (2010), Constructivist Theory offers a valuable lens for understanding the complex social and cognitive dynamics that contribute to violent extremism. Its emphasis on identity, perception, and shared meanings provides insights into effective strategies for countering extremism by addressing root causes, reshaping narratives, and fostering positive engagement on both individual and global levels.

Constructivist theories emphasize the role of ideas, norms, and shared meanings in shaping security discourses. Winter, D.A and Feixas, G. (2019) argue that security is not solely based on material factors but is also socially constructed. Constructivists examine how norms and beliefs influence what is considered a security threat and how these understandings change over time. Constructivist insights can inform efforts to counter extremist narratives. By understanding how individuals construct their worldviews and adopt particular beliefs, counter-extremism programs can tailor their approaches to challenge and reshape these perceptions. Engaging in dialogue and

presenting alternative narratives that resonate with an individual's sense of identity and belonging can be more effective than simply using force or punitive measures.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology used to examine the role of discursive security in combating violent extremism in Uganda. It covers the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

3.1.1 Research Design

This research employed a descriptive research design to address questions about the current state of discursive security and violent extremism in Uganda. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in social sciences, particularly for detailing and reporting phenomena as they occur. It allows for a comprehensive analysis of the role of discursive security in combating violent extremism by describing the rationale, justification, adoption, implementation, and associated challenges in Uganda.

Descriptive research design also allows the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of discursive security in countering violent extremism. This design facilitates the assessment of how various factors interact within a social phenomenon. Additionally, its flexibility permits the research to adapt and be guided by the findings that emerge during the study.

3.1.2 Data Collection Instruments

The study primarily utilized qualitative secondary data. This data was sourced from official periodic reports of security agencies, government ministries, and departments, as well as from NGOs, IGOs, academic journals, theses, dissertations, monographs, online reports, government websites, and other relevant literature.

3.1.3 Data Processing and Analysis

The study employed a qualitative research method to gather data. This approach involved an in-depth examination of documents, internet sources, and unpublished works, which served as secondary data sources. The qualitative data was analyzed by coding recurring themes and presenting the findings in narrative form. Emphasis was placed on responses that were most significant to the issues under investigation. Content analysis of the information facilitated the drawing of conclusions and formulating recommendations.

3.1.4 Ethical Considerations

Adhering to ethical standards is crucial in conducting research. Research ethics are designed to safeguard both the researcher and the participants, especially when handling sensitive topics. The primary aim of these ethical considerations is to ensure the safety and protection of both the research process and its participants. Although this study did not involve primary data collection, confidentiality was maintained for individuals knowledgeable about terrorism narratives. Their identities were kept anonymous, and the data was used exclusively for academic purposes, ensuring no misuse.

3.2 Chapter Outline

The study is organized into several chapters. Chapter one introduces the research topic, including the background, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, hypothesis, and the justification and significance of the study. It also outlines the scope, limitations, and delimitations. Chapter two reviews both empirical and theoretical literature relevant to the study's objectives and theoretical framework. Chapter three details the research methodology used to analyze the role of discursive security in countering violent extremism in Uganda.

Chapter four presents the findings in relation to the study's objectives. Finally, Chapter five offers a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's results.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings in alignment with the research objectives outlined in Chapter One. It specifically addresses the nature of violent extremism in Uganda, the importance of discursive security approaches in mitigating violent extremism, and the challenges and opportunities associated with these approaches. The findings are based on secondary sources and reflect insights gained from a comprehensive review of relevant literature.

4.2 Findings Relating to the Nature of Violent Extremism in Uganda

According to the findings established by this research study, the people and government of Uganda (GoU) consider violent extremism as a major peace and security issue (Thomas Dyrenforth, 2019). The majority of the studies rate Uganda as a moderate at-risk Country compared with other Countries in the region. This research establishes that; Uganda has experienced various forms of violent extremism evidenced by ADF insurgencies in both the Capital City-Kampala and in Western Uganda, particularly in the Rwenzori region. The ADF has been a significant source of violent extremism in Uganda and the broader region. Originally a rebel group formed in the late 1990s in Uganda, the ADF has undergone various transformations over the years, morphing into a hybrid organization with ties to Islamist extremism (Olojo *et al*, 2020). The group has been responsible for numerous attacks, including massacres, abductions, and bombings, targeting both civilians and security forces. Initially active in Uganda, the ADF has expanded its operations, particularly in the eastern part of the DRC. The ADF's nature and motives have evolved, intertwining with jihadist ideologies. This shift has drawn attention to the group's links with international terrorist networks, although the exact extent of these connections

is complex and challenging to fully describe. Ugandan security forces have engaged in efforts to counter the ADF, collaborating with regional partners and deploying military operations.

However, the ADF's ability to operate across porous borders and its adaptability has posed persistent challenges to efforts aimed at eradicating its influence and activities. The situation remains dynamic, and while efforts have been made to contain the ADF's violence, it underscores the complexity of combating violent extremism that transcends national boundaries and involves multiple actors with diverse motives.

Violent extremism in Uganda was also perpetuated by the LRA. The LRA's insurgency in the northern region was evidenced by civilian kidnappings, torture and killings as well as abductions (Allen, 2023). The LRA is a notorious and brutal insurgent group that operated mainly in northern Uganda and parts of neighboring countries, primarily during the late 20th century and early 21st century. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA employed extreme violence and tactics that included abductions, killings, and the use of child soldiers. The LRA's violence is (was) deeply rooted in a blend of religious and mystical beliefs, which Kony claimed justified their actions. They purportedly aimed to establish a theocratic state based on the Ten Commandments. However, in practice, the LRA's actions were marked by widespread human rights abuses, particularly against civilians. Abductions of children to serve as soldiers or sex slaves were a hallmark of the LRA's tactics, forcibly conscripting young boys as soldiers and girls as wives for commanders (Acker, F.V, 2004). These children were subjected to indoctrination, forced to commit atrocities, and endured unimaginable suffering. Over time, concerted efforts from GoU, regional governments, international organizations, and advocacy groups have significantly weakened the LRA's capabilities. By the early 2010s, the LRA's presence and activity significantly diminished, though remnants of the group remained operational in remote areas of

Central Africa Republic, continuing to pose sporadic threats (Faber, P., 2017). While the LRA's prominence has diminished, its legacy of violence and the profound impact on the affected communities, including the thousands of individuals who were abducted or affected by its actions, continue to be felt. Efforts to address the aftermath of the LRA's reign of terror, such as supporting survivors and rebuilding communities, remain an ongoing challenge.

This study also establishes that; Uganda faces sectarian violence, particularly among the Muslim communities which occurred particularly in the 1990s. Uganda has also experienced terrorism-related violence exhibited and attributed to the Al Shabaab terror group which bombed Kampala in 2010 during a World Cup screening at a local restaurant. The above findings corroborate those of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) which ranks Uganda at position 45 on the 2022 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) with a GTI score of 4.106 making it a level three Country on the GTI database (IEP, 2023).

4.3 The Significance of Discursive Security in Curbing Violent Extremism in Uganda

This research study establishes that discursive security plays a crucial role in curbing violent extremism in Uganda, as it involves shaping the narratives, dialogues, and discourses within society to prevent the spread of extremist ideologies. Discursive security involves challenging and countering extremist narratives that fuel radicalization. This is achieved through promoting alternative narratives that emphasize peace, tolerance, and inclusivity (Frank, 2019). Discursive security approaches in Uganda are instrumental in building resilience among communities in Uganda. By engaging communities in constructive dialogue and education, discursive security helps build resilience against extremist propaganda. This includes empowering individuals to critically analyze and question extremist ideologies. The researcher has established that

discursive security strengthens community engagement. Encouraging open discussions within communities fosters a sense of belonging and unity, which often counters feelings of alienation and marginalization that extremists often exploit. These findings are similar to those of Rui and Alastair (2023) who assert that; communities, or societal structures, exhibit empirical complexity. This implies their capacity for adaptation and the emergence of distinct properties, such as self-organization. Because these social systems are profoundly dynamic, nonlinear, and emergent, identifying universal laws or guidelines to accurately predict the behavior of a specific society or community is not feasible and this enables it to become resilient in times of adversary.

The researcher has identified the internet has one of the modern channels through which violent extremism is propagated and where also it can be contained. Internet offers countless chances where opportunities are extended to society, enabling economic growth, communication, engagement, and information accessibility (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2018). A reliable, secure, and cohesive ICT environment is crucial for everyone and requires effective international cooperation to mitigate threats to global peace and security. However, the Internet is often misused by violent extremists and terrorists who increasingly use communication technologies to fund, intimidate, educate, radicalize, recruit, and incite others to commit violent acts. Discursive security provides content-focused strategies to address the dissemination of extremist and terrorist propaganda through global collaboration. It also offers opportunities to partner with private companies to combat terrorism and extremism online by reporting, removing, filtering content, and implementing relevant legislation (Bipartisan Policy Center, 2018).

The researcher identified communication-based strategies as a critical approach to countering the appeal of violent extremist and terrorist propaganda. This involves supporting civil society organizations in Uganda to use counter- and alternative narratives both online and offline. There

is a perception in Uganda linking religion with violent extremism (Mandaville and Nozell, 2017). While broad framing theory aims to avoid unfairly targeting religion, security practitioners in Uganda note a disconnect in understanding the drivers of violent extremism. The government and Western donors tend to emphasize ideological factors, which can foster Islamophobia (Afrobarometer). Many Ugandan Muslims feel marginalized and are thus more susceptible to extremist messages. Most recruited Ugandan youth are not well-versed in Islamic ideology but are drawn to material incentives offered by rebels or terrorists. These observations align with the Life and Peace Institute's (2020) analysis of violent extremism and responses in Uganda. According to this study, ideological matters that encourage violent extremism are tackled not just to confront messages promoting violence based on ideology and religion, but also to enhance prospects for growth by focusing on improved education and livelihood skills.

4.4 Religion as a Driver and Solution to Violent Extremism in Uganda

The researcher has identified religion as both a driver of violent extremism and a solution to it. The intricate connection between religion and violence cannot be simplistically explained through direct cause and effect. While religion might not always be the primary motivator in instances of violent extremism, it can play a more significant role in others (Kjær,2020). Consequently, strategies aimed at preventing or addressing radicalization and extremism should acknowledge the nuanced role of religion, recognizing it both as a contributing factor and a potential part of the solution.

In Uganda, religion plays a significant role in security discourse in several ways; one, it is a source of collective identity and solidarity that facilitates mobilization. Religion has the potential to facilitate mobilization, especially when violent extremist factions seek to attract marginalized

or disillusioned youth who have encountered barriers in adopting other forms of identity like citizenship, ethnic or national affiliations, or professional recognition (Okello, 2019). While this has not been fully entrenched in Uganda, it is evident elsewhere, for instance, recruiters in Europe frequently target young Muslims from second or third-generation backgrounds, exploiting their feeling of being caught between fragmented national identities (like British and Pakistani) by presenting a fresh, predominantly religious, platform for belonging and unified action (Ibid).

The researcher establishes that; in Uganda religious actors leverage their moral authority and community influence to counter violent extremism, emphasizing values of peace, tolerance, and unity across religious divides which can be regarded as discursive securitization. Ugandans are notoriously religious in accordance to the famous line cited on *Traditional African religions* from Kenya's theologian John Samuel Mbiti (1969) who asserts, that; Africans are notoriously religious. This line is further emphasized by Jimmy Spire Ssentongo (2022), who also assertively states that; the religious notoriety of (black) Africans is reflected by a kind of spirituality that binds every aspect of life in Africa – whereby religion is not a performance of the Sunday or Friday. It is part and parcel of the everyday activity; farming, celebration, marriage, social relationships, environmental conservation, leisure, hunting, fishing, dying, mourning, education, careers, name it, every event (Ssentongo, 2022). Further, as per the 2014 Census, Roman Catholics make up 39 per cent of Uganda's population, Anglicans 32 per cent, Pentecostal Christians 11 per cent, Muslims 14 per cent, and other religious groups or those without religious affiliations account for 5 per cent of the general population. The combined percentage of agnostics and atheists is only 0.2 per cent (UBOS-National Population and Housing Census 2014). Consequently, more than 99 per cent of Ugandans identify with a religious affiliation.

The influence of religion on Uganda's security must be contextualized, considering both precolonial and postcolonial dynamics. In this setting, the researcher establishes that; security and religion are deeply interwoven, if not mutually dependent on each other. Throughout the nation's history, religious doctrines have sought to influence Uganda's national politics and security architecture. The same is evident in the historical development of religion in Uganda as explained by Andrew David Omona who chronicles the interface between religion and human security in Uganda. The Namugongo Martyrs incident is one such a significant discursive security case related to religion which has shaped the security narrative in Uganda since 1880s. It refers to a significant event in Ugandan history that took place on June 3, 1886 and it involved the execution of a group of Christian converts, both Catholic and Anglican, by the orders of Kabaka (King) Mwanga II, who ruled the Buganda Kingdom (Ibid).

According to the discursive narrative, these tensions escalated when the king issued an edict demanding that all subjects renounce Christianity or face execution. The refusal of the Christian converts, who remained steadfast in their faith, led to their imprisonment at Namugongo, a village near Kampala. On June 3, 1886, a group of 23 Anglican and 22 Catholic converts were executed, most of them by burning at stake, at Namugongo (Ssentongo, 2022). The martyrs chose to die for their faith rather than renounce Christianity. The execution and martyrdom of these individuals had a profound impact on security narratives and strengthening of Christian religion in Uganda. The Namugongo Martyrs incident is commemorated annually on June 3rd as Martyrs' Day in Uganda (Ibid). It is a significant event in the country's history and holds great religious and cultural importance, with thousands of pilgrims from Uganda and around the world gathering at the Namugongo Martyrs Shrine to honor the martyrs and celebrate their faith and sacrifice.

The researcher has determined that religion significantly influences security discourse in Uganda, especially following the overthrow of Idi Amin. Amin's rise to power in 1971 sought to mobilize the Muslim community to rectify historical grievances against Christians dating back to the 1890s, and he attempted to Islamize Uganda. His regime led to the banning of certain religious denominations, the persecution of their leaders, and executions. After Amin's government was overthrown, Muslims became targets of retaliation, with many being executed by members of other religious groups. Consequently, a large number of Muslims were killed or disappeared during this period of sectarian violence.

The same is evident in a doomsday cultic incident in Kanungu, western Uganda where a group of believers were burned to death, and in northern Uganda where the infamous Woman; Alice Auma Lakwena led a rebellion against the GoU after supposedly being possessed by the spirit of Lakwena (Behrend, 1999). The security narrative alludes that; Alice Lakwena was possessed by the Holy Spirit and instructed to release and free the children who had been "kidnapped" by the NRA and imprisoned in Gulu. The narrative alludes that; Auma Lakwena gave her soldiers strict security and operation guidelines and mobilized the masses to rally behind her. She issued bibles, guns and bullets, 'magical' objects, banned witch doctors and prayed with her soldiers. This made Lakwena a syncretistic embodiment of traditional and Christian values who created a quasi-religious-military organization with a fighting force named the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) which characterized the then security environment of much of Northern and Eastern Uganda (Behrend, 1999).

Joseph Kony formed the LRA to fight the government claiming that he was God's mouthpiece, sent to reinforce the 10 commandments. Kony utilized a syncretistic belief system that combined elements of Acholi traditional beliefs, Christianity, Islam, and witchcraft. The formation of the

LRA greatly changed the security narrative of northern Uganda and the global attention created by the incidents orchestrated by the LRA continues to influence security discourse both in Uganda and beyond.

Regarding violent extremism, Muslims in Uganda often view the government as discriminatory. The Muslim community has frequently accused security officials of arresting and detaining Muslims and Muslim clerics suspected of radicalism and terrorism. The researcher identified incidents after the 2010 World Cup bombing in Kampala when this narrative was amplified. Muslim advocacy groups lodged a petition with the Uganda Human Rights Commission on November 26, urging an inquiry into this claim. On November 28th, Prince Kassim Nakibinge, the patron of the Kibuli Muslim community, urged security agencies to refrain from profiling Muslims during terrorism investigations and emphasized the need to prosecute all suspects through legal channels. The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) and various Muslim civil society organizations have urged authorities to ensure fair and timely trials for Muslims. They have criticized the government for failing to effectively prosecute detained Muslims facing murder or terrorism charges, who have often been held in prolonged pretrial detention. This situation has fostered a perception of bias and discrimination against the Muslim community (United States Institute of Peace, 2017). This perception is volatile and capable of igniting a religious acrimony with dire consequences.

What stands out is the central role of religion in Uganda's discursive security discourse, serving both as a catalyst for progress and a source of challenges. I believe its most impactful contribution lies indirectly, particularly in promoting education to combat illiteracy, ignorance, and enhance civic engagement on security matters. While certain Ugandan religious figures have advocated for the sustenance of security sector policies or tacitly supported reform measures,

others have aimed to broaden public discourse by voicing the concerns of the people (United States Institute of Peace, 2017). The decisions made by religious figures have been influenced by the actions of the state, apprehension, personal principles, financial motivations, and diverse situational factors. The key insight is that religion, depending on its application, can significantly impact security either negatively or positively. In Uganda, religion has played dual roles—serving both as a driver of security concerns and as a potential solution, thereby forming a crucial part of the current security discourse. The researcher establishes that; religion, functioning as a storyline that structures and provides significance to various forms of dissatisfaction and grievances, can assist violent extremist groups in interpreting global occurrences and political changes in manners that align with an individual’s own life encounters. An instance of this is the Shiv Sena, a far-right Indian political party rooted in the Hindutva or Hindu nationalist ideology, which utilizes a religious context to unite and at times physically engage in advocating for political agendas, notably striving for a more “pure” India centered on Hindu interests.

4.5 The Challenges and Opportunities Inherent in Discursive Security

The ways in which language and discourse are used to shape and influence security-related issues, such as countering violent extremism (CVE) present several challenges and opportunities when it comes to curbing violent extremism

4.5 Opportunities

4.5.1 Education and Awareness Campaigns

The researcher has established that discursive security presents empowerment through education and awareness creation. Education and awareness campaigns have empowered communities to critically evaluate extremist messages by promoting media literacy and stimulating critical thinking which inoculate individuals against radicalization. In Uganda, the government has heightened awareness campaigns and education towards discouraging violent extremism. For instance, the researcher established that multiple Muslim CSOs identified that; the imams at the local level frequently lack education and essential abilities to discourage extreme ideologies. Consequently, these Muslim CSOs are committed to providing them with training in interfaith discussions, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and information technology skills.

Simultaneously, efforts are being made to enhance community resilience by educating youth on the Qur'an, addressing the concept of jihad to prevent manipulation, and working to dissociate Islam from violence (Mohammed Abu Nimer, 2018). This approach to discursive security mirrors the "Violent Extremism Has Many Faces" social media campaign from Western Australia, which sought to raise awareness about various forms of violent extremism through visuals and to deter association with extremist ideologies in Australia (Haris Hogan et al., 2016). The researcher highlights the importance of investing in educational programs that foster critical thinking, media literacy, and tolerance to help individuals recognize and reject extremist rhetoric. In Uganda, civil society organizations generally prefer 'soft' approaches that tackle the structural drivers of violent extremism, such as marginalization, lack of access to justice, and limited opportunities for governance participation. They address ideological issues not only to counter messages of violence but also to improve educational opportunities and livelihood skills.

The researcher has established that discursive security approaches encourage and facilitate international cooperation in curbing violent extremism in Uganda. In essence, discursive security acts as a catalyst for international cooperation by aligning narratives, fostering information exchange, enabling collaborative initiatives, utilizing multilateral platforms, and leveraging technology and media in a concerted effort to counter violent extremism on a global scale. In Uganda, discursive security approaches stimulate international cooperation and collaboration. The study found that coordinating efforts across borders fosters information sharing, best practices, and a unified approach to countering global extremist threats.

The study found that; discursive security helps create a shared understanding of the nature and gravity of the threat posed by violent extremism. This shared perception facilitates joint efforts to counter it. Uganda has partnered with her regional neighbors such as Kenya and other counterterrorism partner States such as the United States and United Kingdom to advance counterterrorism initiatives (Open Society Foundations, 2013). Further, discursive approaches in Uganda encourage information exchange and sharing. Uganda has collaborated with regional countries to exchange insights, experiences, and best practices in countering extremism. This sharing of information enhances the collective understanding of effective strategies and tactics (Open Society Foundations, 2013). In the Ugandan context, the discursive security approach facilitates analyzing global trends and counterterrorism narratives therein. Specifically, in Uganda discursive security allows for the analysis of global trends in extremist narratives, aiding in the identification of common patterns and the development of coordinated responses. This is evidenced by the collaborative efforts adopted by Uganda, Kenya, the US and the UK in identifying, searching, arresting and prosecuting suspects linked with the 2010 World Cup Bombing in Kampala. In the same way, discursive security facilitates diplomatic cooperation.

The researcher discovered that discursive security aids diplomatic efforts by aligning messaging and priorities, enhancing diplomatic cooperation in addressing root causes and contributing factors to violent extremism. In this regard, Uganda plays an active role at both regional and international levels, being a member of IGAD, the East African Community, the Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

4.6 Challenges

The researcher identified complexity of messaging and cultural sensitivity as some of the challenges confronting discursive security in curbing violent extremism in Uganda. Crafting messages that resonate across diverse audiences without inadvertently alienating or offending certain groups is naturally challenging. Balancing between condemning extremist ideologies and avoiding stigmatization of particular communities is crucial. The researcher has established that; different cultural contexts demand nuanced approaches. What works in one community might not work the same in another, necessitating a deep understanding of local cultures and norms. This finding aligns with Mohammed Abu Nimer's (2018) critique of CVE interventions that emphasize ideological aspects over structural drivers, which can result in unfairly targeting Muslims and religious ideologies. It is essential to discuss and debate the role of religion and religious actors in tackling violent extremism. For example, in Kenya's coastal cities like Mombasa, imams have been tasked with monitoring and reporting suspicious activities within their communities. However, when these leaders comply, they risk being seen as government agents, which undermines their credibility within their communities. This presents a challenge to the discursive discourse as an approach to counterterrorism both in Uganda and elsewhere.

The researcher has identified the challenge of adapting to evolving communication channels as a major challenge confronting the discursive security approach in Uganda. The study found out that extremist groups adeptly use various communication channels, from social media to encrypted platforms, making it challenging to monitor, analyze, and counter their narratives effectively. Since the internet and social media platforms have become significant spaces for extremist recruitment and dissemination of propaganda, it has become challenging for national security agencies to filter encrypted messages used by terrorists. Extremist groups (such as the ADF) are agile in exploiting a wide array of communication channels from social media to encrypted messaging apps. These platforms constantly evolve, making it challenging for counter-narratives to keep up. The sheer volume and speed at which extremist content propagates across online spaces makes it challenging to monitor, analyze, and respond in a timely manner. In essence, the rapid evolution of communication platforms presents a constant challenge for discursive security efforts. Without agile and adaptive strategies, the ability to effectively counter extremist narratives across these platforms becomes increasingly limited, impacting the overall success of efforts to curb violent extremism. These findings resonate with those of Shannon N and Green, (2017) who postulates that; the inability to adapt swiftly to new platforms or changing user behavior limits the reach and impact of counter-narratives, allowing extremist ideologies to persist and proliferate. The researcher has also identified challenges in legal and regulatory frameworks in this regard, developing effective regulatory frameworks to counter extremist content while respecting free speech presents challenges.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the entire research study, outlines generalizable conclusions, and offers relevant policy recommendations. The main objective of the research was to examine the role of discursive security in countering violent extremism in Uganda. The study focused on the following objectives: analyzing and discussing the nature of violent extremism cases in Uganda, assessing how discursive security is perceived in combating violent extremism in the country, and evaluating the challenges and opportunities associated with discursive security in this context. The study was premised on three hypotheses which stated that; **H₀** Discursive security approach is effective in combating violent extremism in Uganda; **H₁** Discursive security forms an integral component of Uganda's Counterterrorism strategy and **H₂** Ugandans are experiencing several challenges in mainstreaming discursive security into national counterterrorism approaches. Lastly, the chapter presents recommendations for improving counterterrorism and curbing violent extremism utilizing discursive approaches to security.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

5.2.1 The Nature of Violent Extremism Cases in Uganda

According to findings established by this research study, Uganda is a level three country ranked at Number 45 with a Global Terrorism Index (GTI) score of 4.106 making it a level three Country on the 2022 GTI database while the 2023 GTI ranks Uganda as at number 48 indicating a rank change (improvement) of 3 positions with a score of 3.599. The nature of violent extremism in Uganda is multifaceted entailing regional terrorist organizations namely; the ADF and the Al Shabaab militia group based in Somalia. Other sources of terrorism in Uganda

emanated from the LRA led by Joseph Kony and also another one named the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) which to a greater extent influenced the security environment of much of Northern and Eastern Uganda. The discursive security in Uganda entails the use of discourse, communication, and narrative strategies to counter various security challenges. Majority of the scholars and researchers have identified violent extremism in Uganda as being primarily associated with two groups; the LRA and the ADF. The LRA, led by Joseph Kony, gained notoriety for its brutal tactics, including abducting children and forcing them to become soldiers or sex slaves.

However, the LRA's activity has significantly diminished in recent years following their defeat and expulsion from Uganda. The ADF, initially formed in the 1990s, has been linked to various acts of violence and has been designated as a terrorist organization by the Ugandan and the US governments. They have been active along the Uganda-DRC border and have been involved in attacks resulting in civilian casualties and instability in the region. Factors contributing to violent extremism in Uganda include; historical grievances, economic disparities, religious and ethnic tensions, and political instability. Poverty, lack of education, and limited opportunities in certain regions, all which have been exploited by extremist groups to recruit disenfranchised individuals. Efforts by the Ugandan government, along with international assistance and regional cooperation, have aimed to counter violent extremism through military operations, socio-economic programs, community engagement, and deradicalization initiatives. Discursive security has formed part of the strategies adopted to counter violent extremism and plays a significant role in curbing violent extremism by addressing the ideological and communicative aspects of extremist narratives.

5.2.2 The Role of Discursive Security in Curbing Violent Extremism

Discursive security refers to the strategies and efforts aimed at countering extremist discourse and narratives through various forms of communication, including media, education, and public discourse. The researcher has established that by engaging in discursive security strategies, governments, organizations, and communities seek to challenge and counter the ideologies that underpin violent extremism, thereby weakening its appeal and reducing its potential to incite violence. Discursive security facilitates counterterrorism by debunking misinformation spread by extremist groups. The researcher learns that; extremist groups often rely on spreading false information and propaganda to manipulate and radicalize individuals. As a result, discursive security strategies involve identifying and debunking such misinformation through fact-checking, referring to credible sources and heightening public awareness campaigns. By exposing the inaccuracies and manipulative tactics used by extremists, the credibility of extremist's narratives is therefore diminished. Religious extremism, often expressed through Jihadist propaganda and leading to terrorism, has been a significant driver of violent extremism, notably propagated by the Al Shabaab militia group. As a result, discursive security plays a crucial role in countering extremist propaganda by addressing and correcting the distortions of religious doctrines. It also involves promoting new initiatives to fortify community defenses against such ideologies. It does it by promoting tolerance and inclusivity in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society with diverse orientations, often focusing on promoting tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity. By fostering open dialogues and discussions within communities, discursive security strengthens social cohesion and resilience against extremist narratives. By encouraging acceptance of different viewpoints and cultures, discursive security helps in creating an environment less susceptible to extremist recruitment. This study learns that violent extremism

propaganda is currently propagated through the internet and social media platforms (Facebook, X, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram) and therefore discursive security engages with online communities to counter extremist content, done through reporting mechanisms, particularly with strong partnerships with tech companies, and also through the creation of positive online spaces that provide credible information and customer support. Online engagement is particularly important in the amplification of voices that counter violent propaganda. Discursive security strategies are mostly effective when they amplify voices from Community leaders, religious figures, former extremists, and other trusted sources who are able to share personal stories, insights, and messages that discourage engagement with extremist ideologies.

5.2.3 The Challenges and Opportunities of Discursive Security in Curbing Violent

Extremism

5.2.3.1 Challenges Hindering Discursive Security in Counterterrorism

This research study identifies several challenges and opportunities inherent in discursive security as a strategy for curbing violent extremism. Some of the challenges confronting discursive security in Uganda include; complexity of messaging and cultural sensitivity. This means that different cultural contexts demand nuanced approaches, which implies that; what works in one community might not work the same way in another community, thereby necessitating a deep understanding of local cultures and norms. This can be summarized as narrative contestation. Because extremist groups often manipulate narratives to recruit and radicalize individuals, countering these narratives requires credible and persuasive alternative narratives that resonate with the targeted populations. However, creating and disseminating such narratives is quite challenging, especially when communities have deep-rooted grievances or mistrust in government and civil institutions.

Discursive security in Uganda is challenged by information control. Controlling the flow of information is crucial in countering extremism. However, in Uganda, challenges such as limited access to civic education, widespread misinformation, and the spread of radical ideologies through informal channels like local religious centers (Mosques) or online platforms (social media platforms), pose obstacles to effective communication and information dissemination.

There are also challenges associated with acceptancy of government legitimacy and trust in Uganda which hinder discursive strategies associated with the government. Reduced levels of trust in some government institutions due to corruption, political instability, and historical grievances hinder the acceptance of government-led initiatives against extremism. This challenge is compounded by external influences and regional dynamics outside Uganda. Uganda's proximity to conflict-prone regions and porous borders present challenges in managing the spillover of extremist ideologies from neighboring countries. While regional cooperation is essential, differing interests and geopolitical tensions among Uganda's neighbors continue to hinder collaborative efforts. This research study also identified resource constraints as other challenges facing discursive security in curbing violent extremism in Uganda. Limited resources for communication and outreach campaigns impede efforts to effectively disseminate counter-narratives. Investments in media campaigns, community engagement, and educational programs are often constrained, limiting the reach and impact of these initiatives.

5.2.3.2 Opportunities Associated with Discursive Security

There also exist several opportunities associated with discursive security in curbing violent extremism in Uganda. The first one is; empowerment through alternative narratives. Crafting and promoting alternative narratives empowers communities by offering hope, emphasizing shared values, and addressing grievances. By highlighting positive stories of resilience, reconciliation,

and community development, these narratives facilitate countering the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Discursive security encourages community engagement and ownership of their security strategies. Discursive security allows for community-centered approaches. Engaging with local communities, religious leaders, and civil society groups empowers them (community) to take ownership of countering extremist narratives. Involving these stakeholders leads to more culturally appropriate and effective strategies tailored to specific communities. This opportunity is closely associated with educational initiatives. Leveraging discursive security involves educational programs aimed at promoting critical thinking, media literacy, and values of tolerance and inclusivity. Incorporating these elements into school curricula and community workshops can equip individuals to critically evaluate extremist messages and resist radicalization. As education takes root in emancipating Ugandans from violent extremism, technology and communication take root and entrench further emancipation of people. This study realizes that advancements in technology provide opportunities to reach wider audiences in Uganda. Utilizing social media, radio, television, and other digital platforms allows for the dissemination of counter-narratives to target audiences that are increasingly connected online. Currently, 29.1 per cent of Uganda's population is connected to the internet which constitutes a significant audience for disseminating counter-narratives that challenge violent extremism.

Discursive security also offers early intervention and prevention. Discursive security in Uganda allows for early intervention and prevention strategies attained through communication. By identifying vulnerable individuals or communities and engaging them proactively through positive messaging and support networks, it becomes possible to prevent radicalization before it takes hold. This opportunity encourages partnerships and international support. Collaboration

with international partners, NGOs, and regional organizations provides access to expertise, resources, and best practices. By leveraging these partnerships, Uganda benefits from shared knowledge and experiences in countering violent extremism. Additionally, discursive security is instrumental in facilitating and enabling policy integration. Integrating discursive security into broader national security policies ensures a holistic approach to countering violent extremism in Uganda. Aligning communication strategies with security, development, and governance initiatives yields more comprehensive and sustainable outcomes.

5.3 Conclusion

Discursive security offers counter-narratives that challenge extremist ideologies. Discursive security discourse involves developing and promoting counter-narratives that challenge and contradict extremist ideologies and narratives. These counter-narratives aim to provide an alternative perspective for addressing grievances and issues that extremists exploit to recruit followers. By offering a more balanced and nuanced view, counter-narratives offered through communication and dialogue undermine the appeal of extremist ideologies. The findings from the study reveal that in 2022, global deaths from terrorism decreased by 9% to 6,701 and were 38% lower by the end of 2023 compared to their peak in 2015. This decline in deaths was accompanied by a reduction in terrorist incidents, with attacks dropping nearly 28% from 5,463 in 2021 to 3,955 in 2022. The deadliest terrorist groups in 2022 were the Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates, followed by Al-Shabaab, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM). Al Shabaab has claimed responsibility for the recent terror incidents witnessed in Uganda, while Allied Democratic Force (ADF) has claimed responsibility for the 2023 violent extremist attacks targeting Lhubiriha secondary school in which 37 students were confirmed to have been killed. Consequently, Uganda is currently

ranked as third level Country on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) with a score of 3.599 as of to-date.

Discursive security has not been fully embraced in the broader security policies in Uganda and this forms a gap which to a greater extent informed the current research. While the nature of violent extremism in Uganda is very dynamic and influenced by several factors, counterterrorism approaches have entirely utilized hard power to curb extremism. While these hard power strategies have registered a significant success in containing the execution of violent extremist acts, radicalization and propagation of extremism propaganda remains a challenge which cannot be solved through hard power. Discursive security has therefore emerged as an alternative and a soft power approach capable of discouraging violent extremism in Uganda.

This research study has identified religion as one motivating factor which violent extremist operating in Uganda have manipulated to advance their ideologies. It is in the same vein that this research discovers that religion can also be utilized as a tool for countering extremism in Uganda. Ugandans, like the rest of the Africans have been described variously as very religious and therefore religious narratives can be more impactful in discouraging or encouraging extremism. Religion is a source of collective identity and solidarity which facilitates mobilization and therefore has the potential to facilitate mobilization, especially when violent extremist factions seek to attract marginalized or disillusioned youth who have encountered barriers in their social-economic mobility. Since almost all terrorism related incidents in Uganda during pre-colonial and post-colonial periods have religious annotations, it is imperative to invoke religious actors in debunking and demystifying extremist narratives associated with it.

Whereas there are several challenges associated with discursive security approaches, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines community engagement, capacity building, media literacy programs, and targeted communication strategies. It is crucial to involve local communities, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and the media in crafting and disseminating counter-narratives to effectively curb violent extremism in Uganda. Generally, discursive security offers a platform to challenge extremist ideologies, empower communities, and foster resilience against violent extremism in Uganda. Leveraging these opportunities requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving multiple stakeholders at local, national, and international levels.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Discursive security is a novel concept in security studies particularly in Uganda and it has not been embraced in the broader security policies. It is therefore imperative for scholars and policymakers in the security sector to integrate it in the larger security discourse by evaluating the core value it presents to the policy adjustments. While it is less costly than the conventional hard power strategies, it is also very inclusive and accommodates people's narratives relating their own security hence encouraging ownership of the security strategy. Understanding the impact of religious factors on violent extremism is crucial for developing effective Counter-Violent Extremism (CVE) strategies that involve the religious sector. In Uganda, where 99% of the population is religious, integrating discursive security into religious narratives can significantly enhance counterterrorism measures. Discursive security contributes to security sector reforms by emphasizing communication, dialogue, and narrative strategies to counteract extremist propaganda and correct distortions of religious doctrines. To optimize this approach, policymakers and practitioners should focus on incorporating discursive security into CVE

efforts by defining specific roles for faith-based actors beyond religious contexts, adopting practical methods to avoid excessive governmental involvement in religious issues, and ensuring broad and inclusive public engagement in counterterrorism initiatives.

5.5 Implications of the Findings and Recommendations

Discursive security has emerged as a game-changer on matters related to curbing violent extremism. It is therefore imperative to assess the value it presents to the security sector, and formulate modalities of integrating it to the broader security concerns. First of all, since the majority of the violent extremist cases in Uganda are religiously inspired, it is imperative to engage religious actors in the counter-strategies. Religious leaders play a vital role in civil society and are essential contributors to public and security discourse. To achieve comprehensive results, it is crucial to involve them thoughtfully and sensitively in all areas of government work, while being mindful of power imbalances and potential risks. The integration of discursive security in countering violent extremism introduces other actors, in security issues which makes security an all-inclusive concept for both armed agencies and civilian actors.

5.5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research employed the securitization theory developed by the Copenhagen School, including Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde. Securitization theory examines how various societal actors—such as political leaders, media, and interest groups—define and frame certain issues as threats that necessitate immediate and extraordinary measures. In the context of addressing violent extremism in Uganda, this theory is used to analyze how security and extremism discourse is constructed and its impact on shaping policy responses. The theoretical implication of this discursive security is that it introduces new actors that could highlight real or

perceived connections between extremism and broader security challenges, such as cross-border terrorism or regional instability, to gain wider acceptance of the securitized narrative. Discursive security in Uganda introduces civil society groups, academics, and human rights organizations in the security sector which further incorporates the general public, political elites, and international partners. In essence, the theoretical implication is the recognition of other players in the security discourse.

5.5.2 Implications on Practice

Since violent extremism propaganda is currently propagated on social media platforms it is imperative for the government and all security agencies to shift their focus to these emerging sites and heighten their surveillance on the nature of threats presented therein. The government needs to enact legislation that regulates the various forms of data and information propagated through these social media sites. A high level of surveillance should be instituted to filter out information that potentially threatens public safety. In this regard, discursive security requires the security agencies in Uganda to partner with technology firms in filtering the content that is transmitted through these platforms with all due diligence. Extremist ideologies can therefore be detected and the information pulled down before it is disseminated to a larger audience. This calls for the creation of a data commission that can handle public concerns related to security and also for the protection of people against malpractices' which might crop up with such developments, for instance, the protection of sharing private data. Regulations can also offer immunity to whistleblowers who present information to authorities regarding cases of extremism.

5.5.3 Policy Implications

Discursive security has profound policy implications which have the potential to realign security policies in Uganda. Incorporating discursive security in the broader counterterrorism strategy synergies the counterterrorism strategy by incorporating elements of soft power in matters such as intelligence gathering and sharing. Discursive security is integral in incorporating public narratives in intelligence gathering and formulating standard operating procedures for adopting such information in the security discourse.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

This research underscores the importance of exploring the role of modern telecommunications technology in facilitating terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. The rapid evolution of technology is altering how terrorist organizations operate and execute attacks. Groups such as IS, Boko Haram, and the Houthi rebels are increasingly leveraging advanced technology for their activities. For example, approximately 65 non-state actors now have access to drones that can travel up to 1,500 kilometers, be used in swarms, conduct targeted assassinations, carry biological weapons, and require minimal training. This highlights the urgent need for comprehensive research into how modern technology contributes to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism.

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