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## SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHING?

### The taming of the Soldiers of Odin in Norway

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Soldiers of Odin Norway have tried very hard to communicate that they were *not* vigilantes and *not* right-wing extremists. Although they obviously have displayed some traits of vigilantism and anti-Islam opinions, they were clearly less militant and right-wing extremist than their original role model, the Soldiers of Odin in Finland. This chapter will explore why the Norwegian chapter of the Soldiers of Odin (SOO) turned out as a rather moderate variety of the phenomenon but also why it – in its stated mission to provide public safety in the streets – attracted a particular type of participants: young men with a criminal past.

#### **Data**

This study<sup>1</sup> is based on several sources of both primary and secondary data. We have had extensive interviews with the two main national leaders, and previously also the first spokesman.<sup>2</sup> We have been participant observers during one of the first SOO patrols in Drammen on 20 February 2016 and talked with several participants during that event. We have followed a few open Soldiers of Odin support sites on Facebook (but not their closed Facebook sites). Furthermore, we have interviewed (and communicated more informally with) several police officers who have handled different aspects of SOO activities. Some court documents and police data have also been made available to us. And finally, a huge amount of news coverage on SOO activities and activists have provided massive amounts of secondary data.

#### **The emergence of Soldiers of Odin in Norway**

Norway is characterized by a relatively low level of crime, and a high level of social trust as well as a high level of trust in the police and other public institutions,

according to the European Social Survey.<sup>3</sup> The Norwegian police is well educated, but it has one of the lowest ratios of police officers per capita in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The police are considered professional, fair and honest, but score lower on capacity and effectiveness.<sup>5</sup>

Like in many other European countries, the so-called “refugee crisis” became a hot political issue in Norway. 31,135 refugees, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan, applied for asylum in Norway in 2015. The following year, the numbers were down to 3460,<sup>6</sup> partly due to a very restrictive asylum policy by the government, which consisted of a coalition between the Conservative Party and the right-wing populist Progress Party, whose party platform is distinctly restrictive on immigration. Beyond the Progress Party, the far-right scene in Norway is small and weak. Anti-immigration sentiments have a considerable following on social media but have a very limited impact on the street level. Far right political parties generally fail in elections. The Norwegian branch of the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement have only a few dozen activists but lean heavily on support from their Swedish partners when organizing demonstrations in Norway. Their activities are increasing, though.

Opponents of accepting in a rapidly rising number of refugees from the Middle East and Africa into Europe claimed that the “flood of refugees” constitutes a threat along several dimensions: There were concerns about the economic costs, and some were also worried about demographic and cultural impact of the arriving refugees. Some pointed to the potential risk of terrorist infiltration into Europe, and the possible negative consequences of immigration for public safety and crime – and in particular the fear of rape of European women by Muslim males.

What turned more or less well-founded worries into a moral panic was the events that took place in Cologne and several other cities on New Year’s Eve 2015/2016: several hundred women became victims of sexual assaults, mainly committed by recently arrived male refugees from the Middle East and Northern Africa.<sup>7</sup> During the following days, there were reports of similar incidents on a smaller scale in Kalmar, Sweden, and unsubstantiated accounts from several other places. Claims (partly substantiated) that the police and the media initially tried to cover up the assaults to avoid stigmatizing refugees contributed to a widespread anger against refugees as well as distrust towards authorities. Anti-Islam and anti-immigration movements obviously tried to reinforce such emotions, claiming that Muslim men are coming to Europe not only to conquer our lands for Islam, but they are also sexually aggressive predators coming here to molest our women.<sup>8</sup>

During the days and weeks after the New Year events, there were intensive discussions on several Norwegian Facebook pages about the need to do something to protect “our women” against the criminal and sexually over-charged male refugees. The Soldiers of Odin group of Finland and their “uniform”, black hoodies (sweaters with a hood) with symbols combining Norse symbolism, national flags, a militant name and the style of outlaw MC club back patches clearly appeared as an attractive approach. Some contacted the leaders of the original SOO groups in the town Kemi in Finland, and got permission to make use of a

Norwegian variety of the SOO symbols on condition of abiding with the by-laws of the Finnish SOO. The Finnish mother organization had admin status of the Facebook pages of the Norwegian chapter during the first establishment phase but lost (or relinquished) this control after a while. Gradually the Norwegian SOO chapter distanced itself from the Finnish SOO but it regained its ties with the international SOO organization, which was controlled by a Finnish and a Maltese leader.<sup>9</sup>

The Norwegian chapter started to organize, recruit and plan activities on Facebook during late January 2016. They staged their first patrol (“walk”) in the city of Tønsberg on a Saturday night on 13 February 2016, with around 14 participants.<sup>10</sup> The first (allegedly self-appointed) spokesman was a former leading activist in Norwegian Defence League, Ronny Alte. There were also a couple of well-known neo-Nazi activists among them. However, most of the participants had no ties to far-right groups but they were well known by the police for many other issues. The event attracted huge media interest and controversy, which probably helped to fuel recruitment and spread the idea to new places. Within the next ten months, SOO staged more than 100 “walks” in more than 20 different locations in Norway, mostly in smaller cities and towns. Many of these were one-off events with few if any local participants but with “guest appearances” of SOO activists from chapters elsewhere. The most frequent walks were concentrated in five cities: Arendal, Tønsberg, Lillestrøm, Drammen and Fredrikstad.<sup>11</sup>

The start-up phase as well as the continuation became highly chaotic for Soldiers of Odin Norway. Within the first months, two factions split off and established their own organizations: “Sons of Odin”<sup>12</sup> (which included some of the founders of “Soldiers” in Norway) as well as “Guardian Angels”.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the self-appointed spokesman of SOO, Ronny Alte, was excluded from the organization because he acted on his own on behalf of the group without a mandate to do so, and due to his known ties to anti-Islam organizations. He gave SOO an image of being right-wing extremist, which was not the case, his opponents claimed.

A more formal national organization with an elected leadership started to emerge in late February 2016. A kind of general assembly meeting was held in Drammen on 12 March 2016.<sup>14</sup>

A typical SOO “walk” in the areas where they were most active when the organization was at its peak could consist of 5–12 people gathering at an appointed place on a late Friday or Saturday night, but sometimes they were fewer.<sup>15</sup> Full members would wear the SOO hoodies whereas newcomers had normal clothes. They also emphasized the importance of mustering a sufficient number of participants in order to make the group look strong.

Small groups (2–4 persons) will often be perceived as provocative out in the streets; therefore it is a rule to walk in larger groups of around 10 people. This will give a strong signal-effect which as such will contribute to prevent or “drive away” unwanted behaviour/persons. If you plan to do walks in

troubled neighbourhoods or near big events this is particularly important – the more people, the better!<sup>16</sup>

The group would then walk together in the outskirts of the town centre – but usually not in the main entertainment areas of the town where they risked getting into confrontations with opponents, or where they were more likely to be approached by the police. They argued that rape, robbery and drug dealing were more likely to take place in the back alleys than in the main streets. Since many of the SOO members were “streetwise” they knew where in town crime was likely to happen. During the first weeks after SOO Norway emerged in February 2016 there were hints that they might intervene if they come across something criminal.<sup>17</sup> However, very soon they took care to emphasize that they would not be any kind of “extra police” but only observe, document and report to the police. They would only intervene if lives were in danger or serious harm could be prevented.

They did concede that their intimidating appearance was intended to have a deterring impact on potential offenders, and that even a bad (and undeserved) reputation as right-wing extremists could have some advantages:

Soldiers [of Odin] got a very intimidating reputation, partly from abroad. [...] SOO] is pretty radical in Finland, and it caused a rumor among the immigrants [here in town], in particular among the criminal immigrants, because we know more or less who among the immigrant gangs are criminal. And as soon as they saw us [i.e. SOO] they left the city center, and that was of course excellent! We did not talk to them or anything, they just saw us and then we did not see them anymore that evening. [...] Yes, it was a bad reputation, but in just this context it was a good thing that the criminal elements disappeared when they knew we were in town, and that was great!<sup>18</sup>

This SOO leader claimed that they received many positive responses from the locals when they were patrolling his hometown, Arendal. However, when we observed the SOO group walking in Drammen, we found it rather striking that most people avoided contact and appeared to find them frightening. This intimidating image was reinforced by the two rather scary dogs the group brought with them.<sup>19</sup>

There was a striking contradiction between what the Soldiers of Odin communicated verbally – distancing themselves totally from anything having to do with violence, right-wing extremism or vigilantism – and what they communicated visually and symbolically. The name refers to the Norse god Odin’s mythological fighters, about whom Snorre’s saga states that

[Odin’s] own men [...] were crazy like dogs and wolves, they were biting in their shields, were strong like bears and oxes; they killed all people, and neither fire nor iron could harm them, it was called to go berserk ...<sup>20</sup>



**FIGURE 16.1** Soldiers of Odin posing for the photographer before they start a night patrol in Drammen, Norway, 20 February 2016 (Photo: Heiko Junge).

Images of Vikings or Norse gods have long traditions in right-wing extremist circles and the combination with the flag reinforces the nationalist connotations. The stylistic elements were obviously put together to mimic the back patches of outlaw motorcycle gangs, adding to the intimidating image.

To our knowledge, there have not been any reports in the news media nor by the police that the Soldiers of Odin have committed any acts of violence or made any explicit threats during any of their more than 100 “walks”. However, there is no evidence that SOO through their many walks have disrupted any specific acts of crime either.<sup>21</sup>

### **Who were recruited to Soldiers of Odin Norway – and why?**

During the first weeks after SOO Norway emerged, leaders claimed that they got support from all kinds of people, and that their members included dentists and police officers. However, mainstream middle class people were rarely seen among those who turned up for walks with Soldiers of Odin.

Given the fact that Soldiers of Odin was initially established as a reaction to the refugee crisis in 2015, it was hardly surprising that several well-known right-wing extremists and anti-Islam activists turned up as participants in the first Soldier of Odin walks in February 2016. However, as SOO Norway gradually established itself as a formal organization, persons with overt extremist or racist views were swiftly excluded from the group.

People who turned up and thought we were real racists who were out to beat up “negroes”; they were immediately weeded out and excluded. [...] at least 50 people were excluded during my time in the board.<sup>22</sup>

Although many members of SOO continued to hold views critical to immigration and some clearly had ties to far right groups,<sup>23</sup> expressing such views during SOO walks was met with strong disapproval.<sup>24</sup> Whereas right-wing extremists eventually became far less visible in SOO than one might expect, another type of participants became far more prominent in the organization: young men with a criminal past, typically in their twenties and thirties.

The first formally elected leader, Steffen André Larsen, did not hide the fact that he had a background from a criminal milieu and had an extensive criminal record.<sup>25</sup> He resigned as a leader in December 2016 when he faced trial for a violence case (unrelated to his SOO activities). When the new leader, Jan Tellef Aanonsen, took over, he was frustrated by the fact that the previous leader had recruited a number of local SOO leaders with the same kind of criminal background as himself, and also let in a lot of members who were (former) criminals or drug abusers.

It should be the task of the leader to sort out such people. Instead [the former leader and his side-kick] were appointing their pals, including a regional leader who was a drug addict. I went mad! And then they wonder why the police are so much against them?! I have no problems understanding that! [...] When you have local leaders like that, young 20-somethings with criminal records and who are drug addicts, they will not get [law-abiding] adults in their 40s or 50s [like me] to go out on walks with them, they don't want to be seen with such people, it's as simple as that!<sup>26</sup>

After only a couple of weeks as the leader of SOO Norway, Jan Tellef Aanonsen resigned and closed down the organization in early January 2017, claiming that the main reason was that Soldiers of Odin had attracted “the wrong kind of people”. He also asserted that he refused to adhere to the anti-Islam approach of the international leaders of the Soldiers of Odin, and that this position displeased these international leaders (op. cit.).<sup>27</sup>

An interesting question is why so many young men with a criminal past joined an organization that had as its stated purpose to help the police to maintain peace and order in the streets. Many of them had been charged with violence and unruly behaviour, carrying illegal weapons, drug dealing and abuse, robbery and violence against the police – the kinds of behaviours they were now setting out to prevent. The former leader (op. cit.) claimed that even if they excluded many people for being unfit for SOO, around 70 per cent of the active members had such a criminal background. So why did these former offenders then join the Soldiers of Odin?

Part of the explanation is that much of the recruitment was based on pre-existing social networks that in this case happened to be networks between young offenders. However, the Soldiers of Odin was obviously attractive to this type of young men, for several reasons. The black hoodie with the SOO symbols provided the participants with a cool identity, standing out as a strong, uniformed group with an image associated with nationalism, manly warrior ideals, outlaw MC clubs and a strong group identity based on masculine ideals. The organizational structure and the recruitment process was a simplified version of the outlaw biker club model. It required some effort to be accepted as a full member and be permitted to use the hoodie with the SOO logo. That this status was something to be achieved made it even more attractive for certain young men to join. The admission requirements were moderate, though: participate in three walks and three meetings and behave in an acceptable way.<sup>28</sup>

Another explanation was that many young men with a tainted criminal record considered participation in the Soldiers of Odin as an opportunity to make amends for some of the bad things they had done in the past. This interpretation was confirmed by the former leader, Steffen Larsen:

Many of the Soldiers of Odin have been in jail, they are fed up with the system and how things function around them, and now they have a desire to do something really positive for society. We have experience with the criminal scenes. [...] We have a uniform which enables people to recognize us, a very simple logo, so that people can say, "Oh yes, there they are; these are the people we may ask for help".<sup>29</sup>

[... That people in SOO have a troubled background] is something I am well aware of. [...] This] has been quite a big theme [in our group]. That "yes, I have been involved in some criminal stuff and I have been finished with that several years ago and now I feel I have to give something back". It's a really nice way to give something back [to society], by joining something like [Soldiers of Odin].<sup>30</sup>

When the fuss around the "flood of refugees" and stories about their alleged sexual assaults of European women spread like a moral panic during winter and spring 2016, many of these young men grasped the opportunity to make a positive contribution by protecting women and other vulnerable people against this alleged threat. At the same time, it was an opportunity to turn a negative identity and a tarnished personal reputation into something positive: Rather than being known as the town's troublemakers and petty criminals they could now become heroes from whom people could seek protection. The SOO participants were mainly young men,<sup>31</sup> and many were at the end of a career of juvenile delinquency. Soldiers Of Odin could provide them with an attractive exit from their stigmatized identities. Because they knew street life and had experience from the criminal environment they believed they were in a better position to know where and when criminal incidents and rapes were likely to take place.



**FIGURE 16.2** Soldiers of Odin in Norway are helping two young girls safely home on a late Saturday night in Tonsberg, Norway, 13 February 1916. This was the first SOO patrol in Norway (Photo: Luca Kleve-Ruud)

Soldiers of Odin frequently claimed they were “a kind of night ravens”. They were then often challenged with the question of why they could not just join the official, well-established Night Ravens [*Natteravnene*], an organization of volunteers that encourages adult, sober citizens to walk around in the city in groups during weekend nights. Participants are typically parents of youths or children, or elderly, concerned citizens. Their task is to be visible and available for the public, based on the idea that the presence of sober adults will prevent violence and anti-social behaviour. The Night Raven volunteers will also assist people who are unable to take care of themselves. They do not intervene in cases of violence or unruly behaviour but call the police. Like the Night Ravens, they claim to be preventative, not interventionist.<sup>32</sup> The Night Ravens have been in operation since 1990, sponsored by an insurance company, and working closely with the police.

The Soldiers of Odin claimed their tougher image gave them some extra “respect” that ordinary Night Ravens were lacking:

- But why can’t you just join the ordinary “Night Ravens”? [...]
- Because they have to stand there watching if someone are beaten up. They cannot intervene.
- But can you intervene without being vigilantes?



- Yes, if life or health is at stake, then it is our duty. But it is not merely about that. We have more respect than two ladies in their sixties wearing a yellow reflex vest,<sup>33</sup> replies [the local SOO leader].
- [Another SOO activist] adds that several members of the group have been convicted for offences and therefore feel that they do not fit in as ordinary Night Ravens.<sup>34</sup>

The leader of SOO Norway, Steffen Larsen, discussed how they differ from the ordinary Night Ravens:

[The Night Ravens] do not walk around where things happen. And that's what we try to do; we walk in [back] streets where things are likely to happen [...] And many people claim that "you are so big and scary". If that can have a preventive affect against a rapist, I think that is fine. I will honestly admit that. Because people who observe us should not become scared of us unless they have a reason to be.<sup>35</sup>

Distancing themselves from the traditional Night Ravens, the Soldiers of Odin nevertheless continued to present themselves as "a kind of private night raven service". The official Night Ravens were highly critical to the ways SOO were exploiting their reputation and legitimacy as a politically and religiously neutral organization. "The Soldiers of Odin grew out of a right-wing extremist milieu. If you want to contribute to more safety for all groups in the population, it is critical that you act with credible neutrality", the general secretary [of the Night Ravens] states.<sup>36</sup>

## Responses to the Soldiers of Odin

Receiving some kind of recognition from their social surroundings for doing something good was obviously important to many of the participants in Soldiers of Odin – in particular because many of them had a rather tarnished reputation in their local communities. The responses at the street level varied considerably, however, from expressions of disapproval and ridicule to statements of support.

The Facebook group "Support Soldiers of Odin Norway" had around 4000 members. In the general public debate and in the new media critical and negative views on SOO dominated. All the political parties in Parliament spoke out against the Soldiers of Odin and similar vigilante movements. Only one single MP from the right-wing populist Progress Party supported SOO, Jan Arild Ellingsen, who was the party's spokesperson on justice politics. However, the party leader, Siv Jensen, disagreed with her party colleague, and the Progress Party's Minister of Justice at the time, Anders Anundsen, stated that "It is the police that shall secure our streets. [...] I cannot see that the Soldiers of Odin has any role in this context". Prime Minister Erna Solberg stated that Soldiers of Odin "looks like a vigilante

group, and we are against that. There are no others who should patrol and provide safety in Norwegian towns, this is a task for the police alone”.<sup>37</sup>

The media coverage of the SOO was also generally very negative, frequently portraying them as right-wing extremists, which stigmatized those who participated in SOO walks.

After the media went out so badly against us, many [of our participants] almost lost their jobs. Many employers told them that “you have to choose, either being a neo-Nazi or work here”. [...] One member was married to a priest, and he was told that unless he reined in his wife he might lose his job. It’s pretty sick, if you ask me.<sup>38</sup>

The police were also generally outspoken about not wanting any help from the Soldiers of Odin to maintain law and order in the streets.<sup>39</sup> However, there was great variation in how the police in different cities and police districts actually responded to SOO activities after they started their “walks” in February 2016, and the police appeared rather uncertain and fumbling about how to respond. In some cities they were promptly turned away by the police and not allowed to walk around in the streets with their uniforms. In Kristiansand, for example, they were refused to patrol the streets but they were permitted to hand out coffee and cakes.<sup>40</sup> The local police made a public statement that they considered private patrolling to be a criminal offence. Elsewhere, groups of uniformed SOO members were permitted to walk around in the streets but under strict police supervision.<sup>41</sup> Obviously, the SOO activities were not of much help to the police in making the city safer, as they, in effect, tied up considerable police resources that could have been put to better use. In some towns, the police did not respond at all to SOO walks.

A couple of weeks after the first Soldiers of Odin walks, in late February 2016, the police chiefs in all the police districts agreed on a common policy. They referred to the so-called “vigilantism paragraph” in the Police Law:

According to the Police Law § 26, “It is illegal for any other than the police to organise or participate in private operations with the purpose of maintaining public order or in any other forms of law enforcement in public areas.”<sup>42</sup>

The police chiefs agreed that activities appearing like “patrolling”, with the use of joint “uniforms”, without any affiliation to the police or similar institutions, will be considered by the police to be in violation of the Police Law § 26. When the Soldiers or Odin or similar groups appeared in the streets as a group in uniforms, this was considered punishable by law and the group would be instructed to stop this activity, meaning to disband or to remove their uniforms. The activity could be considered illegal and punishable in itself, regardless of whether the activity will disturb the public order or not.<sup>43</sup>

Although the police chiefs in principle had agreed to stop Soldiers of Odin and similar groups from patrolling the streets on the basis of the Police Law's § 26, the police practice continued to vary considerably in different parts of Norway. In some places the SOO continued to patrol uniformed without any police intervention; elsewhere, they were ordered by the police to take off or turn inside out their hoodies in order to hide the symbols.

Elsewhere, the local police tried to prevent the SOO from walking around in the streets with their uniforms with a *different* legal basis, namely the Police Law's § 7 on disturbing public law and order. When the police in the town Kongsvinger in November 2016 on this basis fined the SOO leader for refusing to take off (or reverse) the hoodies they were wearing, he was freed from the charges in the local court. The judge "could not see that removing the group's logo from the attire alone could stop any disturbances of the public order, safeguard the safety of individuals or the public, or disrupt or stop acts of crime, cf. the Police Law § 7".<sup>44</sup>

This verdict was, of course, interpreted as a victory by the Soldiers of Odin, believing that they now had a legal verdict giving them the right to carry out their walks dressed in their hoodies with visible symbols. However, Kai Spurkland, a police lawyer and leading expert on the legal framework for police operations and private policing argued in a paper widely distributed in the police that the verdict was probably correct, given the legal basis the local police had referred to (the Police Law § 7). However, had they instead justified their intervention by claiming that the Soldiers of Odin's uniformed patrolling was a breach of the Police Law § 26 on banning private law enforcement, this would probably have prevailed in court.<sup>45</sup>

Increasingly, the police used the latter approach to order the SOO to disperse or take off their uniforms, and on several occasions, SOO participants were fined. The last known case took place in the city of Tønsberg in early May 2017 when ten Soldiers of Odin were ordered by the police to take off their hoodies. They initially obeyed but when the police came across them again later the same night – dressed in their hoodies – the police fined three of them. "When they appear as a group and are uniformed, it is against the Police Law", the police stated.<sup>46</sup> This was the last known attempt of the Soldiers of Odin to organize a "walk" in a Norwegian city, with or without their hoodies and symbols.

## Concluding remarks

There are few permissive conditions that could make Norway conducive to the emergence of vigilantism. Norway is a stable and affluent democracy with a high trust in public institutions, the police and the rule of law among the large majority of people – although there are some pockets of more distrustful groups. There are no cultural traditions of people taking the law in their own hands in Norway (unlike e.g. the USA).<sup>47</sup> The "offer" by the Soldiers of Odin to help the police to maintain safety in the streets was promptly turned down – by the police as well as by leading politicians from all the major parties. Those who expressed support to

the Soldiers of Odin were few and marginal. The main permissive factor that might contribute to the emergence of vigilantism is the low level of visible policing – police officers are rarely seen in the streets, and they are not necessarily available when you need them.

The main repressive response – that the police eventually banned the SOO from patrolling the streets with their “uniforms” (the hoodies with symbols) and fined them if they refused to take them off – took time to establish consistently in different police districts and cities. In many towns, the local police fumbled on how to handle the Soldiers of Odin. However, when the police finally established a more consistent practice of fining the SOO if they continued to walk as a group with their hoodies, the Soldiers of Odin disappeared from the streets in Norway. The last Soldiers of Odin “walk” took place in Tønsberg on 6 May 2017, one year and three months after they had their first “walk” in the same city.

Thus, the main cause of the downfall of the Soldiers of Odin in Norway was most likely the increasingly consistent approach of the police to ban them from walking as a uniformed group. Thereby they lost their cool image and the identity symbol that obviously was very attractive and important to many of the participants. However, the internal conflicts, organizational problems and strife about who should be leaders and members, and the stigmatization of participants also contributed to the disintegration of the Soldiers of Odin in Norway.

The Soldiers of Odin in Norway was clearly part of a transnational movement of vigilantism in Europe, responding to the “flood of refugees” in 2015 and onwards, and, in particular, to sexual assaults on women on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. Organizationally and visually, it was inspired by the Soldiers of Odin in Finland and their style. However, the Norwegian branch developed in a more moderate direction, playing down the anti-immigration and anti-Islam views of the mother organization, and excluded participants who expressed overt racist or right-wing extremist views. Why did SOO Norway move in this direction?

One part of the explanation is probably related to the people who gained control over the organization. After a brief period of splits and exclusions, the emerging leaders were people who had other agendas than fighting immigration and Islam. They seemed to be very concerned about achieving public recognition for being “good guys” who wanted to do something beneficial and noble. Many of the most active members had a tarnished reputation in their local communities for being criminals and troublemakers. The Soldiers of Odin’s effort to make the streets safer for women and others was their opportunity to make up for some of the bad things they had done in the past. If the SOO became associated with right-wing extremism, this would stigmatize them, and undermine their effort to gain recognition and improve their standing in society.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on the research we did in connection with our study on right-wing extremism in Norway: Tore Bjørgo and Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik (2018). *Utvikling og*

- utbredelse av høyreekstremisme i Norge. In: Tore Bjørge (ed.). *Høyreekstremisme i Norge: Utviklingstrekk, konspirasjonsteorier og forebyggingsstrategier*. Oslo: PHS Forskning: 4.
- 2 Steffen Larsen was interviewed twice, 20 February 2016 (during a SOO patrol we observed) and on 18 August 2016. He was the national leader from late February 2016 until December 2016. Jan Tellef Aanonsen had been a deputy national leader until he took over as leader on 19 December 2016 but retired and (in effect) closed down the organization on 6 January 2017. He was interviewed on 17 October 2017. These two plus the first (self-appointed) spokesman were highly public figures and are the only SOO activists to be named in this study.
  - 3 See e.g. [https://www.academia.edu/2215329/Trust\\_in\\_justice\\_-\\_Topline\\_findings\\_from\\_the\\_European\\_Social\\_Survey?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/2215329/Trust_in_justice_-_Topline_findings_from_the_European_Social_Survey?auto=download).
  - 4 See: [https://www.reddit.com/r/europe/comments/6dggqx/police\\_officers\\_per\\_capita\\_in\\_europe/](https://www.reddit.com/r/europe/comments/6dggqx/police_officers_per_capita_in_europe/).
  - 5 Gunnar Thomassen, Jon Strype and Marit Egge (2013). Trust no matter what? Citizens' perception of the police 1 year after the terror attacks in Norway. *Policing*, Volume 8, Number 1, pp. 79–87.
  - 6 <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/innvandring/innsikt/statistikk-om-innvandring/id2339904/>.
  - 7 For a discussion of the New Year incidents in Cologne, see the chapter by Daniel Koehler in this volume.
  - 8 See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/18/polish-magazines-islamic-of-europe-cover-sparks-outrage>, discussing the cover page of a Polish magazine with a picture of a white woman draped in the EU flag, being molested by several “brown hands”, headlined “Islamic Rape of Europe” (*wSieci*, No. 7, 2016).
  - 9 This is based on information from our separate interviews with the two national leaders of SOO Norway.
  - 10 <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/asyl-debatten/her-patrujjerer-soldiers-of-odin-for-foerste-gang-i-norge/a/23616953/>.
  - 11 Based on information from former SOO leader Jan Tellef Aanonsen. According to him, the police were unaware of many of these walks.
  - 12 The Sons of Odin was quite active with “walks” in Bergen and a few other towns during winter/spring 2016. It is not clear to us what the differences between them and “Soldiers” were, and whether one was more extremist than the other. The media and the police tended to confuse the two groups.
  - 13 The Guardian Angels had a softer image than SOO, using light blue hoodies without symbols associated with right-wing extremism. However, this group did not succeed and soon faded away.
  - 14 <https://www.dt.no/nyhet/drammen/soldiers-of-odin-mottes-i-drammen/s/5-57-319582>. See footage from the meeting: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/tv/#!/video/101164/her-legger-ledelsen-i-soldiers-of-odin-planen-for-gruppen-videre>.
  - 15 This description is based on our own participant observation of a SOO walk in Drammen on 20 February 2016 and our discussions with two SOO leaders and the police.
  - 16 Cited from the bylaws of Soldiers of Odin Norway, made available to us by the SOO leader at the time.
  - 17 Example: <http://www.agderposten.no/nyheter/soldiers-of-odin-aksjonerer-i-arendal-sen-trum-onsker-a-bli-arrestert-1.1557302>.
  - 18 Interview with SOO leader Jan Tellef Aanonsen, 17 October 2017, talking about SOO walks in his hometown.
  - 19 During a stop and check by the police in Drammen the SOO members were told to take the dogs back to the cars.
  - 20 From Snorre Sturlason's *Saga of the Kings of Norway: Heimskringla*, Chapter 6, written in the first half of the thirteenth century.
  - 21 In interviews with police officers, we were informed about a single case where the Soldiers of Odin had notified the local police about a drunk man who was laying out in the cold. The police subsequently brought him to safety.

- 22 Former SOO leader Jan Tellef Aanonsen, interview 27 October 2017.
- 23 For example, a young man who repeatedly appeared in the media as a local SOO leader in 2016 was marching with the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement's demonstration in Kristiansand on 29 July 2017.
- 24 One telling episode took place during our observation of a SOO walk in Drammen on 20 February 2016: a man approached the SOO group and presented himself as an "Islam critic", holding a brief monologue about his anti-Islam ideas. The SOO group stayed silent until he left. It is possible that our presence influenced the situation but our feeling was that his views were not welcome, and that they did not want to invite him to join the group.
- 25 <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/odins-soldater/ny-odins-soldater-leder-til-vg-je-g-har-sonet-min-straft/a/23627125/>.
- 26 Former SOO leader Jan Tellef Aanonsen, interview, 27 October 2017.
- 27 According to Aanonsen, it was the Finnish and Maltese leaders of SOO worldwide who declared that "Soldiers of Odin in Norway does not exist anymore", and that this happened as a consequence of him resigning as a leader of SOO Norway.
- 28 According to the bylaws of Soldiers of Odin Norway, § 4.
- 29 Film interview in Aftenposten TV 31.03.2016: <http://www.aftenposten.no/webtv/#!/video/111303/man-faar-ikke-stoppet-en-folkebevegelse-som-soldiers-of-odin>. This URL does not work anymore, but the following does: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/tv/#!/video/101164/her-legger-ledelsen-i-soldiers-of-odin-planen-for-gruppen-vi-dere>. This film from an internal national meeting of leaders and activists in SOO shows several interesting aspects of who participates in SOO and how they behave.
- 30 Our interview with former SOO leader Steffen Larsen, 18 August 2016.
- 31 There were some female members of SOO in Norway; some of these were the girlfriends of male members.
- 32 Tammy Castle and Tara Parsons (2017). Vigilante or Viking? Contesting the mediated constructions of Soldiers of Odin Norge. *Crime Media Culture*, 1–20. DOI: 10.1177/1741659017731479. To our knowledge, this is the first scholarly study on the Soldiers of Odin on Norway.
- 33 A yellow reflex vest is the "uniform" of the Night Ravens, making them easily visible at night.
- 34 Interview in the local newspaper Agderposten 23.07.2016 <http://www.agderposten.no/nyheter/soldiers-of-odin-aksjonerer-i-arendal-sentrum-onsker-a-bli-arrestert-1.1557302>
- 35 Interview with SOO-leader Steffen Larsen, 18 August 2016.
- 36 <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/M3wo/Natteravnene-tar-avstand-fra-Odins-soldater>.
- 37 Several central politicians were negative to SOO: VG 23.02.16: <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/asyl-debatten/erna-solberg-om-odins-soldater-ligner-en-borgervern-gruppe-og-det-er-vi-imot/a/23623556/>.
- 38 Interview with former SOO leader Steffen Larsen, 18 August 2016.
- 39 The only exception was one single leading police officer in northern Norway who stated that "much of what the Soldiers of Odin plan to do is unproblematic from the police point of view". [https://www.nrk.no/finnmark/politistjef-om-odins-soldater\\_-\\_uproblematisk-at-de-trygger-byer-og-tettsteder-1.12810642](https://www.nrk.no/finnmark/politistjef-om-odins-soldater_-_uproblematisk-at-de-trygger-byer-og-tettsteder-1.12810642).
- 40 <https://www.nrk.no/sorlandet/politiet-holdt-oye-med-odins-soldater-1.12814198>
- 41 When the authors walked with the Soldiers of Odin in Drammen on 20 February 2016, the police spent considerable resources on keeping around 12 participants under close supervision, making use of uniformed police officers as well as plain-clothes officers. The police checked the participants for weapons, registered their IDs and ordered two big dogs to be locked up in the cars. <http://drm24.no/nyheter/her-patrujlerer-soldiers-of-odin-i-drammen-1622048>.
- 42 [https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1995-08-04-53#KAPITTEL\\_8](https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1995-08-04-53#KAPITTEL_8).
- 43 This summary of the consensus between the police chiefs is based on a policy document produced by the Oslo Police District, made available to us.

- 44 Cited from the verdict in Glåmdal tingrett, case no. 17–004234MED–GLOM, page 4.
- 45 Kai Spurkland: Kommentar til dom i Glåmdalen tingrett om “Odins soldater”. Paper dated 7 February 2017.
- 46 <https://www.tb.no/odins-soldater/politi/nyheter/tre-far-bot-etter-odins-soldater-patruljering/s/5-76-531878?key=2017-12-12T13:44:19.000Z/retriever/3721444a5963529f45598be7d0d7b7792bbfd7b0>.
- 47 However, there have been historical incidents of collective “hunting of travelers” (“fantejakt”) in Norway, Olav Rune Ekeland Bastrup and Aage Georg Sivertsen (1996). *En landevei mot undergangen. Utryddelsen av taterkulturen i Norge*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget: 54–55, summarized in Tore Bjørgo & Ingvild Magnæs Gjelsvik (2015). *Forskning på forebygging av radikalisering og voldelig ekstremisme: En kunnskapsstatus*. Oslo: PHS Forskning 2015:2. <http://hdl.handle.net/11250/284584> |.