

## MAPPING A SOCIAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

### Outlinking on Gab & Twitter Amongst the Australian Far-right Milieu

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of findings from a RESOLVE Research Report exploring the online social media ecosystems of the Australian far-right milieu. The report presents a data-driven examination of the online ecosystems in which identified Australian far-right violent extremists exist and interact, as mapped by user generated uniform resource locators (URL), or 'links', to internet locations gathered from two online social media platforms—Twitter and Gab. This link-based analysis builds on previous studies of online extremism to map the platforms and content shared in online spaces, providing further detail on the online ecosystems in which extremists interact. In line with Macdonald, et al., (2022) and Mudde (1995), this report uses the term "far-right" to describe ideas and actors "situated on the 'right-wing' of the global political spectrum and sharing a 'core ideology of nationalism, xenophobia, welfare chauvinism, and law and order' (Mudde, 1995)" (Macdonald, et al., 2022). "REMVE" is also similarly used to refer to a "specific, fringe subset of the far right, comprised of far-right individuals, groups, movements, or content that explicitly legitimate, promote, or support violence" (MacDonald, et al., 2022). To learn more about the research methodology and detailed findings, please refer to the RESOLVE Research Report by Julian Droogan, Lise Waldek, Brian Ballsun-Stanton, and Jade Hutchinson: [Mapping a Social Media Ecosystem: Outlinking on Gab & Twitter Amongst the Australian Far-right Milieu](#) (2022).



#### Absence of REMVE and Violent Content

The absence of explicitly violent content in the top highly engaged links is an important finding. Instead of explicit violence, however, we found an environment characterized by the propagation of narratives promoting, either explicitly or implicitly, racism, hatred, and othering, although, we only examined the very top-most engaged portion of our sample.



#### A Coherent Media Ecosystem

Networks of links indicate the existence of a complex social network that crisscrosses mainstream social media platforms, legacy media sites, and the plethora of countermedia social media platforms, media sites, and websites. Gab users frequently linked to mainstream social media sites such as Twitter and YouTube. We saw less evidence of Twitter users linking to Gab and other parts of the countermedia environment.



#### Prevalence of International Content and Events

Wider link analysis of a broader far-right milieu suggests that while local issues may be elevated at a particular time and in a target way for mobilizing broader support, this exists against a backdrop of continual interest in and commentary on wider international events and debates.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

01

The findings raise questions about how we define and identify REMVE actors from within a wider online milieu in which they may exist, and how we identify the threat they pose. A focus on explicit violence is necessary, but how these activities connect and are sustained and expanded by a wider landscape defined by ideologies of othering, racism, and hatred must also be considered.

02

Broadening public awareness and discourse about how extremist and violent actors appropriate wider conservative and right-wing media ecosystems towards anti-democratic goals could help neuter their ability to hijack and derail public debates. Programs that address this wider connection must be careful to not falsely equate conservative (far right) political opinion with that of the anti-democratic or violent far right (REMVE and far right extremism), for instance through the overzealous moderation of non-violent online content.

03

While we did not find evidence for links out to explicitly violent material, the interplay between content from a range of social media platforms and websites, reinforce the importance of multi-platform studies to understand how networks develop and expand across the diverse and complex media ecology. This can reveal ways communities on mainstream and alternative platforms interact and engage with global material to reinforce narratives and in-group identities.

## RESOLVE NETWORK

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RESOLVE is housed at the U.S. Institute of Peace, building upon the Institute's decade-long legacy of deep engagement in conflict affected communities

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