

# Social Networks as Open Sources An Analysis of „Echo Chambers”

**Lecturer Raluca LUȚAI, Ph.D.\***

\*Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca  
e-mail: [raluca.lutai@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:raluca.lutai@ubbcluj.ro)

## Abstract

This article examines the role of open-source intelligence (OSINT) and, more specifically, social media intelligence (SOCMINT) in understanding emerging social dynamics, focusing on the extremist narratives circulating on the Gab social media platform. As a poorly moderated and ideologically homogeneous environment, Gab functions as an echo chamber in which far-right and white supremacist ideas are generated, amplified, and normalized. Using a passive netnographic methodology, the study analyzes content posted between March and May 2024, identifying patterns of radicalization, hostile narratives, and identity-building processes within two dominant ideological themes: far-right nationalism and white supremacy. The findings demonstrate how social media platforms, whether mainstream or obscure, constitute valuable open sources for identifying early indicators of societal tensions, discursive polarization, and potential offline mobilization. By highlighting how echo chambers shape user perceptions and reinforce extremist worldviews, the article underscores the strategic value of OSINT/SOCMINT for policymakers and security institutions. Ultimately, the study shows that systematic monitoring of online ecosystems is essential for anticipating emerging risks and supporting preventive responses within the broader national security framework.

## Keywords:

Open Sources; Social Media Intelligence; Gab; Social Networks.

### Article info

Received: 16 November 2025; Revised: 11 December 2025; Accepted: 12 January 2026; Available online: 8 April 2026

Citation: Luțai, R. 2026. "Social Networks as Open Sources. An Analysis of „Echo Chambers."  
*Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University*, 15(1): 145-157. <https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-26-09>



© „Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution ([CC BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/))

## The dynamics of open sources and the emergence of Social Media Intelligence

Open sources represent all publicly available information, collected legally, without requiring privileged access or clandestine means (Hassan and Hijazi 2018, 4). This includes traditional media content, government documents, publicly accessible databases, academic publications, and information generated in the digital environment, particularly on social networks. When data and information from open sources are used to create products that support decision-making, the process is called Open Source Intelligence. Open source data used in the intelligence process can come from radio/TV broadcasts, satellite images, letters of any kind (Hassan and Hijazi 2018, 4). This data represents material that, if taken separately, is not important in the intelligence analysis process, being valuable only when processed alongside other data (Heather and Blum 2018, 10). The first media from which these open sources were collected were books, newspapers, and then radio and TV broadcasts. The importance of open sources was rethought with the emergence and development of social networks, which are now one of the most dynamic and valuable open sources, due to the abundance of information they provide and because they reflect in real time the perceptions, reactions, tensions, and processes shaping public opinion. The emergence of social networks has led to the need to develop a new subdomain of OSINT, as they represent a space where data of interest to analysts is created: Social Media Intelligence. Abbreviated as SOCMINT, it consists of methods, tools, and technology that make it possible to collect and examine data exclusively from social media platforms. It is important to note that Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) is the general framework for collecting, processing, and analyzing information from public sources, while Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) is a specialized subdomain of OSINT, dedicated exclusively to data generated in online social media. While OSINT integrates a wide range of sources, from traditional media, official publications, and public databases to satellite imagery, SOCMINT focuses strictly on the dynamics, interactions, and content of user-generated content on social media platforms, providing a type of insight that cannot be obtained by other means.

For information from the internet, including social media datasets, to be used effectively, it must be delivered quickly, securely, and in a way that makes sense to strategic and operational decision-makers. Depending on the objective, the use of SOCMINT can range from simple operational use of a single screen to in-depth strategic analysis (Omand, Bartlett and Miller 2012, 4).

For governments, security agencies, and international organizations, open sources are an essential tool in understanding and monitoring the social environment. Overall, although Social Media Intelligence offers significant advantages such as rapid access to large volumes of data, the ability to monitor events in real time, and an understanding of the structure and dynamics of groups, it also has limitations related to the accuracy of information, the volatility of content, and the difficulty

of filtering relevant data. Beyond these limitations, social networks remain essential because they allow for the early identification of social developments, changes in collective behavior, and emerging discourses that can influence political stability, national security, or social cohesion. Social networks, through the volume and high rate of user-generated content, provide access to a body of information that is difficult to obtain through traditional methods, as they capture both the spontaneous reactions of individuals and the way in which groups build their identity, solidarity, or opposition to certain ideas.

The usefulness of open sources extends significantly to the field of strategic intelligence production<sup>1</sup>. By integrating and analyzing data obtained from these environments, institutions can identify patterns, trends, and emerging phenomena that influence the security environment. Intelligence generated from open sources is not only descriptive but also anticipatory: it allows for the assessment of potential risks, the understanding of radicalization processes, the observation of the dissemination of disinformation and hostile narratives, and the estimation of how certain tensions may translate into concrete actions. This anticipatory capacity is one of the fundamental functions of OSINT/SOCMINT, facilitating the development of preventive policies and strengthening institutional resilience.

---

<sup>1</sup> Strategic intelligence = a form of analysis that provides a systematic and anticipatory assessment of external developments relevant to the state, used by policymakers to develop national strategies.

In this sense, social networks occupy a central place in the analysis, as they are the space where social dynamics manifest themselves most rapidly and visibly. Mainstream platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, or Instagram reflect widespread trends and immediate reactions from the population, while less regulated or obscure networks such as Gab or Telegram provide access to marginal, radical, or emerging discourses that often precede manifestations in the traditional public space. An essential aspect for understanding these platforms is the phenomenon of *echo chambers* (Flaxman, Goel and Rao 2016, 298–320), in which users are predominantly exposed to ideas, opinions, and narratives that confirm their own beliefs. Theoretically, echo chambers work by filtering information and algorithmically structuring digital media so that concordant content is amplified and dissonant content is minimized or excluded. This dynamic favors polarization, the hardening of attitudes, and the consolidation of group identities, as interactions occur in a closed, self-referential environment that constantly reinforces the same perspectives (Del Vicario et al. 2016). In particular, echo chambers are one of the most relevant phenomena for SOCMINT analysis, as they indicate how algorithms and media consumption behaviors influence the aggregation and radicalization of online groups. On obscure platforms, where moderation is low, and users are drawn together by strong ideological affinities, echo chambers become even more pronounced, facilitating the emergence and spread of extreme discourse at an accelerated pace.

Echo chambers formed on various social networks allow governments and institutions to observe both the process of forming dominant opinions and the way in which collective frustrations are aggregated, extremist messages are propagated, and groups with potential influence or risk are mobilized. It is precisely this extended visibility that transforms social networks, whether well-established or lesser-known, into a barometer of the state of society, providing essential clues for anticipating phenomena such as radicalization, polarization, protest mobilization, or the emergence of movements capable of affecting public order (Patel et al. 2020).

Therefore, the importance of open sources, and especially social networks, regardless of their level of notoriety, lies not only in their accessibility but also in their ability to provide a complex, real-time picture of social change. When used appropriately, they become an indispensable strategic resource for understanding developments in contemporary society, for the early identification of emerging risks, and for anticipating collective phenomena with a major impact on national security and stability (Europol 2026). In other words, the systematic integration of open sources into institutional processes becomes not just a methodological option, but a strategic necessity.

Using the tool of netnography, this paper examines how echo chambers are formed on the Gab platform, analyzing two of the most prominent ideological directions present in this environment: the far right and white supremacy. Addressing these issues allows us to understand the processes by which radical discourses are generated, amplified, and normalized in a poorly moderated digital space, where interactions between users are shaped by strong ideological affinities. Studying these phenomena is essential because it provides early clues about the dynamics of radicalization, the consolidation of hostile collective identities, and the potential transfer of violence from the online to the offline space. The analysis of echo chambers and dominant themes on Gab thus contributes to a deeper understanding of emerging risks and is a valuable tool for developing prevention and protection measures in the field of national and social security.

## Methodology

Gab.com was chosen as a case study because it is a relatively new social network (launched in 2016), and the context of its emergence, as well as the events subsequently generated through the content distributed, make it a relevant environment for analyzing online extremist phenomena. According to founder Andrew Torba, interviewed by National Public Radio (NPR), the platform was designed as a response to what he called „censorship” practiced by mainstream networks such as Twitter. Torba stated: *I wanted to build an alternative to the big tech oligarchy... I had seen what was happening in Silicon Valley with the rise of censorship during the 2015–2016 election cycle, and I had experienced it myself on Reddit, Twitter, and other platforms. I didn't see any clear and viable alternatives, so I decided to build*

*one myself. Our mission, from day one, has been to defend freedom of expression and individual liberty online for all people* ([Public Post 2016](#)).

A decisive factor in selecting this platform for analysis was the 2018 attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, which has become a frequently cited case in discussions on the link between online radicalization and offline violence. The perpetrator was highly active on Gab, where he posted and reposted explicitly antisemitic content and threats targeting the Jewish community. Shortly before the attack, he published the message: "I can't sit back and watch my people being sacrificed. Screw public opinion, I'm going in" (public post, 2018), and subsequently killed 11 people ([Goodwin 2021](#)).

While this case is often discussed in journalistic investigations, it also reflects broader dynamics identified in the academic literature on online radicalization. Research has shown that poorly moderated or alternative social media platforms can function as echo chambers in which extremist narratives are normalized, reinforced, and increasingly legitimized ([Conway 2017](#); [Neumann 2013](#)). Such environments facilitate processes of moral disengagement and grievance amplification, which can contribute to the transition from ideological commitment to violent action ([Borum 2011](#)).

Empirical studies further demonstrate a correlation between exposure to online hate speech and real-world violence, suggesting that digital platforms play a significant role in shaping offline behavior ([Müller and Schwarz 2020](#)). In this context, Gab has been identified as a space that enables the circulation and mutual reinforcement of extremist discourse due to its minimal content moderation and explicit positioning as a "free speech" alternative ([Conway et al. 2019](#)). The Tree of Life attack thus serves as an illustrative case of how online radicalization processes may culminate in offline acts of extremist violence. The data collection period for this study was March–May 2024, a three-month interval chosen to capture a diversity of reactions to local and international events, as well as the dynamics of ideas circulating in the community. The platform was monitored at least once every three days, with a minimum of ten posts selected per session. The content was filtered according to two themes of interest: right-wing extremist nationalism and white supremacy. Blocks of text, images, audio-visual materials, and visible symbols were analyzed, especially those inciting hatred against vulnerable groups such as people of color, Jews, Muslims, or other minorities.

The data collection method followed the principles of netnography, an adapted version of traditional ethnography applied to digital media. Netnography involves direct, systematic, and participatory observation of behaviors, interactions, and discourses in online communities ([Bartl, Kannan and Stockinger 2016](#), 167). Using this method, the researcher can document not only the published content, but also how it is received, reinterpreted, and amplified by community members ([Bartl, Kannan and Stockinger 2016](#), 168).

Ingrid Jeacle points out in „Navigating netnography: A guide for the accounting researcher” (Jeacle 2020, 89). The first category is archival data, which consists of communications and posts made by members of the online community before the researcher joined them and which are accessible to everyone (Jeacle 2020, 89). Passive netnography is the study and observation of this type of data (Costello, McDermott and Wallace 2017, 20). The second category consists of jointly obtained or created data, information that the researcher co-generates with online users during interactions with the group, such as feedback on their own posts, responses to online surveys, and interviews with group members (Jeacle 2020, 90). The researcher participates in a continuous, real-time discourse in this type of active netnography (Costello, McDermott and Wallace 2017, 21). The third category is data produced as a result of field notes taken by researchers while observing the online community (Jeacle 2020, 90). According to this classification, the type of netnography used in this research is passive netnography, focused predominantly on the analysis of archival data. This approach involves non-intrusive observation of content already existing on the platform before the start of the investigation, without direct interaction with community members. We did not actively participate in discussions, we did not intervene in the dynamics of the group, and we did not co-generate data with users, but limited ourselves to periodically monitoring the online space and collecting relevant public posts. Passive netnography is suitable for studying extremist communities because it allows us to capture radicalization processes, dominant discourses, and mechanisms for strengthening group identity without influencing user behavior or altering the nature of interactions between them.

### **Gab.com. An echo chamber of hate**

Gab.com is a social networking site similar to Twitter and Facebook, with over 85.8 million monthly visits (Semrush.com 2026). It was created by Andrew Torba, a businessman and supporter of President Donald Trump who describes himself as a „conservative Christian Republican.” What motivated him to start Gab was the desire to create a space for conservatives, who had been unfairly marginalized on Facebook and other social media sites.

According to the information provided in the section „Gab Help Guides - What is Gab.com?”, Gab is a social network that promotes „freedom of speech, individual liberty, and the free flow of information online.” (Gab.com 2026). Gab quickly became a platform surrounded by controversy (Zannettou et al. 2020, 1008-1009). From the outset, it promoted the idea of almost unlimited freedom of expression, which attracted both supporters of an uncensored internet and much more radical groups. Due to its very permissive content rules, the network became a refuge for far-right individuals and communities, conspiracy theorists, and anti-establishment activists who had been sanctioned or excluded from traditional platforms. Thus, the platform’s public image has been shaped at the border between a space of total

freedom and a place where the lack of moderation has allowed the proliferation of controversial and dangerous ideas.

This concentration of radical voices has generated serious criticism. Observers have noted that hate speech, conspiracy theories, and extremist material frequently circulate on Gab without consistent intervention from moderators. Over time, this climate has caused several hosting companies, payment processors, and service providers to distance themselves from the platform, leading to periods where Gab was blocked or forced to rebuild its infrastructure almost from scratch.

The audience using Gab has gradually taken shape. Although it initially attracted people curious to try an alternative to traditional networks, the platform has gradually become a meeting place for those who felt censored or marginalized in the mainstream online space. Many of the users are people interested in intense political discussions, without strict moderation limits.

As the platform's reputation became linked to the idea of „total freedom of expression,” Gab attracted diverse groups, from anti-establishment activists and supporters of unconventional political ideas to communities that had been excluded from other networks because of their behavior or discourse. This has resulted in a heterogeneous community, united mainly by the desire to have a space where they can post without fear of sanctions from moderators. Without a doubt, Gab is an expression of an „echo chamber” in which radical opinions amplify each other, and users are exposed almost exclusively to similar ideological perspectives.

In addition to numerous posts promoting hatred and racist content, Gab's lax approach to content has allowed a wave of QAnon conspiracy theories, misinformation, and anti-Semitic comments on the platform. Much of this would not be allowed on today's well-known social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), although they have their own problems in moderating extremism. Promoting „free speech” in an extremist way and broadly defining the concept of freedom of expression, which users invoke whenever they want to justify their malicious actions, creates an environment conducive to the emergence of extremist and hate speech. The toxic environment created within Gab.com should be of interest for studying the role of social networks in Open Source Intelligence analyses.

## **Nationalism, the far right, and white supremacy**

### ***Nationalism and the far right***

On Gab, nationalist and far-right ideas are expressed in a visible and often direct manner, shaping the platform's identity over time. In the absence of strict moderation rules, messages glorifying national identity, traditions, and cultural symbols are expressed without restraint. These are often accompanied by anti-globalist rhetoric, which views international institutions and global elites as threats to sovereignty or „authentic” values.

With the mass migration of users excluded from large platforms, Gab has gradually become a refuge for radical voices. In this environment, far-right ideas have become increasingly prominent: xenophobic rhetoric, anti-immigration messages, politically-tinged conspiracy theories, and posts that idealize the past and portray the present as inevitable decline. The symbols, slogans, and themes specific to these movements circulate freely, sometimes even being celebrated by certain internal communities.

The lack of firm moderation has created a space where the line between hardline conservatism and radicalism is blurred. In such a permissive climate, ideas can quickly evolve from simple political opinions to rigid identity discourses, and groups on the fringes of the political spectrum have found fertile ground here to express themselves and attract followers.

The posts identified as falling within the theme of right-wing extremist nationalism discussed any information that would endanger national identity: the users whose posts were collected generally identify themselves as American Christians. Thus, any foreign element (different religion, nationality, ethnicity) represents a threat that, out of loyalty and devotion to their nation, users feel the need to inform the community about and sometimes find solutions to, most often disproportionate ones.

Among the entities frequently targeted by hostile discourse are Ukraine, China, Israel, Muslims, and immigrants. Concerning Ukraine, many users believe that the United States is sending unjustified financial and military aid, ignoring domestic issues such as those in the healthcare system. A common image shows former President Joe Biden alongside Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, accompanied by the rhetorical question: „Why is there no money for health and social security, but there is money for Ukraine, illegal immigrants, and state-funded colleges?”(public post, April 2024) Ukrainians are sometimes described as a people seeking to profit financially from the US, an idea illustrated by images depicting President Volodymyr Zelensky as the „Queen of Welfare” in a satirical manner. Some posts claim that US support for Ukraine is the result of Jewish influence on US politics, a recurring theme in anti-Semitic narratives on the platform.

Another important direction of these narratives is theories about Israel’s influence on US politics. A post shared by @etrimmer features the director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Steven M. Dettelbach, accused of wanting to „confiscate Americans’ guns,” claiming that his intentions are motivated by his Jewish identity. The associated comments reinforce the same conspiracy theme, suggesting that the US is „occupied” or manipulated by organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League. Anti-Semitic discourse occupies a central place in many posts. Jews are blamed for major events such as the 9/11 attacks or caricatured with negative attributes such as „liars,” „greedy,” „evil,” and prone to manipulating the world by playing the victim card in relation to the Holocaust. The narrative that Jews control global institutions or promote social movements such as LGBTQ+

is repeated. In visual representations, the „Happy Merchant” template, considered one of the most widespread anti-Semitic memes, characterized by degrading stereotypes, is frequently used.

Posts glorifying Nazism or far-right figures such as Adolf Hitler or Ursula Haverbeck<sup>2</sup> also appear in these communities. Some messages present Nazism as misunderstood or unfairly „demonized,” and Hitler as a sacrificed figure, reinterpreted in a positive light. The posts often receive extensive reactions and explicit support, a sign of the resonance of these ideas in the community. The number of those who support Nazi ideas is numerous. In addition to their admiration for Haverbeck, some users also focus their attention on Adolf Hitler, who is considered a politician who wanted to save the Germans from the Jews and is seen more as a victim than a leader who committed war crimes. @ToddORiley states that „in 1913, Hitler painted Jesus as a child, while the Jews celebrated taking over global finance with the creation of the Fed... History is contaminated...” (public post, April 2024). In addition to such posts, in which Hitler’s decisions or quotes are viewed with admiration, there are also those that glorify Nazism in general, by distributing pictures of locations that had the Nazi flag or images of supporters of the extremist ideology.

A constant theme is hostility towards immigrants. Posts such as that of @Commonsense1774 portray illegal immigrants as armed criminals, while other messages glorify authoritarian policies towards minorities, attributed to leaders such as Vladimir Putin. In the *Trump 2024* group, the discourse describes illegal immigration as an „invasion” permitted or encouraged by the US government, and some users propose radical solutions, such as „a one-way bridge to send Mexicans back.”

### ***White supremacy***

On Gab, white supremacist discourse is expressed in a direct and unfiltered manner, creating a space where racial identity is transformed into a criterion of human value and social legitimacy. The central discourse that dominates these communities argues that white people are responsible for all the achievements of modern civilization, from political institutions to contemporary technologies, and this perception is accompanied by the idea that other races are inherently inferior or incapable of cultural progress. The posts collected can be grouped into several categories: glorification of the „white man” as the author of civilization, victimization of white supremacists, attribution of negative traits to non-white people, and calls for aggressive action, both online and offline.

In these narratives, white people are presented as rational, disciplined, and moral individuals at the center of human evolution. Examples such as the

---

<sup>2</sup> Ursula Haverbeck (1928–2024) was a German right-wing extremist, best known for denying the Holocaust. Over the years, she was repeatedly convicted of inciting hatred and making public statements contesting and minimizing Nazi crimes.

post by user @AllAmericanJorge, which justifies the safety of the state of Maine by the fact that the population is „95% white,” illustrate the idea that racial homogeneity guarantees peace and public order. In contrast, non-white groups are described as prone to violence or crime, and this perception is constantly reflected in comments and memes distributed within the community. This discourse is supported by messages such as „White people built everything you see” or „White people invented cars, airplanes, and freedom,” along with arguments intended to minimize the cultural achievements of people of color or other non-white populations. Images depicting African villages or traditional dwellings are used derisively to create an artificial contrast between „civilization” and „primitivism.” At the same time, ideas are propagated about the need to maintain a „white” patriarchy, seen as an indispensable structure for preserving social order and racial supremacy. Profiles such as that of user @Henree, who openly declares his identity as a „national socialist, pro-white,” are representative of communities that promote such ideologies.

Victimization is another essential element of white supremacist discourse. Many users claim that they are discriminated against simply because of their identity, that they cannot enjoy their culture or values without being criticized, while minority communities are „encouraged” to express their identity. This leads to claims that „white unity is forbidden” or „just our existence annoys others,” creating a false narrative of „white genocide,” argued through concepts such as „imposed diversity,” considered a strategy to dilute or eliminate the white population. In many of the posts, people of color are portrayed in a degrading manner, being associated with animalistic terms and violent stereotypes. The comments suggest that black people are naturally prone to aggression or criminality, which „excludes” them from the category of „civilized people.” This perception is amplified by offensive images, racist jokes, or videos depicting assaults on people of color, distributed not for informational purposes but as a source of entertainment for community members.

In addition to discursive propaganda, there are also calls for direct action. Some users believe that people of color should be „sent back” to the African continent, while others encourage physical aggression or public humiliation. Figures such as @Gypsycrusader are turned into community idols for their videos verbally harassing people of color on video platforms, and their popularity is amplified by the distribution of themed products or racial symbols.

Taken together, the themes of extremist nationalism and white supremacy highlight how the loosely regulated space of the Gab platform fosters the proliferation of radical ideas. While nationalist discourse emphasizes loyalty to the nation and hostility toward certain ethnic or religious groups, white supremacy adds an extra layer of radicalism, articulating a vision in which the white race is presented as the foundation of civilization and as a group in constant danger. Hatred of Jews, Muslims, or people of color is not a new phenomenon on Gab, but the social context and recent events, such as the conflict in Ukraine or internal debates in the United States, have intensified these narratives.

What is worrying is that these discourses do not always remain online. Examples such as the attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018 show that digital extremism can turn into real violence, transforming chat rooms into incubators of radicalization. The lack of immediate consequences in the virtual environment and the feeling of impunity fueled by anonymity encourage the expression of increasingly severe forms of hatred, threats, and misinformation.

By analyzing these manifestations, it becomes clear that freedom of expression is distorted in these communities. Any attempt at moderation is perceived as „oppression,” and critical reactions are turned into evidence of a conspiracy against the white population. This victimization perspective strengthens internal solidarity but also amplifies the potential for radicalization.

Monitoring platforms such as Gab are essential to understanding the processes through which extremist ideas are formed and propagated. Poorly regulated digital spaces provide fertile ground for the development of movements that can become dangerous in real life. By identifying these dynamics early on, institutions, researchers, and stakeholders can anticipate risks, observe trends in radicalization, and develop appropriate strategies to prevent violence.

## Conclusions

This study highlights the growing relevance of open sources in the analysis of social phenomena with implications for national security, demonstrating that digital media, especially social networks, represent a privileged space for early observation of processes of radicalization, polarization, and collective mobilization. The Gab platform, characterized by a low level of moderation and an internal culture that promotes the idea of absolute freedom of expression, functions as a veritable „echo chamber” in which extremist discourse is not only tolerated but amplified and normalized. The analysis of the two themes—right-wing extremist nationalism and white supremacy—shows how online communities can construct hostile identity narratives, reinforce perceptions of victimization, and consolidate polarization mechanisms through repetitive interactions.

By using netnographic methodology and leveraging data from open sources, the paper demonstrates the usefulness of social media analysis in generating strategic intelligence. Observing how such narratives are formed, articulated, and propagated provides institutions with essential insight into emerging risks, enabling early identification of radical developments and tensions that may escalate into violence. Beyond its descriptive dimension, such analysis provides the ability to anticipate, contributing to the formulation of prevention policies and the strengthening of societal resilience. In this sense, research confirms that the systematic monitoring of social platforms, whether mainstream or obscure, is not just an academic exercise but a strategic approach that is indispensable for understanding contemporary realities and protecting national security.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research relies on a passive netnographic approach, focusing exclusively on publicly available, archival content from the Gab platform, without direct interaction with users. As a result, the analysis is limited to observable discursive and symbolic practices and does not capture individual motivations or subjective interpretations of posted content. Second, the data selection is thematically oriented toward far-right nationalism and white supremacy and is not intended to be statistically representative of the entire platform, which may lead to an overemphasis on extremist narratives. The relatively short time frame analyzed (March–May 2024) further constrains the generalizability of the results, as online discourses are highly sensitive to contextual and political developments. Finally, the anonymity of users and the absence of empirical linkage between online discourse and offline behavior limit the ability to assess the real-world impact of the narratives identified, which should be interpreted as indicators of potential risk rather than demonstrated causal relationships.

Building on these findings, future research should expand the temporal and comparative scope of analysis in order to better capture the evolution and persistence of extremist narratives across different platforms and contexts. Integrating longitudinal approaches, cross-platform comparisons, and, where ethically and methodologically appropriate, mixed methods that combine netnography with quantitative or interview-based data could provide a more nuanced understanding of radicalization dynamics and their potential translation into offline action. Such directions would not only strengthen the analytical depth of OSINT/SOCMINT research, but they could also enhance its practical value for anticipating emerging threats and informing more effective prevention and policy responses within the field of national security.

## References

- Amend Alex.** 2018. "Analyzing a terrorist's social media manifesto: the Pittsburgh synagogue shooter's posts on Gab". <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/10/28/analyzing-terrorists-social-media-manifesto-Pittsburgh-synagogue-shooters-posts-gab>.
- Bartl, Michael, Vijai Kumar Kannan, and Hanna Stockinger.** 2016. "A review and analysis of literature on netnography research". *International Journal of Technology Marketing* 11(2): 165–182. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJTMKT.2016.075687>.
- Borum, Randy.** 2011. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories". *Journal of Strategic Security* 4(4): 7-36. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26463910>.
- Conway, Maura.** 2017. "Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing". *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40 (1): 77-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408>.

- Costello, Leesa, Marie-Louise McDermott, and Ruth Wallace.** 2017. "Netnography: Range of Practices, Misperceptions, and Missed Opportunities". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917700647>.
- Del Vicario, Michela, Alessandro Bessi, Fabiana Zollo, Fabio Petroni, Antonio Scala, Guido Caldarelli, H. Eugene Stanley, and Walter Quattrociocchi.** 2016. "Echo Chambers in the Age of Misinformation". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* 113 (3): 554–559. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.1509.00189>.
- Europol.** 2026. "EU Internet Referral Unit - EU IRU, Monitoring terrorism and violent extremism online". <https://www.europol.europa.eu/about-europol/european-counter-terrorism-centre-ectc/eu-internet-referral-unit-eu-iru>.
- Flaxman, Seth, Sharad Goel, and Justin M. Rao.** 2016. "Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption". *Public Opinion Quarterly* 80(1): 298–320. [doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006](https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006).
- Gab.com.** 2026. "Gab.com Help". <https://help.gab.com>.
- Goodwin, Jazmin.** 2021. "Gab: Everything you need to know about the fast-growing, controversial social network". <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/17/tech/what-is-gab-explainer/index.html>.
- Hassan, Nihad A., and Rami Hijazi.** 2018. *Open Source Intelligence Methods and Tools*. Berkeley, CA: Apress.
- Jeacle, Ingrid.** 2020. "Navigating netnography: A guide for the accounting researcher". *Financial Reporting and Accounting* 37(1): 88-101. <https://doi.org/10.1111/faam.12237>.
- Müller, Karsten și Carlo Schwarz.** 2021. "Fanning the Flames of Hate: Social Media and Hate Crime". *Journal of the European Economic Association* 19(4): 2131-2167.
- Neumann, Peter R.** 2013. "The Trouble with Radicalization". *International Affairs* 89(4): 873-893. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12049>.
- Omand, David, Jamie Bartlett, and Carl Miller.** 2012. "Introducing Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT)". *Intelligence and National Security* 27(6): 801–823. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02684527.2012.716965>.
- Patel, Faiza, Rachel Levinson-Waldman, Sophia DenUyl, and Raya Koreh.** 2020. *Social Media Monitoring: How the Department of Homeland Security Uses Digital Data in the Name of National Security*. Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law.
- Semrush.com.** 2026. "Gab.com – Website Traffic, Ranking, Analytics". <https://www.semrush.com/website/gab.com/overview/>.
- Williams, Heather J., and Ilana Blum.** 2018. "Defining Second Generation Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) for the Defense Enterprise". *RAND Corporation*. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1964.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1964.html).
- Zannettou, Savvas, Barry Bradlyn, Emiliano De Cristofaro, Haewoon Kwak, Michael Sirivianos, Gianluca Stringhini, and Jeremy Blackburn.** 2020. "What is Gab: A Bastion of Free Speech or an Alt-Right Echo Chamber". *WWW '18: Companion Proceedings of the The Web Conference 2018*, pp. 1007-1014. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3184558.3191531>.