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THE SOLDIERS OF ODIN IN CANADA

The failure of a transnational ideology

Emil Archambault and Yannick Veilleux-Lepage

The Soldiers of Odin first established a Canadian presence in March 2016, five months after the foundation of the group in Finland. As in other countries, the group experienced rapid growth in Canada, establishing a number of chapters throughout the country. Yet, as is common with far-right groups in Canada (Perry & Scrivens, 2016, p. 823; 831–832), the presence of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada has been marred by numerous breakups, internecine conflicts, and divisions.

In this chapter, we trace and assess the six internal splits that marred the group during its first 14 months of existence in Canada, between March 2016 and April 2017. One apparent central point of contention and divergence among Canadian members, we argue, was the significance and perceived value of belonging to the wider transnational network of the Soldiers of Odin, particularly of the Canadian chapters' relationship to the Finnish leadership. As such, this chapter examines the spread and decline of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada through this transnational lens, and argues that the relationship of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin to the wider movement provided a focal point around which internal disagreements coalesced, leading to the failure of the movement to establish a lasting presence. We suggest that the experience of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin is the result of a disjuncture between a transnational rhetoric and ideology emphasizing transnational communities and local presence and concerns.

Ideology of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada¹

The first chapter of the Soldiers of Odin was created by the self-avowed white supremacist Mika Ranta in October 2015, in what is generally taken to be a response to the influx of refugees settling in Finland or transiting through Finland to reach Sweden (Lamoureux, 2016a). By December 2016, the SOO claimed 20

national chapters all around the world (Montpetit, 2016), including Australia, the United States, Canada, and throughout Europe, from France to Estonia. As Tommi Kotonen's chapter in this volume details, the Finnish founding chapters quickly faced accusations of racism, neo-Nazism, and white supremacy, due both to the group's anti-immigrant, anti-Islam stances, and the composition of its membership (see Rigatelli, 2016a and 2016b; Lamoureux, 2016b; Simons, 2016). Most notably, while the group claims to be overtly non-racist and open to all (Lamoureux 2016b), the organization's founder, Mika Ranta, self-identifies as a "National Socialist" and is well known for his support of white supremacist ideology (Rigatelli, 2016a).²

The group spread to Canada as early as March 2016,³ with its initial chapter reportedly established in Gimli, Manitoba, a town with significant Icelandic heritage (Biber, 2016). The group quickly spread across the country, with chapters being established over the summer in Quebec, British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and even Yukon. Unlike in Finland, the official emphasis in Canada seems to have been put on community-building efforts, such as shovelling snow (CBC News, 2016), organizing food drives for local charities and shelters (CBC News, 2017a), cleaning up parks (Lamoureux, 2016a), etc. In order to spread rapidly, the Soldiers of Odin in Canada established a particularly strong online presence, through a number of Facebook pages and groups. Indeed, through its main Facebook page which, at its peak, counted over 10 000 "fans",⁴ as well as a large number of province- and city-focused Facebook groups, the Soldiers of Odin were able to effectively communicate and transmit propaganda and organizational messages. For this reason, the spread of the group was extremely rapid. Shortly after the foundation of the group in March 2016, the Soldiers of Odin already counted chapters in most Canadian provinces (Andersen & Fedec, 2016, p. 2).

The Canadian Soldiers of Odin, in line with other branches of the movement, conduct "observe-and-report styled patrols" in order to act, in their words, as "the eyes and ears of the police" (Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1). The vigilantism that defines the group's *modus operandi* worldwide remains a significant part of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin's operations. These patrols very often have an overt or covert Islamophobic or xenophobic *raison d'être*. For instance, in December 2016, the leader of the Quebec chapter was ousted as he "insisted on patrolling the 'politically correct' areas of Quebec City, like Saint-Roch, where the group was less likely to confront the city's immigrant population", according to the leader who replaced him. She, in turn, stated that they used to "avoid that, on patrols, we go into areas where there are a lot of Muslims or Islamization. But, when it comes down to it, that's where we should be patrolling" (Montpetit, 2016). Thus, while the patrols are officially about preventing crime, the group draws a very direct link between Islamophobic sentiments, anti-immigration discourse, and crime prevention, which it displays and enforces through vigilante-style patrols.

In combination with these vigilante street patrols, however, Canadian Soldiers of Odin also emphasize a commitment to community-building and charity actions. The bylaws thus note that they want "to help make local communities better", and

to this end “will also host family friendly events and give back to the local charities in [their] communities” (Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1). Indeed, branches of the Soldiers of Odin have conducted a number of charitable actions, collecting goods and food for the homeless, cleaning up public parks, even offering free snow shovelling (CBC News, 2016, 2017a). The Canadian Soldiers of Odin, by and large, seem to consider these two activities – vigilante patrolling and community and charity work – as complementary, and part of a single ideological and rhetorical frame.

The group’s bylaws, once again, offer insight into this ideological framing. The group overtly claims to exist because “the higher authorities are failing the Canadian citizens”. The authorities do so by “the allowing of illegal aliens into this country”, by “accepting refugees from countries that hate us”, and by “releasing confirmed terrorists back to their organizations”. From these points, the racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic justification for street patrols is made clear: refugees and immigrants are equated with security threats, and lead to crime and violence, which vigilante patrols are meant to counter. Indeed, the bylaws continue, “we as Soldiers of Odin realize that it is time to take back our streets, provinces, and country”. The “other”, from whom the “streets, provinces, and country” are meant to be reclaimed, is clearly construed as immigrants-qua-criminals (encouraged by friendly authorities). Crucially, however, the bylaws specifically denounce government authorities for accepting refugees and immigrants “while Canadians are on the streets” (Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1); this framing recurs regularly in Canadian Soldiers of Odin propaganda, often with a specific focus on veterans as the disadvantaged and disenfranchised party.

In other words, Canadian Soldiers of Odin frames immigration and social care as part of a zero-sum equation, where providing assistance to refugees means taking away resources from (real) Canadians. As such, protests against immigration, vigilante patrols, and charity work are part of a single, xenophobic, ideological mindset: immigration constitutes the problem, and the group’s community minded activities are part of an effort to divert resources back to deserving Canadians and away from immigrants who illegitimately appropriate resources while “caus[ing] more harm against Canada” (Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1). The whole activities of Canadian Soldiers of Odin remain within an overwhelmingly anti-immigrant, xenophobic paradigm, and as such are consistent with the rest of the Soldiers of Odin movement, despite the focus on community work, which distinguishes them from other branches of the movement.⁵

Nevertheless, this focus on local communities points at a tension within the ideological framework of the movement. The group’s bylaws, as cited above, point to a specifically Canadian focus, with Canadian Soldiers of Odin endeavouring “to keep Canadians safe [...] and protect our Constitutional Rights”; similarly, the emphasis on community action points to a specifically Canadian nationalist outlook. The bylaws, however, immediately undercut this nationalist mindset by accusing Canadian authorities of “demonizing anything that has to do with European Culture to try and create racial tensions to turn citizens on one another”

(Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1). This mention of “European Culture” points to the larger significance of the Soldiers of Odin’s transnational network, the majority of which is indeed (geographically) European. In the case of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin, it remains unclear where they fit within this Soldiers of Odin network’s “European” focus, particularly when key figures of the network such as Mika Ranta post on Facebook exhortations to “Build the European Homeland” (Ranta, 2017). While “European” here definitely ought to be taken as an ideological (and racial) term rather than as a strictly geographical denomination, it does nevertheless indicate a tension within Soldiers of Odin Canada between Canadian nationalism and transnational ethnonationalism.⁶

These ideological tensions are also made manifest in disagreements between branches of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin over tactics. The Quebec Soldiers of Odin, for instance, seem to put more emphasis on street patrols, and put less emphasis on charitable actions (Montpetit, 2016).⁷ In contrast, Mack Lamoureux, attending an Edmonton meeting, noted that “while [the leaders] assured the group that patrols will happen, the meeting focused primarily on volunteerism at a local homeless shelter and cleaning up garbage. The men around the pool table seemed dedicated to staying on the straight and narrow,” even quoting one of them as stating “We’re not criminals, and we’re not fucking vigilantes” (Lamoureux 2016b). Thus, it seems that the tension between community-building activities and vigilante patrolling represented a pressing concern within the group, fragilizing its ideological unity; this tension, in turn, mirrored the fragile balance between Canadian and “European” ethnonationalist identities.

Divisions within the movement

This tension between a strictly Canadian nationalist focus and a transnational civilizational, “European” orientation has proven to be a major point of contention throughout the existence of Canadian Soldiers of Odin, with numerous splits occurring as a result. Already from the start, Canada’s Soldiers of Odin have had an ambiguous relationship to the Finnish group: the group’s bylaws identify Canadian Soldiers of Odin as “a Division of the original Soldiers of Odin Finland” (Soldiers of Odin, 2016b, p. 1); yet, in an interview, the national leader in Canada stated that “What they do over in Finland and in Europe, they have all sorts of different issues altogether. That’s not really what we are. We’re an independent charter of Soldiers of Odin; we’re a community watch group” (Biber, 2016). While, as argued above, vigilante patrols and community building activities are part of a single anti-immigrant, xenophobic ideology, the Canadian Soldiers of Odin struggled in finding a balance between overt and covert xenophobia, emphasizing or downplaying the affiliation to the Soldiers of Odin Finland in response to pressure from their members, a largely sceptical public, and watchful authorities.

The first group to split from the Canadian Soldiers of Odin seems to have been the Canadian Sentinels, in November 2016, although the group seems to have been rather short-lived and marginal. The second breakup, however, was more

consequential, as a number of Albertan chapters left shortly after to form the Guardians of Alberta. The founder of the Guardians of Alberta, claiming black and native American ancestry, explicitly attributed the split to “the racist overtones” in Canadian Soldiers of Odin “and its ties to neo-Nazi organizations” (Johnson, 2017).⁸ As such, while not mentioned explicitly, it seems that the Canadian Soldiers of Odin’s connection to the Finnish Soldiers of Odin did play a role, given Mika Ranta’s and other members’ avowed neo-Nazi ties (Rigatelli, 2016a, 2016b; Simons, 2016).⁹ Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the Guardians of Alberta’s social media presence and communiqués are far from devoid of Islamophobic overtones (see for instance Guardians of Alberta, 2017).

Shortly thereafter, a leadership shakeup in the Quebec wing of Canadian Soldiers of Odin saw the removal of the Quebec president and national vice-president Dave Tregget in December 2016. By both his account and that of the new Soldiers of Odin Quebec leaders, the main cause of his removal was attributable to the contentious association with the Finnish Soldiers of Odin: “Tregget felt the group’s success in Quebec depended on softening its anti-immigration image and putting some distance between the founding Finnish members, who have been accused of having ties with neo-Nazis” (Montpetit, 2016). Tregget himself stated that he was “finished with the racist image of Finland”; the new leadership, meanwhile, specifically targeted “areas where there are a lot of Muslims or Islamization” and sought to “return the Quebec branch of the Soldiers of Odin to its Finnish roots” (Montpetit, 2016). Tregget, meanwhile, went on to found Storm Alliance, a group which rose to (relative) prominence in 2017 as it conducted protests against illegal immigration, particularly Muslim immigration (Tasker, 2017).

In a further split, in February 2017, the Saskatchewan chapters broke off from Canadian Soldiers of Odin to constitute the “Patriots of Unity”. As with the earlier groups breaking off, the focal point of contention seemed to consist in perceptions of racism, associations with neo-Nazism, and particularly the affiliation to the Finland leadership. In their statement announcing the split, the Patriots of Unity explicitly announced the end of their affiliation with “Soldiers of Odin Canada, or Finland” (Ward, 2017a). As with the Guardians of Alberta, they reoriented their activities to focus on community assistance, although they continued to conduct street patrols. Furthermore, the Patriots of Unity borrowed almost verbatim the Soldiers of Odin bylaws, although they deleted the few sentences about opposing immigration and the Canadian government (Ward, 2017b).

Around the time of the secession of the Saskatchewan chapters in February 2017, there seems to have been a move to emphasize the connection of Finnish and Canadian Soldiers of Odin.¹⁰ Possibly in response to this statement, Canadian Soldiers of Odin strengthened the rhetoric relating to the Finnish-Canadian connection, as well as to the transnational network of Soldiers of Odin. The slogan “United we Stand, Divided we Fall” became more prominent; profile or cover pictures showing the “Soldiers of Odin Worldwide”, or lapel pins of Canadian and Finnish flags started appearing, in conjunction with or replacing the standard Soldiers of Odin images. Yet, this is in tension with another prominent slogan used by

the Soldiers of Odin in Canada, namely “We stand on guard for thee”, lifted from the Canadian National Anthem, emphasizing the local outlook of the Canadian Soldiers of Odin.

As the history of these splits demonstrates, the presence of a link between Canadian and Finnish Soldiers of Odin chapters proved to be quite contentious as issues of racism and xenophobia have coalesced around the significance of this transnational connection. While Soldiers of Odin Canada is by no means devoid of racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia (see, for instance, the excerpts from the bylaws discussed above), ideological disagreements have tended to be blamed on the transnational relationship and its role in dragging the Canadian Soldiers of Odin away from its nationalist and community-based roots. As Dave Tregget noted, the presence of the transnational affiliation was routinely considered as holding back the Canadian Soldiers of Odin by tainting the whole movement with overt racism, which these splinter groups would rather see downplayed.¹¹ While these splinter groups often display similar Islamophobia and anti-immigration sentiments as the Soldiers of Odin do, they acknowledge that the presence of a connection to the Finnish leadership may contribute to both radicalize the movement and infuse it with more overt racist ideology.

The Canada–Finland split

The final straw came at the end of April 2017, as Soldiers of Odin Canada, following a change in leadership, announced its separation from the international Soldiers of Odin movement. In turn, the Quebec chapter split from Soldiers of Odin Canada in order to remain affiliated to the Finnish leadership. Since then, (independent) Soldiers of Odin chapters have continued to exist in Canada in a much more subdued and less visible form, retaining the name and logo of the Soldiers of Odin while separate from the Finnish leadership, except for Quebec, where affiliation was retained.

The statement published by Soldiers of Odin Canada explaining the reasons for their departure is quite clear (although somewhat misleading). They state that they “officially Denounce the Finland and the international leadership of SOO”, as they “are against their racist agendas”. They continue to assert that Soldiers of Odin Finland’s “ridiculous beliefs in racism has always been a huge issue for us in Canada as we do not support or share their views on race”, and that “We do not and have not ever abided by these twisted beliefs or the Racist entities in SOO” (Soldiers of Odin Canada, 2017). The Canadian Soldiers of Odin, therefore, clearly attempted to portray this latest splinter as the result of a significant ideological disagreement with the Finnish leadership, attributable to the racist views of the latter.

That being said, there are several reasons to doubt this official narrative as presented by the Canadian Soldiers of Odin. First of all, it is somewhat odd that they would have waited a full year before discovering Soldiers of Odin Finland’s racist ideology, even more so given that their racist discourses, iconography, and commitments were widely reported (Simons, 2016). The number of previous splits

from Soldiers of Odin Canada rather show that a large number of people were aware of the implications of the association with Soldiers of Odin Finland and left as they felt that the movement was too closely aligned with its overseas counterparts. While the former leader of Soldiers of Odin Canada had emphasized that they are “an independent charter of Soldiers of Odin” (Biber, 2016), Soldiers of Odin Canada was aware of the ideological commitments of Soldiers of Odin Finland and chose to embrace their association for over a year before the split. As Katy Latulippe, the Quebec leader, wondered, “[Bill Daniels, the Soldiers of Odin Canada President] spent one year as a leader, saying that the Finnish chapter wasn’t racists. And then suddenly, after a little conflict, he starts using the term racist? It doesn’t hold” (Montpetit, 2017).

Second, as established above, xenophobia and Islamophobic ideology are present at the core of Soldiers of Odin Canada and are not as foreign to the group as the statement quoted above suggests. In Canada, the group repeatedly associated with other far-right, Islamophobic, and anti-immigration groups and speakers (Bell, 2017), in addition to propagating messages in line with the anti-immigration positions quoted in the group’s bylaws. Rather, it would seem that the dispute was partly over money, as the Finnish group sought to collect membership fees from members (Montpetit, 2017).

It seems much likelier that, in addition to the dispute over membership fees, the main disagreement concerned methods, pointing to the dichotomy between local concerns and transnational ideology identified in the first part of this chapter. As such, Soldiers of Odin Canada’s statement on the break states that they want “the ability to run [their] own countries without being micromanaged by another country”; more clearly, they assert that they “are against their racist agendas and only doing Street patrols and not helping our fellow countrymen and women” (Soldiers of Odin Canada, 2017). It seems therefore that the distinction between community-building work – though inspired by xenophobic sentiments, as explained above – and vigilante patrols became untenable, as the two conflicting orientations indicated the presence of an increasing rift between a xenophobic Canadian hyper-nationalism and identification to a transnational, civilizational struggle. Significantly, it suggests that Soldiers of Odin Canada failed to mobilize on the basis solely of the transnational affiliation, and that local Canadian dynamics in the end mattered more than the affiliation to the transnational network of the Soldiers of Odin.

The Soldiers of Odin and the extreme right in Canada

In addition to the difficulty in forging a coherent group ideology and the resulting splitting of Soldiers of Odin Canada, the movement, despite its initial momentum, appears to have struggled to retain its members and to contain defections to other far-right groups. A preliminary analysis of the online activities of 265 individuals in Canada with clear and demonstrable evidence of membership in the Canadian Soldiers of Odin conducted by the authors of this chapter between January and September 2017, allows us to assess the effects of the breakaway from Finland and

the following decline of the group (Veilleux-Lepage and Archambault, 2019). This preliminary study examined the Facebook profiles of members displaying clear iconography – logos, clothing, slogans, etc. – associating them to the Soldiers of Odin; a repeat examination of the previously identified profiles was conducted in September 2017 to assess variations in group affiliation. This allows us to garner insights into the groups joined by former Soldiers of Odin members and what these individuals sought by joining the Soldiers of Odin, and how they perceived their former group.

This research paints a rather clear portrayal of the scale of defections amongst the group members. Out of the 265 members, 61 individuals appear to have consciously removed all traces of their previous Soldiers of Odin affiliations, 49 had joined another far-right group, and 54 remained active within Soldiers of Odin chapters.¹² Among the 49 members who joined other groups, most of them either joined a group which resulted from a splinter from Soldiers of Odin; *La Meute* [trans. The Wolf Pack], a Quebec-based, anti-immigration group founded in October 2015; or Canadian chapters of The Three Percenters, an American paramilitary movement which pledges armed resistance against attempts on the restriction of private gun ownership (Lamoureux, 2017b).

The poor retention of members by Soldiers of Odin Canada is unsurprising and conforms to Perry and Scrivens' observation that members of far-right groups tend to "try on different coats", moving "from group to group throughout their lives" as a result of various factors, including personal disagreement and infighting between group members, increase in attention by law enforcement, weak leadership; or changes in members personal or financial circumstances (Perry & Scrivens, 2016, p. 831). However, the defections from Soldiers of Odin to *La Meute* and to The Three Percenters are rather telling and can potentially be attributed to the aforementioned tension within Soldiers of Odin Canada between Canadian nationalism and transnational European ethnonationalism. Unlike the Soldiers of Odin or the short-lived PEGIDA Quebec, *La Meute* is an entirely domestic far-right movement, and more particularly a Québécois movement. The Three Percenters, similarly, emphasize the defence of local communities against a government perceived as illegitimate.

La Meute was founded in 2015, by Eric "Corvus" Venne and Patrick Beaudry, Canadian Forces veterans determined to combat what they perceived as a threat posed by Islamic extremism as Canada began accepting the first of 25,000 Syrian refugees. It has become Quebec's biggest, most rapidly growing far-right group with 45,000 members in their Facebook group, and up to an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 active members (PRI World Staff, 2017). In a province where cultural issues are at the front and centre for every political party, the appeal of *La Meute* can be attributed to its leveraging of profoundly local concerns, often overlapping concerns expressed by mainstream political parties in Quebec. In August 2013, the government of the *Parti Québécois* first introduced the idea of what was to become Bill 60 – also known as the Quebec Charter of Values¹³ – which aimed primarily to affirm the secular nature of the state, along with gender equality. The bill, which

amongst the suggested measures, prohibited employees of the public and para-public sectors from wearing an “object which ostensibly displays one’s religious affiliation” (art. 5); required employees and users of public services to provide and receive services with their “face uncovered” (art. 6 and 7), and banned activities and practices in childcare and schools “such as dietary practices stemming from a religious precept” (art. 30), received initial support amongst the wider population (La Presse Canadienne, 2015).

As keenly observed by Nadeau and Helly, the debate surrounding the Bill 60 served to crystalize anti-immigration and anti-Muslim sentiments in Quebec in a fashion akin to that of European extreme right parties such as Le Front National and UKIP (Nadeau & Helly, 2016). Moreover, Nadeau and Helly observed that support for the bill was essentially based on general themes: (1) the fear of a return of religion in the public space; (2) the emergence of a Muslim enemy whose values are perceived as irreconcilable with those of Quebec culture; (3) the inertia of the political class and its complicity with media and minorities; (4) the predominance of legal over political powers and of individual over collective rights; and (5) multiculturalism, as a factor of denationalization and social fragmentation (Nadeau & Helly, 2016). The theme of Islamic religious practice being irreconcilable with Quebec’s values and multiculturalism as a source of denationalization and social fragmentation represents a central component of La Meute’s discourses and actions. For example, La Meute was heavily involved in campaigning against the establishment of the Muslim cemetery in St-Apollinaire (Peritz, 2017). Furthermore, it organized jointly with Storm Alliance – the Soldiers of Odin splinter group founded by Dave Tregget – two large-scale protests (in August and November 2017) in Quebec City opposing illegal immigration and policies of the Quebec government (CBC News, 2017b; HuffPost Quebec, 2017; Pineda, 2017).

The other group that has attracted the largest number of former members of the Soldiers of Odin is The Three Percenters, which first emerged as a largely decentralized American paramilitary group that organized after Barack Obama was elected president in 2008 and built around strong anti-government and pro-gun views. The Canadian origins of The Three Percenters can be traced back to late 2015, shortly after Justin Trudeau became prime minister. While, in many ways, The Three Percenters are a direct copy of an American militia that has been adapted to fit into a Canadian worldview – even the name “Three Percenter” comes from an American myth that it was 3 percent of the American population that fought against the British in the War of Independence – their success in recruiting individuals in Canada, particularly in Alberta and Quebec, can also be attributed to its ability to leverage local concerns effectively, particularly with regards to firearm deregulation (Lamoureux, 2017b).¹⁴ As such, with its vehemently anti-Islam views – the group was after all described as “anti-Islam” by Beau Welling, the president of the Alberta chapter and national vice-president of The Three Percenters in Canada – and its strong emphasis the creation of an armed militia, it appears that The Three Percenters appealed to members of the Soldiers of Odin, who might have felt disenchanted by the group’s efforts to reduce its Islamophobic

hard-line, members who believed that armed preparation was necessary, or members who prioritized firearm deregulation, particularly during a liberal tenure (Lamoureux, 2017b).¹⁵ Indeed, it is worth noting that in December 2018, The Three Percenters appointed a new national leader who is a former local leader of the Soldiers of Odin (and also openly Islamophobic) (Lamoureux 2018b).

In summary, while a significant number of Soldiers of Odin members seem to have disengaged – at least for the time being – from involvement with the far right following the disintegration of the group, the majority of members surveyed continued to be involved in far-right movements in Canada, either in the Soldiers of Odin themselves or in other groups. The transfer of members to The Three Percenters should be of particular concern, as it indicates at the very least a willingness to prepare for potential violence combined with anti-immigrant, xenophobic ideology.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a survey of the presence of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada, particularly of the conflict between its emphasis on Canadian nationalism and its relationship to the Finnish leadership of the movement. As the history of the successive splinterings of the Soldiers of Odin, most prominently the separation of the Canadian chapters from the Finnish leadership (and of Quebec chapter from Soldiers of Odin Canada) shows, there was a strong sense within the group that the association to Finland detracted from the group's community-based work and ideological commitments. Furthermore, the follow-up research conducted on identified members of the Soldiers of Odin after the April 2017 split demonstrates that the majority of the members who transferred to other extreme right groups relocated to groups such as La Meute and The Three Percenters, which have a distinctly local (as opposed to transnational) focus.

While the Soldiers of Odin have been in decline since the April 2017 split, the implications of this research are significant. First, it seems clear that the decline of the Soldiers of Odin is not attributable to a rejection of vigilantism as a method, but rather a return to vigilantism as motivated by local concerns rather than a narrative of ethno-nationalist transnational struggle. Second, it does suggest that the online presence of extreme-right groups, while significant, is of limited value when this online presence is not aligned with the activities of members. Finally, the history of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada suggests that extreme-right groups may have more difficulty mobilizing when the rationale for the group's activities is transnational, rather than grounded in local concerns.¹⁶

Notes

- 1 This section concentrates on the Soldiers of Odin in Canada until the end of April 2017, at which point the group split from the Finnish leadership of the movement. We offer an assessment of the Soldiers of Odin after the breakup in the concluding section.

The founder and national president, Joel Angott, put up a cover picture of the SOO logo with a Canadian flag on March 22, 2016. The Soldiers of Odin Canada public

- Facebook page, however, was founded on January 15 (Angott, 2016; Soldiers of Odin, 2016a).
- 2 See Kotonen's chapter for more details on Mika Ranta and his links to National Socialist movements.
 - 3 This timing coincides with the end of the Canadian government's program to resettle 25,000 refugees from Syria, which was undertaken shortly after the Liberal Party's electoral victory in October 2015. It is unclear – although likely – that this policy contributed to the founding of the Soldiers of Odin in Canada (Associated Press, 2016).
 - 4 This page was deleted in May 2017, precipitating the sharp decline of the Soldiers of Odin Canada.
 - 5 See Tommi Kotonen's chapter in this volume for a comparison with the group's activities in Finland.

Mack Lamoureux, as well, in comparing the Soldiers of Odin to the Three Percenters, suggested that such charitable activities are first and foremost used to sanitize a toxic public image (Lamoureux 2018a).
 - 6 One example of an attempt to situate Canada within a “European” struggle against immigration can be found in the words of a leader of the Soldiers of Odin in Edmonton, Canada: “The guys in Europe, they're dealing with some real shit, we might not see that here for ten or so years. When that happens we want to look as good as possible” (Lamoureux, 2016b).
 - 7 Montpetit, in particular, notes that the Québec Soldiers of Odin tied these patrols to the policing of “areas where there are a lot of Muslims or Islamization” (Montpetit, 2016).
 - 8 It should be mentioned, however, that the Guardians of Alberta have recuperated much of the anti-immigrant rhetoric found among right-wing groups such as the Soldiers of Odin Canada (Thomas, 2017).
 - 9 See Tommi Kotonen's chapter in this volume.
 - 10 It is impossible to demonstrate that these two events are causally linked, but timings coincide.
 - 11 Dave Tregget, for instance, founded a new group called Storm Alliance, which is largely aligned with the anti-immigration agenda of the Soldiers of Odin, although it claims no organizational affiliation. Storm Alliance gained notoriety in 2017 by, among others, staging protests against illegal immigration at the Canadian-American border, as well as organizing surveillance missions at the border to monitor the arrival of asylum seekers crossing from the United States. It also organized a large-scale joint protest in Quebec City in November 2017 (CBC News, 2017b; Lamoureux, 2017a; Shingler, 2017).
 - 12 No information could be collected on the remainder of the individuals as their social media profiles had either been deactivated or suspended.
 - 13 Complete title: *Charter affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality and of equality between women and men, and providing a framework for accommodation requests.*
 - 14 The Canadian Firearms Registry was introduced by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien in 1993 and required the registration of all non-restricted firearms. In 2012, following the Conservative Party of Canada majority win in the 2011 election, Bill C-19, the Ending the Long-gun Registry Act, came into force. The Province of Quebec immediately filed a request for an injunction to prevent the destruction of the data. On 27 March 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the destruction of long-gun registry records was within the constitutional power of Parliament, denying the Quebec government's legal challenge and allowing for those records to be destroyed. Following the election of a new Liberal government in 2015, the Prime Minister of Canada promised to strengthen firearm legislation in Canada (Hamilton, 2015).
 - 15 As Lamoureux (2018a) noted, The Three Percenters, like the Soldiers of Odin, have also sought to engage in charitable activities in order to soften their public image.
 - 16 As of January 2018, it seems that the Finnish-led Soldiers of Odin are seeking to re-establish a presence in Canada, having added a chapter in Calgary to its foothold in Quebec. The independent Soldiers of Odin Canada continues to exist as well, and the

two groups seem set on remaining separate. Apart from the Quebec wing, neither group seems particularly active (Soldiers of Odin Canada Official, 2018).

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