

# Refusing to Serve in the Military

*Negotiating Peace Around the Topic of Conscientious Objection in Cold War  
Norway*

Ann-Kristin Korneliussen



University of Oslo

Department of Archaeology, Conservation and History

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## **Abstract**

The thesis analyses how ideas around “peace” and “war” were formulated in Norway under the cultural and political framework of the Cold War. I argue that conscientious objectors had an active role in forming the discursive field on peace and war in this period, and that objecting military service became an important channel through which to express criticisms and resentment towards how Norwegian authorities positioned Norway politically in the Cold War system. As this thesis will illustrate, people in Norway drew highly different conclusions from the Cold War. Around the 1960s onwards, an increased number of objectors started giving mainly political reasons for refusing military service. These reasons were tied directly to Cold War realities and Norway’s position within these. At the core here was the NATO-membership, which many objectors argued made Norway complicit in the moral decay of the USA. The Vietnam War and the use of nuclear weapons as a tool of power were important elements in these accusations. While conscientious objectors promoted non-violence, peace research and international communication across military blocks, Norwegian authorities, on the other hand, put strong believe in military solutions to problems of war and peace. These different conclusions mounted to a clash of ideas that is highly visible around the problem of conscientious objection throughout the whole period under discussion. Periodically, the main focus of this thesis is roughly on the 1960s to the 1980s. However, strong elements of continuity have led on references to periods further back in time. This thesis suggests that the strong emphasis on military solutions is linked to the needs of the state –both of which have been important elements in Norwegian history since the Union with Sweden. This nationalistic focus has led to the marginalisation of conscientious objectors from the nineteenth century to the Cold War. This continuity furthers an understanding of the Cold War as a “container” if ideas rather than their origin and might help explain why conscientious objection has remained small in scope and size in Norwegian history and self-understanding. Lastly, the narrative presented in this thesis encourages a rethinking of some common conceptions about post-war Norway as a period of steady improvement under a liberal democratic state, as well as a vanguard for promoting peace.

## Foreword and Acknowledgements

When I started this project, I had little knowledge about conscientious objection, and the numerous ways it would inform me about the society I live in, was not at all clear to me. Working on this research project has at times been demanding and frustrating, but for the absolute most part it has been a huge thrill and an intellectual journey for me personally. I feel a strong need to give a special mentioning to the Norwegian conscientious objectors. Their demonstration of unconditional commitment to ethical and moral principles should be seen as an example for others to follow. The world is a no less complicated place then it was during the Cold War, and the lines between right and wrong are not always as evident as we make them up to be. It is with great humility I now conclude my perspective on their stories, and I sincerely hope I have done it justice.

As I write this, it is dawning on me that the final moments of this project, that has seemed abstract and distant for two years, are here. The time has therefore come to give a heartfelt thank you to all those who have supported me along the way. First and foremost, to my supervisor Patrick Bernhard, for always thorough and helpful feedback and personal support. Doing this with your assistance has made a massive difference to the product I now present. I also must thank my family, my mom and dad, Bjørg Jenny and Svein-Magne Korneliussen, and my brothers Jan-Magne, Ole-Christian, and Tor-Erik for unconditional support and affection. Knowing you take pride in me has always been a great source of strength. To my friend Minja Mitrovic. Our countless conversations about history over the years has brought me into this discipline, and I thank you for wishing me well and offering emotional support all these years. And Amalie Henriksen, for always being there for me. My co-students have also been a significantly positive element to this journey, especially Elisabeth Lysfjord Barlaug and Lærke Ajaaja.

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## Introduction

In November 1967, a young Norwegian named Øyvind Ulltang caused quite a sensation. When called into arms, he not only refused his military service, he did so on political grounds. Unlike most conscientious objectors before him, he had no religious reasons for objecting military service. Rather, Ulltang related his decision to the American engagement in the Vietnam War, the unjust processes of decolonisation, and the military alliance NATO during the Cold War:

*“As a socialist, I do not refuse to bear arms in all circumstances. [...] I cannot, without entering a conflict with my own serious consciousness, serve in a military apparatus that is implemented in NATO. The NATO-country Portugal is today conducting pure terror and slaughter of the people in the Portuguese colonies in Africa. The NATO-country USA is today conducting a brutal war against the people in Vietnam. [...] My solidarity is on the side of those repressed and subdued. Therefore, I cannot serve in a military apparatus such as NATO, because this is on the side of the oppressors.”<sup>1</sup>*

As is clearly formulated here, Ulltang’s reason for refusing military service came from a strong condemnation of Norwegian defence- and foreign policy during the Cold War. At the core of this mistrust was Norwegian alliance policy, which involved support for nuclear deterrence. Based on his moral conscience he felt unable to be part of a military apparatus that supported what he saw as counteracting the peace and well-being of all people. The distance between his and the Norwegian state’s view on promoting peace was so vast that he could not under these circumstances serve in the Norwegian military –an act he argued to be a fundamental democratic right.<sup>2</sup> In February, the Ministry of Justice denied his application to be exempted from doing military service, though. Norwegian authorities could not accept that Ulltang’s reasons for objecting were based on a particular situation. According to them, he had to be sincerely against all forms of military activity in order to be exempted from military service. The rejection from Norwegian authorities did little to change his stance, however, and Ulltang responded that his imperative for action was still strong. He found it ethically binding to oppose

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<sup>1</sup> “Som sosialist nektar eg ikkje å bera våpen under allt tilhøve. [...] eg kan ikkje, utan å koma i konflikt med mi alvorlege overtydning, tjenestegjera i eit militærapparat som er integrert i NATO. NATO-landet Portugal driv i dag rein terror og nedslaktning av folk i dei Portugisiske koloniane i Afrika. NATO-landet USA fører i dag ein brutal krig mot folket i Vietnam [...] Min solidaritert er på dei undertrykte og underkua si side. Eg kan difor ikkje gjera tjeneste i eit militærapparat som NATO, då dette er på undertrykkjarane si side” (my own translation). Høyesterett, 31.09.1968, 10 (pdf). URL: [https://www.pdf-arkivet.no/soldat/ulltang\\_saken.PDF](https://www.pdf-arkivet.no/soldat/ulltang_saken.PDF)

<sup>2</sup> Oslo Byrett, 08.12.1977, 5. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001.

the “imperialist politics led by the Norwegian state”.<sup>3</sup> Norwegian authorities did not budge. The case went through several appeals all denied by the legal system, before it eventually went to Høyesterett (the Norwegian Supreme Court) where again was denied.<sup>4</sup> Through several years Ulltang did not give in, and for that he was sentenced to prison.<sup>5</sup> As we shall see in this thesis, Ulltang was not alone in his views. In the late 1960s, a rising number of young Norwegians refused to oblige their constitutional duty of serving in the armed forces, and ideas concerning peace was at the very heart of their reasons for refusing military service.

As is illustrated with the Ulltang-case, conscientious objection was much more than merely the act of refusing to serve in the Norwegian armed forces. To him and many others, the draft became a decisive moment where they had to assess what values they wished to promote, and which they wished to oppose. Today, many Norwegians lay great trust in their country’s national defence as an important instrument in protecting democracy and territorial security, but what happens when these values seem to be lost on decision makers and forgotten in the international community? When the Cold War reality tightened its grip on the Norwegian society, and anxieties of an emerging global conflict with new weapon technology possessing the potential to wipe out entire populations were felt by many, the question of what to do soon became pressing. Conscientious objection became an important mouthpiece for those who found themselves in disillusion by these political realities. The objectors that emerged during the Cold War questioned the rationale behind their country’s military engagement in NATO and the doctrine of mutual deterrence in the Cold War. Thus, conscientious objection became a means to protest contemporary foreign policy. Overall, this criticism was centred on topics closely related to the Cold War context. If we take a step back and consider these criticisms, it becomes apparent that these are ways of formulating ideas of peace. By virtue of being a vehicle for protest and an important matter in the discursive field of war and peace, conscientious objection is a fruitful topic for a study of ideas in their historical contexts.

### **Research Questions**

In this thesis, I look indeed at how ideas of peace were formulated within the cultural and political framework of the Cold War. I argue that conscientious objectors took an active part in shaping the discursive field of peace and war in this period. My main focus lies on the

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<sup>3</sup> “Den imperialistiske politikken Norge fører” (my own translation). Norges Høyesterett, 31.09.68: [http://pdf-arkivet.no/soldat/ulltang\\_saken.PDF](http://pdf-arkivet.no/soldat/ulltang_saken.PDF)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Talgø, Steinar, *Konsept til brev*, 26.02.1986. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534, 1.

politicised aspect of conscientious objection, although other aspects will occasionally be drawn in.

The questions I will address are: In what ways did the Cold War system, consisting of political and ideological rivalries and the principle of nuclear deterrence, feed into ideas of war and peace in Norway? How are these ideas formulated around the question of conscientious objection? To what degree did the Cold War alter ideas of war and peace? What were the central tropes in this discussion? To answer these questions, I will examine the dialogue between conscientious objectors, Norwegian authorities, and the wider Norwegian public on issues of war and peace. The Cold War will serve as a historical framework, with a special focus on the problems it posed for promoting peace and preventing war. Therefore, the Vietnam War, nuclear weapons, and block politics are highlighted. To this end, I study how the discursive field of peace was shaped in Norway during this period. What is important to note here is that “peace” is rarely expressed in isolation, but more often part of the larger conceptual paradigm of both peace and war.<sup>6</sup> I will also have a closer look into the dynamics of this relationship, and examine what conditions led to increased militarisation and why conscientious objection increased in these environments.

Conceptually, my work follows the assumption that conscientious objection was, for many, a crucial way of communicating their resistance and discomfort brought on by Cold War realities, and that ideas about “peace”, “non-violence” and “pacifism”, as well as the brutal dangers of modern warfare, became important instruments in making sense of an increasingly more complex reality, and that this in turn gave new meanings to these concepts. Similar to historians Matthew Grant and Benjamin Ziemann, I argue that ways of imagining the implications of an actual outbreak of war between the East-West powers became important in fighting and managing the Cold War, for the COs and the government alike.<sup>7</sup> Based on this approach, I try to get access to how the Cold War was understood and shaped by contemporaries both in and outside high politics. Through a historical analysis of these concepts, I aim to demonstrate how the same concept can take on several different meanings shaped by social and cultural context. By extension, bringing together a study of peace-related ideas in the problem of conscientious objection with the Cold War context, I aim to demonstrate that familiar concepts that are

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<sup>6</sup> Statistically, there was a clear parallel between increased militarisation and conscientious objection, Gleditsch and Agøy. *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 119-120.

<sup>7</sup> Grant and Ziemann, “Understanding the imaginary war”, 3.



seemingly fixed to us indeed have their own history shaped by culture and context as they are reproduced by various historical actors. The goal here is not to arrive at an accurate conclusion of what “peace” means, but rather to take its historicity seriously in a study of conceptual shifts initiated by the Cold War.

In this way, I aim to open up a debate on the issue of peace that has been kept quite narrow in academia and a wider audience in this country. Historical research in Norway tend to treat conscientious objection as a separate thematic field confined, at best, to the realms of the military. The fact that conscientious objection has not been comprehensively discussed in relation to issues of peace can reveal something about how these concepts have been interpreted and negotiated in Norwegian history. Much seem to suggest that the approach to peace put forth by objectors deviated from that of the Norwegian government, and this might explain why they have been confined to separate frames of interpretation. My thesis seeks to broaden this narrow perspective, instead attempting to demonstrate that the history of conscientious objection is relevant for a far wider thematic field of Norwegian history than previously considered. By doing so, I want to historicise the commonly held notion of Norway as a peace nation, which is strongly anchored in the nation’s history and identity.<sup>8</sup> With this thesis, I seek to offer an important nuance to this notion. The purpose is not to assess how historically accurate this perception is, but rather to offer a critical perspective on how Norwegians think about such concepts in national history.

### **State of Research**

My research brings together three scholarly strands: the Cold War, peace research and conscientious objection. I discuss secondary literature as it relates to these three. Notably, they are treated separately in most scholarly research. By the Cold War, I refer not only to the conflict itself, and the significance it had for Norwegian history. I am also interested in the period at large. Therefore, research of the Cold War period also includes perspectives on the post-war period and cultural and political ramifications of 1968 in Norway.

In later decades, the historiography on the Cold War has found new directions in a wide landscape of interpretations. Despite a manifold of readings, there is wide agreement that the Cold War was a harbour of longer-term historical developments and that it is best understood

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<sup>8</sup> Pharo, *Den norske fredstradisjonen*, 239.

as an international system of global transformations.<sup>9</sup> Historian Frederico Romero seem to suggest that the manifold interpretations have gone too far. He calls for conceptual clarity, and a broad cultural understanding of the Cold War as well as contextualisation within a larger process of historical change. He sketches out a broad but distinct focus on ideas, identities, and the contest for cultural hegemony that facilitates an inclusive characterisation of the Cold World as a predominately strategic and ideological conflict for shaping and defining the future. This does not mean, however, that historical studies accentuating the crucial role of the nuclear threat, the political stalemate it caused, and the prolonged militarisation of states and societies are side-lined. Romero argues that fear of uncontrolled change in the social, political, economic, and cultural realm hold important positions in both these perspectives.<sup>10</sup> This approach, concentrating on the clash of ideas and social systems, is an important point of departure for my perspective on the Cold War. Another key element Romero underscores is to include the critical continuum of the Second World War and the Depression as the “intellectual matrixes” that informed not only policy making, but also the cultural and emotional imagination of post-war societies inside and outside of Europe.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, historian Odd Arne Westad offers an important reminder not to deploy the Cold War as an all-embracing source for explanations, whilst still recognising that its effects hit broadly.<sup>12</sup>

Historiography on the Cold War in Norway tend to have a predominately political focus. Historians Knut Einar Eriksen and Helge Øystein Pharo have written a comprehensive work on the period 1949-64 which focuses on Norwegian foreign politics during the Cold War. Central for their perspective on Norwegian Cold War history is domestic political stability and comprehensive internationalisation. They follow a complex interwoven relationship of Norwegian and international history and analyse its influence on the global, Atlantic, Western-Europe, and Nordic political arenas. Their research focuses on how Norwegian politicians reacted to drastic international changes, and shaped Norwegian foreign politics accordingly. The book gives a thorough account of political aspects of the Cold War, and how Norwegian politicians perceived Norway’s role in it.<sup>13</sup> Because the traditional Cold War historiography in Norway is largely led by political perspectives, I rely much on works with a different thematic

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<sup>9</sup> See for example: Prasenjit Duara “The Cold War as a Historical Period: An Interpretive Essay”. *Journal of Global History*: No. 6 (2011): 457-480. Odd Arne Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*, and *The Cold War: A World History*. Frederico, Romero, *Historiography at the Crossroads*.

<sup>10</sup> Romero, *Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads*, 685, 689-690.

<sup>11</sup> Romero, *Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads*, 690.

<sup>12</sup> Westad, *The Cold War: A world history*, 1-2, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 15.

focus for insights about social and cultural currents in the wider Norwegian society in this period. Many of these themes follow under the, as I would call it, historical umbrella-term “1968”. Research on this history has gained wider attention in later years. From being a subject largely handled by those who were involved in the events themselves, it is now a frequent topic for historical research, also in Norway. There is wide agreement among scholars that 1968 is about far more than the events that took place this year.<sup>14</sup> A central scholar of the Norwegian 1968 is historian Tor Egil Førland. In *1968*, he emphasises the symbolic meaning of this year and argues that its significance was strongest for the individual. Thus, he shifts focus away from the political, and instead treats it as a period of change for worldviews and ways of being. According to Førland, events commonly associated with the Cold War, such as discussions of western imperialism and resistance towards the American societal system, were located within the 1968 framework.<sup>15</sup> However, *1968* is more a presentation of different micro-historical glimpses with cultural roots in 1968. Thus, I have supplement with the very recently written *Arven etter 1968* (The Legacy of 1968), for a broader perspective on the social, political and cultural currents in Norway following 1968. As a cross-disciplinary historiographical contribution, the authors handle various sides of the theme 1968 from different scholarly perspectives. The book aims first and foremost to give an account of the effects of 1968, by reading cultural, political, religious and normative changes through political lenses covering broad political spectre.<sup>16</sup> It is therefore valuable in piecing together a cultural, social as well as political historical backdrop of 1968 in the country.<sup>17</sup>

The scholarly attention devoted to peace research signifies not only its importance but also the complexity of the concept. A leading voice in Norway has long been peace researcher Johan Galtung who put the topic of peace research on the academic agenda when establishing the International Peace Research Institute in Norway in 1959. In a well-known and widely cited article titled *Violence, Peace and Peace Research*, Galtung presents a broad definition of peace where he argues that peace and violence are in an intricate conceptual relationship with each other, where the former is defined by the absence of the latter. This perspective rests on the argument that too little is dismissed when a condition of peacefulness is declared. The article

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<sup>14</sup> Dørum and Tønnesson, *Rød, grønn eller blå bunnlinje?*, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Førland, *1968*, 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Dørum and Tønnesson, *Rød, grønn eller blå bunnlinje?*, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, “The Scandinavian 1968 in a European Perspective”. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 33:4 (2008): 326-338, provides a comparative account of differences and similarities of 1968 in the Scandinavian countries, in addition to comparing Scandinavia to the rest of Europe.

encourages new thinking, research and possibly action towards important issues of peace and violence in various societies. Galtung also introduces a conceptual toolbox for peace research, important among which are the concepts of negative peace, which is simply the absence of war, and positive peace, which demands also the presence of justice. Violence, in Galtung's terms, is made relative to what is avoidable. Thus, any intended, or unintended, manifest or latent acts on the structural, physical or psychological level committed by persons or other conditions that have a negative effect on someone's potential are included in this definition of violence.<sup>18</sup> Although a mouthful, the perspective Galtung presents here is useful in discussions where peace and violence are located within a grey area, and the research field on peace gains a new tool for identifying and defining its problems.

Galtung's view that peace is more than the absence of war is picked up by political scholar and peace activist David Cortright. In *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*, Cortright argues that peace needs exoneration and seeks to meet this need by offering a broad account of movements and ideas for peace.<sup>19</sup> In his perspective, the concept of nonviolence has pivotal importance and is situated, perhaps somewhat paradoxical, within what he calls "history's most violent era".<sup>20</sup> The insights offered by Cortright provide a thorough backdrop for understanding the historical actors in this thesis. It can sometimes be easy to get confused by conflicted terms such as pacifism, that carry a heavy baggage of meaning but is often understood in quite rigid terms. According to Cortright, pacifism encompasses all movements, ideas, and practices focused on preventing war and building peace. He launches the term "Realistic Pacifism", and by this he effectively historicises the concept. He illustrates how pacifism can go from absolute and unconditional in its rejection of force and weapons in some contexts, to pragmatic and conditional in others. Further, what has previously been labelled as pacifism might be more appropriately defined in contemporary terms such as peace-building and peacemaking.<sup>21</sup> Although one should be careful about applying contemporary terms on interpretations of the past, Cortright opens up a space for a historical analysis less influenced by the complex and confused meaning of terms such as pacifism.

In a similar vein, historian Jay Winter studies instances of hopeful visions for the future. In *Dreams of Peace and Freedom* he coins the terms "minor utopias" as opposed to the "major

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<sup>18</sup> Galtung, *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, 168-172.

<sup>19</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, 1, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, 334.

utopias” of for example Stalin’s communism and Hitler’s fascism. Winter wishes to devote historical attention to beliefs that social action could eliminate fundamental elements of conflict and misery. These beliefs, he argues have been overshadowed by the popular attention to evils –of which there were many examples of during the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> The attention Winter devotes to language and context is of particular interest to this thesis. Winter argues that movements in the twentieth century have their point of reference in upheavals of collective violence, whilst movements in the previous century followed the French and industrial revolutions. The former is therefore profoundly different from the latter. This subtle dialectic between minor utopian visions and the emergence of total war in the twentieth century is at the core of Winter’s historical study of movements. Winter thus provides a contextual framework for also understanding conscientious objectors in Cold War Norway. Additionally, he takes into account the discursive changes after 1968, where minor utopians focused less on nation and class and more on civil society and human rights.<sup>23</sup> I take these discursive transformations with me as I embark on the dialogue of peace in Norway from the 1960s onwards.

Still in the scholarly realms of peace research, historians Holger Nehring and Helge Pharo seek to offer a more complex picture of the twentieth century. They do this by shifting the focus from narratives about the dark and violent twentieth century that they argue hold a dominant position in accounts of this period. Instead, Nehring and Pharo focus on what historical research can gain from examining how peace was established and maintained in the wake of wars. The analytical framework presented here is fruitful for this thesis in several ways. It serves as a renegotiation of assumptions between peace and violence and provides a channel through which a study of how various actors have negotiated peace at different historical junctures can be conducted. Moreover, they suggest that it is more rewarding to focus on societal and government efforts at peace-building as mutually intertwined, as opposed to focusing on different domestic and international sites of peace negotiations, such as different movements or government agencies or causal factors that might have promoted peace.<sup>24</sup> I draw on this suggestion in my focus on the dialogue between objectors and Norwegian authorities in order to decipher the dynamic process of negotiation and contestation of historically specific shapes, forms, and definitions of “peace”.

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<sup>22</sup> Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom*, 1-2

<sup>23</sup> Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom*, 5-6.

<sup>24</sup> Nehring and Pharo, *A Peaceful Europe?*, 277-278.

The most comprehensive attempt at placing conscientious objection in a conceptual context is Charles C. Moskos and John Whiteclay Chambers's *The New Conscientious objection*. In the book, Moskos and Chambers present a cross-national account of origins and patterns, as well as how the phenomenon has been handled by national governments through criteria and policies. The main point here is that an overreaching and consistent pattern can be detected in the social and political evolution of conscientious objection where objectors previously gave religious reasons for refusing military service, later began basing their objection on moral and ethical reasons. They call this pattern "the secularisation of conscience".<sup>25</sup> According to them, this secularisation points to a significant change in the size, motives, and extent of conscientious objection. They locate this transition in post-modern Western societies, where non-religious objectors grew to be the biggest group, and conscientious objection was more likely to be accepted by the state.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, the phenomenon of conscientious objection is painted very broadly here, and there is little room for national particularities. Still, it is a useful framework and a set of questions that I will nuance with the study of conscientious objection in Norway.

As for the Norwegian context, sociologist Nils Petter Gleditsch and historian Nils Ivar Agøy have arguably provided the most thorough accounts. In *Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, they sketch out the main developments of conscientious objection in the country from its ancient roots to the end of the twentieth century. As this account is a chapter in the book by Moskos and Chambers, it is guided the same research questions and perspective on conscientious objection. The discussion is mainly focused on legal developments, of which it gives a thorough assessment. The secular development Moskos and Chambers point to seem to be accurate also for the Norwegian case. Legal changes and interpretations concerning conscientious objection are also well covered in debates between legal scholars.<sup>27</sup> Nils Ivar Agøy has provided a thorough historical account of the period until 1922 when conscientious objection became legalised in Norway. In a 1990 article, he tracks the turbulent process leading up to the law on conscientious objection and examines how the historical conditions at the time of this debate brought stalemates and clampdowns in communications.<sup>28</sup> There has also been conducted

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<sup>25</sup> Moskos and Chambers, *The New Conscientious objection*, 5- 6.

<sup>26</sup> Moskos and Chambers, *The New Conscientious objection*, 1, 5-6

<sup>27</sup> See for instance: Attachment two in the 1979 NOU on conscription: Morten Ruud, *Fritakskriteriene etter §1 I lov om fritaking for militærtjeneste av overbevisningsgrunner: en gjennomgåelse av lovforarbeider og rettspraksis*, pages 257-318.

<sup>28</sup> See: Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection In Norway From From the 1890s to 1922*. This is an article based on his thesis for the Cand. Philol. Degree: *Kampen mot vernetvangen* (Department of History, University of Oslo, 1987).

sociological studies of conscientious objection in Norway.<sup>29</sup> There is, however, no Norwegian scholarly accounts linking conscientious objection to the peace cause. As the overview here indicates, the scholarly attention divided to Norwegian conscientious objection tend to focus on the legal framework. I aim to fill this historiographical void by drawing a close connection between conscientious objection and ideas of peace.

### **Theory and Methodology**

At the core of the theoretical framework that guides this thesis are insights from the history of ideas. From its original output provided by Arthur O. Lovejoy's "unit-ideas", referring to the fundamental enduring ideas of the Western intellectual tradition, several dimensions have been added to this analytical framework. Li Hongtu's article *The Return of the History of Ideas* gives a thorough account of these dimensions and the elements that have been brought into focus on historical research throughout the development of the history of ideas. In the following, I will map out the ones that informs this thesis. The first relevant addition is the social and society, thus forming a "social history of ideas", often referred to as "new cultural history". Under the lead of historian Robert Darnton, this research paradigm focuses on ideas located outside the realm of elite-thinkers. It studies structures of the social world led by the idea that these are produced historically by the interconnected practices of the social, political, and discursive. Additionally, the processes through which meaning is constructed were also studied based on the practices that has given meaning to the world –often in plural or even contradictory ways. According to Hongtu, a key term here is "historicalness", which not only indicates having a historical perspective, but also a strong emphasis on the interdependency and agency of culture.<sup>30</sup> Guided by the theories on historical research presented here, I aim to study the ideas, sentiments, and mentalities deployed by conscientious objectors in Norway to pursue their actions. I argue that any attempt at understanding these must take careful consideration of the society and culture in which this complex social organisation took place.

Another important element in the thesis is my understanding of peace and war as concepts due to my interest in their meaning and connotations in the past, which calls for another frame of interpretation. At the practical level, studying concepts as it was laid out by Reinhard Koselleck

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<sup>29</sup> Sverre Røed Larsen, *Militærnektning i Norge: en studie av en protestgruppe*, Oslo: 1973 (Master's thesis in sociology), and Johan Galtung, *Hva mener sivilarbeiderne?: en undersøkelse av Havnåas leir for vernepliktige sivilarbeidere*, Oslo: 1957 (cand.real. thesis).

<sup>30</sup> Hongtu, *The Return of the History of Ideas*, 141-142.

involves bringing a word together with the context in which it is used. By doing this, concepts such as “peace” or “war” are treated in my study as words that gain their meaning through the perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and objectives of whomever employed them in the Norwegian Cold War context.<sup>31</sup> This creates space for arguing that peace and war might have carried different meanings for conscientious objectors and, for instance, Norwegian officials. The social realm is still relevant here, because conceptual meaning is inseparable from its social context. Thus, my interpretations follow a bridge between the history of concepts and social history to see how people have interpreted concepts and how they have responded to their meanings. As I deal with peace and war as concepts, I make use of a theoretical apparatus that is slightly extended from that of a cultural history of ideas by its focus on language. In *Culture –Meaning –Discourse. Begriffsgeschichte reconsidered*, historian Hans Erich Boeeker discusses the theoretical paradigm referred to as *Begriffsgeschichte* –the history of concepts. With its criticism towards the use of expressions as temporally fixed and ideas introduced as constants, this understanding of the study of concepts in history informs the way I deal with shifting and conflicting ideas of peace and war during the Cold War. The main concern here is the history of “forming, using and changing concepts”.<sup>32</sup> This provides me with the methodological tools to examine how the Cold War context changed or expanded conceptual meanings. For example, how increased nuclear deterrence changed how both peace and war could be imagined.

In methodological terms, my thesis is based solely on the interpretation of texts. The theoretical framework sketched out above has in several ways guided the way I interpret these texts. As a practical guide on how to read primary sources, the insights provided by historians Benjamin Ziemann and Mirian Dobson in *Reading Primary Sources*, has been particularly helpful. These methods are drawn from theoretical considerations after “the cultural turn”, where discourse analysis is a predominant method for reading sources. In discourse analysis, the aim is not to recover the meaning an author has put into it, but rather to examine the interplay of the various linguistic elements within the text.<sup>33</sup> In the following, I give an account of the specific methodological advances that will be employed to the interpretation of primary sources. As it follows, these are tied to the theoretical body of the thesis.

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<sup>31</sup> Hongtu, *The Return of the History of Ideas*, 143.

<sup>32</sup> Boeeker, *Concept-Meaning-Discourse*, 51-52.

<sup>33</sup> Ziemann and Dobson, *Reading Primary Sources*, 3.



I look for key concepts and attempt to decipher their meanings and connotations, and how these meanings have changed over time and in various contexts, as well as caused change. Ziemann and Dobson calls these diachronic and synchronic perspectives.<sup>34</sup> I also look for how metaphors have been used as rhetoric devices. For example, my material seems to suggest that the nuclear bomb carried a heavy symbolic meaning of destruction and was used by conscientious objectors to persuade others to think critically towards the Cold War system. I explore this more closely in the thesis. I also assess the mode of emplotment furthered in the texts I handle. The concept, coined by Hayden White, suggests that historical writings are stories. This line of thinking can be applied to primary sources as well, as they do in fact also tell a story. Dobson and Ziemann argue that this is valid for a wide range of sources. In that vein, I look at how encounters between “the hero” or “the villain” of the story and the wider world are described. As well as the moral judgements and conclusions, and dichotomies implicitly suggested.

Another important interpretive measure I follow is focused on the reality effect of the source.<sup>35</sup> This is similar to what Kristin Asdal and Hilde Reinertsen suggest in their presentation of document analysis. They view documents as textual and discursive, but also material objects – something tangible. Another emphasis in the methodological tools of Asdal and Reinertsen is the emphasis on what texts can do and influence both in how they are used by historical actors and how they form parts of a larger field of practice.<sup>36</sup> A way to decipher this is to assess its relationship with existing discourses, and look for implications for discursive changes in the sources.<sup>37</sup> An example will be to look at for instance a journal made by and for objectors doing alternative service and examine how it differs or relates to peace discourse. A last important interpretive measure, which follows from the theoretical framework, is to take the context into consideration. Dobson and Ziemann underscore the importance recognising our limitations in understanding a historical context from our position as contemporary observers of the past. To overcome this obstacle, I do my best to learn about the material circumstances of which the texts were produced and disseminated.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ziemann and Dobson, *Reading Primary Sources*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ziemann and Dobson, *Reading Primary Sources*, 7-12.

<sup>36</sup> Asdal and Reinertsen, *Hvordan gjøre dokumentanalyse*, 16-17.

<sup>37</sup> Ziemann and Dobson, *Reading Primary Sources*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Ziemann and Dobson, *Reading Primary Sources*, 13.

## **Primary sources**

In this section I will explain what primary sources I have used in my thesis and why. I have made extensive use of the Defence Archives, and the archive of the Ministry of Justice- and Police, both at the National Archive in Oslo. These have been useful in tracking the communication between conscientious objectors and Norwegian authorities. The legal documents found here have also proven valuable to study what reasons objectors gave for refusing to serve in the military and how authorities reacted to these reasons. These are valuable sources for identifying and characterising the clash of ideas I refer to in the thesis. Pamphlets and brochures have provided basis for examining how conscientious objectors advocated their cause, and how they viewed the act of refusing military service. I have also made extensive use of newspaper articles to gain an impression of how people talked about conscientious objection in the Norwegian press, and thus gain a better idea of what was presented to the wider Norwegian public about this topic. Newspapers have also proven valuable to examine what Norwegian citizens thought about conscientious objection and what they based these opinions on. Another crucial source has been the NOU about conscription from 1979, where a publicly admitted committee was mandated to go through the meaning and content of conscription and military service in Norway. The committee handled all sides of this topic from both military and civil standpoints, and the discussion is well documented in the NOU. A great source for political opinions about conscription, what function the military ought to have, and how the legal system around conscientious objection was negotiated in the political sphere are reports from discussions in the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget).

## **Organisation of the Paper**

My argument comprises four parts divided by chapters, where each is guided by separate themes surrounding the question of conscientious objection, and a set of crucial questions linked to these. Since the chapters are thematically organised and handles different sides of the topic of conscientious objection, the years covered in each chapter will occasionally overlap.

### *1. Religious Pacifism Strongly Preferred: Conscientious Objection and the Nation at War Before 1945*

The first chapter maps out the period before the Cold War. It addresses how the process of legalising conscientious objection took place in contexts of conflict where defending the nation received primal attention and negotiating peace thus became second priority. To say anything about how the Cold War affected ideas of peace and conscientious objection from the 1960s

onwards, it is vital to have a look at how these ideas took form during in the period that came before. Therefore, this chapter is focused on three major conflicts that affected Norwegian society from 1850-1945: dissolving the Union with Sweden, The First World War, and the Second World War. This chapter is crucial for understanding the elements of continuity around considerations for the nation that will be sketched out in later chapters.

## *2. In the Shadow of the Bomb: The Cold War and How it Informed Military Conscientious Objection*

This chapter focuses on how ideas of peace were negotiated in Norway in the Cold War context. A crucial element in this chapter is the way objectors marked their distance from pacifism to strengthen the political element in their reasons for refusing military service. Disclaiming pacifism sharpened the fact that it was specifically Cold War foreign politics these objectors criticised. The Cold War created a situation of uncertainty for Norway, and the crucial decision to seek security in the western wing of the East-West conflict was strongly contested due to American foreign politics which were viewed as highly questionable if not directly immoral. By focusing on how conscientious objectors stated reasons for objecting military service based on the military-political system that Norway was part of, and how Norwegian authorities reacted to these ideas, this chapter investigates how the Cold War created a specific historical trajectory for negotiating peace.

## *3. The Limits of Liberalism: The Debate on Alternative Service*

This chapter is first and foremost intended to offer a nuance to the notion of a period of political stability under a social democratic order from the 1960s to the 1980s. This notion is supported by the narrative about 1968 in Norway as particularly peaceful, and a tolerant Norwegian government is an important factor in this characterisation. At the core of this chapter is the debate on alternative military service that span across several decades. Conscientious objectors demanded to be offered a peace relevant alternative service, which they viewed as a democratic right. Norwegian authorities repeatedly dismissed these demands, and the debates that went on illustrate a clash of ideas that is illuminating not only for studying how peace was negotiated in Norway in this period, but also for a reassessment of this period in Norwegian history. Bringing together the narrative of 1968 and debates on alternative service also furthers a broader look at 1968 in Norway. The clash of ideas laid out in this chapter provides the groundwork for chapter three, which takes a closer look at its underlying mechanisms.

#### *4. Real Men? Conscientious objection and Gender Dimensions in Formulating Ideas of Peace*

This chapter examines how ideas are formed through social interaction by focusing on dynamics of interpretation between conscientious objectors and the wider Norwegian public through a gendered perspective. The reason why gender is an important theme to include in relation to conscientious objection is because the ways in which objectors and their ideas were perceived by others carried strong references to ideas about preferred masculinity. This chapter also investigates what cultural currents might have affected ideas about gender, and the continued importance of the Second World War experience is a crucial aspect here. It created a tendency in Norwegian culture and society which promoted standards of masculinity closely tied to the duty to defend the nation –expectations that conscientious objectors were perceived as not living up to. The strong emphasis on the needs of the state, apparent as a red thread throughout the thesis, is also better understood if gender is included in the frame of interpretation.

## Chapter one: Religious Pacifism Strongly Preferred: Conscientious Objection and the Nation at War before 1945

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1907, a young man named Einar Li had scheduled to attend a meeting with other politically aware youth to discuss militarism and antimilitarism. This day did not go quite the way Li had intended, however. Li was absent at the meeting because earlier that day the police arrested him. The time had come for Li to serve his prison sentence. His crime: he refused to join the Norwegian military not on religious grounds (as was somewhat accepted at that time) but for political reasons. Thus, he did not fulfil his duty as a citizen to defend the new nation. Yet as Li was also a distinguished person within the Labour Movement, his arrest attracted public attention.<sup>39</sup> Indeed the left-wing press started a campaign to raise awareness for what it thought was a glaring neglect of Li's political conscience. In the Tromsø-based newspaper *Nordlys*, at the time owned by the Labour Party, one could read the following statement:

*For the second time Le has within the walls of prison lived as a martyr in service of the peace cause. [...] Li refuses any participation in preparations for war. Therefore he is treated as a criminal. For purely principal reasons Li is against the military establishment, because his conscience forbids him to contaminate himself with preparations for murder –regardless of if these preparations are called war- or even peace preparations.<sup>40</sup>*

Li's case and the public reaction it stirred contain in a nutshell what the chapter, and by extension, my thesis is all about: They illustrate that conscientious objection was an extremely controversial topic in Norway in which questions of the nation, collective duties, and problems of conscience, defined either in secular or religious terms, were negotiated in often fierce terms. In the following I will argue that when conscientious objection to military service was finally introduced as a right in 1922, religious motives were strongly preferred and that this restriction was due to the preponderance and persistence of a thinking that put the national community and

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<sup>39</sup> Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek, *Dagen i dag*. URL: <https://www.arbark.no/Kalender/Kal1106/kal.htm>

<sup>40</sup> "For anden gang har Li inden fænglets mure levet et martyrium i fredssakens tjeneste. [...] Li nægter enhver deltakelse i krigsforberedelse. Derfor skal han behandles som en forbryter. Av rent principielle grunne står Li mot krigsvæsenet, fordi hans samvittighet forbyder han at besmitte sig med mordforberedelser –selv om disse mordforberedelser kaldes krigs- eller endog fredsforberedelser" (my own translation). *Nordlys*, Einar Li: *Kampen mot militarismen i Norge*, 2.

its right to defend itself with military means first. This way of thinking was shaped and reinforced by the war and armed conflict Norway saw since 1814, making it very difficult for the emerging peace movement to promote a wider, i.e., political understanding of conscientious objection as a true alternative to securing peace. As it turns out, one person's martyr was another person's troublemaker. The development of how conscientious objection was regulated in Norway in the period from 1890 to 1922 had paradoxical effects. Negotiations in regulation for conscientious objection ran smoothly, and changes seemed well underway. Then, instead of improving, the process came to a considerable halt, and the situation for objectors worsened considerably. Despite of the fact that the issue remained important, and the number of objectors rose, unfair regulations remained in place for nearly two decades. In 1922, Norway came in last of the Scandinavian countries to accept a bill that allowed conscientious objection, but the process leading up to this was rugged and filled with controversies.<sup>41</sup>

As we shall see in this chapter, the topic of conscientious objection has historically been closely connected to considerations for the nation. In this complex interplay, threats towards the national community have had a tendency of negatively affecting conscientious objectors. Before moving on to explore if and how this relationship changed by the new framework of the Cold War, it is necessary to have a look at the Norwegian relationship with peace, war and conscientious objection in the period that came before. I will develop my argument around in three steps. Firstly, I look at the final phases in the Norwegian-Swedish Union and discuss how this context reinforced ideas about a citizen's duty in the national community, and how this nationalistic focus contributed to connecting pacifism to presumed female traits. Secondly, I examine how the First World War fuelled antimilitarist sentiments around the time of the legalisation of conscientious objection. Thirdly, I discuss how the Second World War experiences led to vastly different conclusions about war and peace.

### **The Birth of the Male Nation: The Debate on Citizens Duties and the Invention of “Female” Pacifism**

When the Union with Denmark was dissolved in 1814, Norway forcibly entered a union with Sweden, under the monarchy of the Swedish king. Throughout the nineteenth century, the question of Norwegian sovereignty had long been a hot political topic, however, the Union with Sweden strengthened assumptions about the duty to defend the nation. The political climate

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<sup>41</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 3.

was highly divided towards the end of the nineteenth century in views on military matters. On the one hand, calls for improving a halting national defence were pressing. Furthermore, the conservative Høyre (right) party emphasised the military as a way of handling domestic unrest and external threats. On the other, the liberal Venstre party (left) saw the military establishment as an instrument at the hands of the Swedish king, and thus a threat to the aim of national self-determination. Political disagreement was sharpened from the mid 1880s, by a growing vaguely antimilitarist Labour Party and a bourgeoisie peace movement.<sup>42</sup> Rivalries increased when the liberal Venstre party gained power in Norway in 1884. The process of dissolving the Union went through various phases of increased and decreased tension. However, after this the aim of national independence was brought to the forefront of the political agenda.<sup>43</sup> In the late 1890s, when the possibility of war with Sweden seemed not so farfetched, the national defence question experienced a blooming in Norwegian politics and public opinion. In this period, a number of organisations devoted to military questions arose, and the military was expanding. People in general who had tended to view the military with scepticism and mistrust, also began to view a strong national defence as an important weapon in the fight for a more independent Norway. Even the formerly military sceptic liberal Venstre was promoting a strong defence as an instrument of power in the Union.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it was in this context of increased interest for the military, and strong incentives to show muscles in a showdown with Sweden that the national peace society, Norges Fredsforening, was established. At this time Norges Fredsforening, established in 1895, had an unconditional view on military matters: disarmament. Yet, its birth can hardly be said to have been without complications. Public interest for peace agitation in the context described above was lukewarm. Besides, the peace issue was considered a topic for high politics, and the initiatives of a few agitators received minimal attention. However, largely due to the impressive stamina of some individuals, Norges Fredsforening still managed to claim its place on the public arena. Their influence was also quite out of proportion to their size.<sup>45</sup> When explaining how the Norwegian Peace Association was established counter to popular currents focused on the military, historians Mats Rønning and Per Jostein Ringsby argue that this did not come as a result of a burgeoning peace idea, but rather as an attempt to consolidate ideas under pressure.

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<sup>42</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 42-43.

<sup>44</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 6.

Thus, the establishment of Norges Fredsforening was a reaction to strong agitation for national defence, rather than an indication of popular interest for the peace cause.<sup>46</sup>

The unlikely survival of Norges Fredsforening did not mean that a stable foundation was laid for further development of the peace cause in Norway. Its establishment in a time of armament and increasing tensions with Sweden is reflected in its negative public reputation and frequent inner conflicts. Allegedly, the infamous Norwegian poet and eager societal debater Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson condescendingly referred to antimilitarists as “freedsfaar” (sheep of peace) –a slight alteration of the term “fredsfar” (father of peace), but with a totally different meaning.<sup>47</sup> Disagreements within the national peace society were so sharp that there is reason to argue for it having two fractions. One of them found their emphasis on the peace cause in religion. Based on strictly pacifistic religious beliefs, these argued that all types of war were a sin. The other fraction promoted a more pragmatic and relative peace ideology and were inclined to accept the need of a national defence. These two fractions had difficulty gathering under a common strategy for peace, which is evident in their many confrontations and at times pungent characterisations of each other. In the years that followed, the association had modest influence. It took years for the Norwegian peace society to establish itself properly, and it had relatively few members.<sup>48</sup> The peace movement were small in scope, and motives for promoting the peace cause seem have been shifting.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, parliamentary efforts received most credit for its efforts in the peace cause. Nonetheless, the peace movement’s role in keeping the peace issue on the public agenda should not be overlooked.<sup>50</sup>

In the 1890s, conscientious objection had grown to be a problem Norwegian authorities no longer could ignore –and ignore they didn’t. Harsh and repeated sentences for objectors caused public outrage, and many pushed to have legislation changed so that jailings could be put to an end. Two bills in 1878 and 1885, which reflect the increased interest in military matters brought on by the clash with Sweden, had made it virtually impossible for young healthy Norwegian men to avoid being drafted. Perhaps related to this, objectors were few in numbers. From 1885 to 1902, there were only 40 objectors in Norway, and the majority stated religious reasons for objecting military service. Like the religious fraction of Norges Fredsforening, these objectors

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<sup>46</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 41 and 43.

<sup>47</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 43.

<sup>48</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 43-45.

<sup>49</sup> Pharo, *Den norske fredstradisjonen*, 246.

<sup>50</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 51.



were pacifists and their religious beliefs prevented them from doing military service of any kind. Because of few cases, Norwegian authorities had no systematic procedures for handling conscientious objectors. Desperate measures, such as appeals to patriotism or labelling objectors insane, were used to persuade them to give up their stance. These measures very seldom worked, and objectors were imprisoned, most often on grounds of disobeying orders. Because objectors could be charged with this offence repeatedly, they were often imprisoned year after year. Einar Li, referred to in the beginning of this chapter, was sentenced to prison three times before authorities gave up persecuting him.<sup>51</sup>

Historian Nils Ivar Agøy gives the burgeoning peace movement much credit for speaking up about the situation around conscientious objection in the late 1800s. For instance, the leader of Norges Fredsforening, Nicolai Julius Sørensen, worked hard to put conscientious objection on the top of the peace movements agenda. Although both factions condemned the treatment of objectors, it was especially its radical pacifist religious fraction who openly supported conscientious objection. To them, objecting military service was the only morally defensible stance, and the whole peace movement argued that it was an unacceptable form of religious persecution unworthy of a civilised state. Not surprisingly, comprehensive attempts made by the peace movement to change legislation were met with reluctance at the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting, preoccupied with the Swedes.<sup>52</sup>

At the turn of the century, a new kind of objector entered the frame and significantly altered the question of conscientious objection. Agøy uses the term socialist objectors. As the term denounces, these objectors did not express religious reasons, but ethical or political. Socialist objectors belonged to the, at the time, antimilitarist labour movement. To the growing Norwegian Labour Party, militarism was a class issue. They believed the military establishment to be a power tool at the hands of the leading classes, used to keep working classes down. In different variants, some more radical than others those belonging to the Labour Movement, like the conscientious objector Einar Li, had a strong disgust for the military establishment. These ideas did not sit well in nonsocialist circles, and the topic of conscientious objection changed from being a question of religious tolerance to an incentive to overcome dangerous unpatriotic radicals. Meanwhile, harsh criticism of the situation regarding conscientious objection continued, and the issue went through numerous rounds of discussions in the Storting, and the

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<sup>51</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 12.

<sup>52</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 4-7.

Norwegian government. Eventually, a circular was issued in 1902 that temporarily suspended sentences for *religious* objectors until better arrangements could be made.<sup>53</sup> This caused a situation where religious objectors would go free, while nonreligious objectors faced prison sentences.<sup>54</sup> Crucial for understanding why religious objectors were treated highly differently from nonreligious objectors is the strong emphasis put on the needs of the state. While the former was perceived to be a matter of religious tolerance, the latter were viewed as unpatriotic threats to a nation in need that had to be weeded out. This is an important reason why the process of legalising conscientious objection came to a halt in the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>55</sup>

The Union with Sweden was dissolved peacefully in 1905. The peaceful dissolving of the Union between Norway and Sweden has later been characterised as a diplomatic masterpiece, and the Swedish king Oscar II was two years later saluted by the favourable label “fredsfyrste” (peace prince).<sup>56</sup> The fact that an armed conflict was avoided seems to have had little effect on the situation for conscientious objectors. What is important to note here, is that the legal system in Norway was completely underdeveloped and unprepared for handling changes in conscientious objection. Objectors were sentenced based on different penal codes and legal paragraphs, which led to legal practices bordering on improvisation, with dramatic consequences. Despite firm beliefs, especially in the military establishment, that harsh sentences would curb antimilitary sentiments, they had the paradoxical effect of strengthening it.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the majority drew a stark line between ethically and politically motivated objection, and few believed that one’s political stance could lead to a breach of conscience. This was a turbulent public debate, where political rivals, the military establishment, and the peace movement were discussing conscientious objection on vastly differing premises, leading to, in Agøy’s terms, a deadlock.<sup>58</sup>

What made the idea of defending the nation so powerful, was that during debates people managed to link pacifism with presumed weak women –which was not a preferable association for a man. Gender was a crucial category for defining the nation. Notions of a common Norwegian belonging were strongly affected by prevailing characteristics of women and men. The sense of who was included or excluded becomes particularly visible during the creation of

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<sup>53</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 6-8.

<sup>54</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 115.

<sup>55</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 10-11.

<sup>56</sup> *Store Norske Leksikon*, “Unionsoppløsningen i 1905”, Knut Dørum, 06.11.21. URL: [https://snl.no/Unionsoppl%C3%B8sningen\\_i\\_1905](https://snl.no/Unionsoppl%C3%B8sningen_i_1905)

<sup>57</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 13.

<sup>58</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 16.

the nation, such as when Norway in 1905 became a fully sovereign state.<sup>59</sup> The 1905 referendum strengthened the right to vote as a measurement for whom belonged to the national community. When the Norwegian people were asked to give their vote in the question of dissolving the Union with Sweden, women did not have full citizenship, and were therefore left out of this fateful decision, an exclusion of which they felt great grief. Nonetheless, with exclusion comes mobilisation. Women participated in alternative ways in matters of militarism and the peace cause, which tells us that both men and women defined themselves as belonging to the national community, but that political activity took place along gendered lines.<sup>60</sup> In 1889, for example, a women-circle in Christiania (now Oslo) initiated a fundraising for the national defence which was signed by 56 women. The aim was to strengthen the national defence in preparation to defend the peace. The call was directed at Norwegian women under a statement saying that if the choice between war and peace rested on women's vote, the outcome would be certain, because women loved peace. It was argued that women were depended on peace in everything they did, and that women suffered particularly during wartime because they were mere bystanders in the fight their dearest ones participated in. the female love for peace made it necessary to be prepared to fight for peace, and all women were asked to contribute with what they could afford so that military supplies could be bought.<sup>61</sup>

In *Gendered Nations*, Ida Blom, Karen Hagermann and Cathrine Hall explores issues concerning the gendering of nations and nationalisms. In a transnational perspective, Blom understands interactions between gender and nation as affected by cultures. She holds that across various cultures, masculinity is understood as a key to public rights and obligations in the nation, but that understandings of femininity are more fluent. In the Norwegian case, discussions on femininity were centred around women's access to the public sphere through paid work, admission in universities and work, and married women as legal subjects. By looking at the different expectations towards men and women, Blom pose some interesting questions regarding the influence of modernisation and the collective versus the individual as value systems. Trough cross national research the international character of nationalism as well as women's emancipation are confirmed. This enables us to see the connection between the public and private, culture and the nation, and symbols and realities. Thus, the ambiguities in the constructions of nations are revealed.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, these ambiguities were tied to the

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<sup>59</sup> Blom, *Gender and Nation in International Comparison*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Blom, *Det er forskjell på folk*, 179, 182-183.

<sup>61</sup> Blom, *Det er forskjell på folk*, 168.

<sup>62</sup> Blom, *Gender and Nation in International Comparison*, xv, 10, 14.

rights and duties in the nation state. In the 1905 referendum, the gendered divide between men and women in rights of citizenship became clearer. The mobilisation caused by this among women who not only yearned for the right to vote, but also to have their voice heard in matters concerning the Norwegian nation, illustrates how the referendum fed into struggles for women's suffrage.<sup>63</sup>

Notwithstanding, citizen rights came with considerable duties to the state, and one fundamental duty is that of defending the national territory. Thus, the importance of gender in the military seems straightforward. A clear feature of military rhetoric is notions of the military as a masculine arena, where men are perceived to be strong and courageous, and women weak and fearful, in need of protection. Applying the transnational perspective notions of "others", often defined along racial and national lines, are talked about in ways very similar to the military rhetoric of cowardice, bravery, strength and worthiness. Those who are not included in the national community, and thus not obligated to defend it are "feminised". The invention of standing armies and universal conscription seems to have transformed the military from a masculine-feminine undertaking to a strictly masculine sphere.<sup>64</sup> This is not to overlook women's role in fighting wars. Rather, the insights provided here creates ground for looking at how gendered practices such as these might have influenced conscientious objectors. As Norwegian citizens who refused to partake in the glorious duty to defend the nation, it seems fair to argue that the feminisations discussed above might have also been projected to views of the objector's manliness.

### **The First World War, Antimilitarism and the 1922 Law on Conscientious Objection**

The year 1914 marks the outbreak of the First World War. Norway managed to stay out of the conflict as a neutral nation.<sup>65</sup> Still, the war created a political environment that proved beneficial to the process of legalising conscientious objection. During 1910, a radical movement had emerged within the Norwegian Labour Party, and the turmoil following the First World War boosted this radicalisation. Through increased governmental control the radical fraction of the

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<sup>63</sup> Blom, *Det er forskjell på folk*, 182.

<sup>64</sup> Blom, *Gender and Nation in International Comparison*, 15.

<sup>65</sup> Norgeshistorie, "1914-1940: første verdenskrig og mellomkrigstiden".

Labour Party, led by Martin Tranmæl, was determined to transform Norwegian society in the direction of socialism.<sup>66</sup>

The outbreak of war was devastating for those who had put their faith in peace and international cooperation through decades of agitation. However, the agitation did not come to a halt. Already two weeks after the outbreak of war, Norwegian peace activists had gathered 12 000 people to express their disgust for the war and salute the will for peace that, despite everything, still existed in Scandinavia. The war led to increased cooperation between peace movements in the neutral Scandinavian countries, and membership to peace organisations grew in these countries – a positive development in an otherwise bleak situation.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the assumed Norwegian profile as a peace nation has its roots in the period from 1905 onwards.<sup>68</sup> After the war, the Norwegian polar hero Fridtjof Nansen became internationally known as one of the leading symbols of peace- and humanitarian work through his role in the League of Nations.<sup>69</sup> Simultaneously, the well-known Nobel Peace Prize of 1901, later awarded to Nansen, had established a reputation as an ambassador for peace the peace cause in Europe.<sup>70</sup>

Antimilitaristic tendencies already quite widespread before the war, were taken to new highs by the macabre realities of warfare that the First World War had made ever clearer. After the war, the number of conscientious objectors increased dramatically, and in 1921 there were 460 registered objectors.<sup>71</sup> Reports from the war fronts had fuelled antimilitarist sentiments, further helped by the emerging radical Labour Party's socialist antimilitarism. In this hotly tempered milieu, the support for conscientious objection increased. The military establishment, in disbelief with the development, attempted to defend the principal of universal conscription with force. Nevertheless, it seems that little could curb the antimilitaristic currents in movement. A bill issued by the Defence Ministry suggested that nonreligious objectors would be punished as before, whilst religious objectors would have to compensate with nonmilitary work. Thus, the contours of what we now know as alternative military service were drawn after the first world war. However, the bill never stood a chance of being accepted by the Storting. This is a

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<sup>66</sup> Kjelstadli, "Arbeiderbevegelsen –reform, revolusjon og ny reformisme", *Norgeshistorie*. 07.11.21.

<sup>67</sup> Rønning and Ringsby, *Strid om fred*, 53.

<sup>68</sup> Pharo, *Den norske fredstradisjonen*, 239.

<sup>69</sup> Vogt, "Nansens internasjonale engasjement", *Norgeshistorie*. 07.11.21.

<sup>70</sup> Tønnesson, "Nobels fredspris", *Norgeshistorie*. 07.11.21.

<sup>71</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116.

testimony to the massive collapse in communication over the question of conscientious objection in the early twentieth century.<sup>72</sup>

In 1922, twenty years after the “temporary” circular of 1902, the Storting passed a bill that regulated conscientious objection. Religious and nonreligious objectors were granted exemption from military service on grounds of “serious religious reasons or on other serious reasons of conscience”. However, interpretations of the 1922 law illustrate that a distaste for nonreligious objectors still existed. It was unclear about strictly political objectors, which led to variation in court decisions regarding these cases. Subsequently, the Storting further amended the Military Penal Code in 1925 which declared that an objector could not be punished if “military service of any kind is contrary to his serious conviction”.<sup>73</sup> Regarding different kinds of military objection, the law seems fairly liberal in its outlook. However, applications stating strictly political reasons for refusing military service, could and were, rejected by some courts.<sup>74</sup> This aspect were debated by legal scholars, and it is difficult to say anything clear cut about who the law intended to include or exclude. What one can say, however, is that it was open for interpretation. In debates between legal scholars, the problem seems to arise when political objectors are separated into sub-groups. Ambiguity is particularly visible in the question of if political objectors were pacifists. There seems to be agreement over the fact that all pacifist objectors were exempted from military service under the legal framework of 1922. The socialist objectors who tied military service to class were, according to some, not covered by the law. Legal scholar Morten Ruud concluded, somewhat hesitant, that also non pacifist objectors were covered by the 1922 law. Notwithstanding, the law should be interpreted based on what kind of objectors were relevant in the twenties.<sup>75</sup>

### **Achieving Peace by Preparing for War: The Second World War and Differing Interpretations of Pacifism**

The date 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1940 marks a turning point in Norwegian history. From that day until the end of the Second World War, Norway was occupied by German forces. The national defence was poorly prepared for the German attack, and within two months the Norwegian forces

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<sup>72</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 19-20.

<sup>73</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 20, and Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116.

<sup>74</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116.

<sup>75</sup> Ruud, *Fritakskriteriene etter §1 lov om fritaking for militærtjeneste av overbevisningsgrunner*, 265-265. (NOU, attachment 2).

capitulated.<sup>76</sup> People drew rather different lessons from the war experience when it came to pacifism. To some, it confirmed the idea that more had to be done to defend the nation with military means. Whilst to others, it brought moral responsibilities of states and individuals to the forefront and revitalised the idea that more had to be done to avoid the catastrophic conditions of war. A key word in Norwegian history after this event is foreign policy, and the contrast on this area between before and after 1940 is striking. The swiftness and force of the German occupation in April 1940 had demonstrated even to the most convinced sceptic that the nature of global conflict had changed, and that neutrality could no longer be upheld. This resulted in a dilemma for Norwegian authorities, where each road chosen was governed by geopolitical constellations. Many sought security in United Nations-membership, but this rested on if the great powers USA and the Soviet Union could maintain at least a minimum level of cooperation. The other alternative, which politicians chose, was to seek security in a military alliance.<sup>77</sup> Thus, perceptions on avoiding war and maintaining peace changed after the war. Great power rivalries and arms race were no longer perceived as sole preconditions for war. Instead, political extremist movements fuelled by poverty and need were seen as the main conditions leading to war.

The Nazi rule in Germany had strengthened the idea that such totalitarian states were inherently aggressive expansionists. Thus, military security was no longer only seen as a means to protect national sovereignty, but also to achieve peace. Based on this line of thinking, Nazi Germany was replaced by the Soviet Union as the major threat to international security.<sup>78</sup> Drastic changes did not just occur on the political level, the war years also drastically reshaped people's lives. Arguably, the hard times of the interwar period followed by angst, humiliation, and material shortages during the occupation made any improvement seem monumental. Although post-war progress had its roots in the interwar period, the Second World War still stands out as an important temporal transition.<sup>79</sup> The Nuremberg Trials, established to legally persecute war crimes committed during the Second World War also led to some changes in perceptions of what it meant to be a soldier. Article 8 of the Constitution of the International Military Tribunal came into place because many claimed that their crimes during the Second World War had simply been about obeying orders. The article then declared that any superior order, be it from

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<sup>76</sup> Norgeshistorie, 1940-1945: *Andre verdenskrig*, <https://www.norgeshistorie.no/andre-verdenskrig/>

<sup>77</sup> Pharo, *Den norske fredstradisjonen*, 247.

<sup>78</sup> Pharo, *Den norske fredstradisjonen*, 248.

<sup>79</sup> Olstad, *Den lange oppturen*, 12-13.

a government or others, was not enough to free the soldier of the responsibility for his actions.<sup>80</sup> Several conscientious objectors later referred to article 8 in relation to their reasons for objecting. The moral responsibility put on the soldier after the Nuremberg Trials, they argued, made impossible to serve in a military establishment that they viewed as morally corrupted.<sup>81</sup> After the war, conscientious objection continued to increase. Many also grew critical of the alternative military service for not being socially relevant and not contributing to the peace cause, which led to even more imprisonments.<sup>82</sup> Peace researcher Johan Galtung was a conscientious objector, and like many other objectors, he can be seen as both a product and an outsider of the world he spent his youth in. He experienced the brutality of Nazi occupation when his father was attacked by German soldiers in 1944, was inspired by imported thoughts of nonviolence –in Galtung’s case the non-violent teaching of the Indian social activist Mahatma Gandhi, and he longed for an expanded formula for thinking about peace and war.<sup>83</sup> Galtung was also one of those objectors who Norwegian authorities labelled as a criminal. During winter 1954-55, he spent six months in prison. The reason behind his imprisonment was that he refused to do alternative military service unless it was relevant to peace.<sup>84</sup>

## Chapter Findings

In this chapter, I have mapped out the pre-Cold War period around the central tropes of this thesis. Overall, my analysis illustrates that conscientious objection was a controversial topic in Norway throughout the period, and that this controversy was closely tied to consideration for the nation during domestic and foreign instabilities, and changes in perceptions of militarism. Furthermore, it shows that conscientious objection was a topic close to heart in the peace movement, and an important tool in questioning the military establishment. During the process of dissolving the Union with Sweden, and the security concerns it aroused, the call for strengthening the national defence gained widespread attention. Perhaps not surprising, the peace cause had trouble being heard in this sable rattling environment. Nevertheless, organised calls for peace did manage to establish itself. Despite the peace movement’s role in keeping conscientious objection on the public agenda, the increased interest in military matters during

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<sup>80</sup> [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.2\\_Charter%20of%20IMT%201945.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.2_Charter%20of%20IMT%201945.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> S.I.N./Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, *en kommentar til st.smelding 70 –om verneplikt*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534.

<sup>82</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116-117.

<sup>83</sup> Galtung, *Johan uten land*, 54-56.

<sup>84</sup> Galtung, *Johan uten land*, 61.



these events caused considerable obstacles for the process of negotiating conscientious objection and injustices continued.

The First World War brought the atrocities of warfare to Norwegian's front door, and support for the military declined accordingly. Furthermore, the groundwork for the Norwegian self-understanding as a peace nation was well underway during the early twentieth century. Despite neutrality, Norwegians suffered because of the war, and rearmament and national defence questions gained second place in politics. The Labour Party, with its renowned antimilitarist sentiments, grew even more radical. This did not mean that the process of legalising conscientious objection ran smoothly as a result. The military establishment determinedly worked to dismiss any attempts at legalising objection to military service. A proper result in this process was not achieved until 1922, where ambiguities regarding non-religious objectors persisted. The foundation for alternative service was also laid in this period.

Norway did not manage to stay out of the Second World War, signalling to most Norwegians that security in neutrality was lost. Not only this, the feeling of national pride and sovereignty had also been compromised following the German occupation. As a consequence, the war initiated processes of rethinking war and peace, which has had vast consequences for Norwegian foreign policy. Again, defending the nation grew in importance. As we shall see in later chapters, experiences from the Second World War lived on in Norwegian collective memory and national self-conscience and affected later contexts.

## Chapter Two: In the Shadow of the Bomb: The Cold War and how it informed military conscientious objection

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1967, forty students from NTH (Norwegian Institute of Technology) in Trondheim collectively decided to object to conscription in the Norwegian military. To inform the public about their standpoint, the students issued a press release to around fifty Norwegian newspapers. It contained copies of a document that had been sent to military authorities, where they warned military authorities and the ministry of justice that they refused to serve in what they called “the Norwegian NATO-military”:

*The students make aware that they do not regard themselves as pacifists[...] The military conscientious objection is for the 40 a practical consequence of their standpoint towards the military-political system that Norway is part of. They disagree with the foreign-, military- and alliance-policy that the Norwegian government and their allies are leading, and they are not willing to defend this policy with weapons in their hands.<sup>85</sup>*

The crucial factor here is that the students emphasised their distance from pacifism, and thereby emphasised the political weight of their stance. From the student’s perspective, conscientious objection was the only proper way to react to a government that, in their view, should be held accountable for acting against the interests of the Norwegian population. They argued that the government acted based on economic interests that threatened Norwegian sovereignty and independence and made a mockery of their solidarity with the peoples of the world that fell victims of United States foreign policy.<sup>86</sup> As is exemplified by the forty students in Trondheim, the Cold War system, and its implications for Norway as a small nation in a globalised society gripped the daily lives of elite politicians and the general population. It also shows that the 1960s radical revolt became characterised by a new generation of youth, internationally and in Norway, who appeared increasingly restless with the world built by the previous generation and the Cold War realities that formed much of its conceptual framework. In the world around them, they witnessed revolts against colonialism being fiercely rebuked by the world powers,

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<sup>85</sup> “Studentene gjør oppmerksom på at de ikke anser seg selv som pasifister[...] Militærnekingen er for de 40 en praktisk konsekvens av deres standpunkt til det militærpolitiske system Norge er en del av. De er ikke enig i den utenrikspolitikken og den forsvars- og alliansepolitikk som den norske regjering og deres allierte fører, og de er ikke villig til å forsvare denne politikken med våpen i hånd” (my own translation), Kolstad, *Nei, vi elsker*, 15-16.

<sup>86</sup> Kolstad, *Nei, vi elsker*, 22.

American involvement in brutal warfare and mass murder in Vietnam, and the emergence of weapons of mass destruction as a tool of power on the international arena.

This generation also looked at their own society and state and watched with growing resentment how the Norwegian government was on the side of what they deemed was the oppressor. Norway was a founding member of NATO. By this, its social democratic Labour-government believed to have assured security in the good company of the western block and modernised the country. Yet, to some, it had done so at the expense of neutral foreign policy and national sovereignty.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, the NATO membership brought disagreements between the government and civil mobilisation, largely grounded in a generational gap clinging to differing world views, to the forefront. An important part of the movements in this rugged frame of events were conscientious objectors to military service. They represent a fraction of the peace idea in Norwegian history located within the civil and social movement.

Like in a nutshell, the episode of the forty students thus hints at more fundamental changes in the way Norwegians thought about war and peace in this period. As I will argue in the following, it was foremost the Cold War that created a specific historical trajectory for negotiating peace in the 1960s and 70s, leading to a clash of ideas between conscientious objectors and the Norwegian government. What exactly changed due to the Cold War was, first, that politicians understood that the country could not stay out of international developments. Second, that numbers of conscientious objectors rose in the 1960s, and that there is a fundamental transition in the way young people rationalised their objection to military service, where they increasingly marked their distance from earlier forms of objection commonly based on religious or pacifist rationalisations. Thus, conscientious objection became more of a political statement, as evidenced by the 1967 episode in Trondheim. In the following I will explore how political conscientious objectors actively took part in shaping the discursive field that was developed around and in opposition to Cold War realities and how contemporaries related to their participation in forming this discourse. To begin, I will present an overview of the historical context in which these ideas were formed.

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<sup>87</sup> Kolstad, *Nei, vi elsker*, 22.

## Growing Tensions and a Call for Security

In a context of armament and increasing tensions, the Cold War created a specific historical trajectory that demanded new ways of negotiating between war and peace. At the beginning of the 1950s, peace celebrations saluting the ending of the Second World War had begun to settle in Europe, and optimism for the future became replaced by worries that a new global conflict was on the horizon. The beginning of the Korean war in 1950 demonstrated the military power of Norway's Soviet neighbours and raised fears that it be used to launch an attack on Norway.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, the Cold War conflict was escalating, and its edges were forming a new global society. The conflict had separated Europe into military blocks with competing economic systems and ideologies, and, as historian Odd Arne Westad puts it, "Even in tranquil Norway the world was divided".<sup>89</sup> As it became clear that ramifications of this conflict would also reach Norway, the course of Norwegian foreign policy was altered in a way that was unprecedented in Norwegian history. Previously there had been the notion in Norway that the country's small size and minimal political influence should make it a minor concern to the competing giants. Further, Norway had put its faith in the UN as a stabilising factor in this conundrum, but the organization found itself paralysed by the Cold War. It became increasingly apparent that the changes happening on the global arena would also make their demands on this seemingly tiny nation at the northern edge of the world map. These developments convinced policymakers that Norway could no longer rest on the notion that the East-West conflict was an affair between the USA and the Soviet Union and if they kept their head low and offended neither, this was not Norway's business.<sup>90</sup>

Increasing Cold War tensions and the traumatising experiences from German occupation during the Second World War combined led Norwegian policymakers to believe that the nation-centred approach to securing sovereignty and territorial integrity was outdated, and that a new line of foreign policy resting on alliances and international cooperation was needed. The traditional determination to stay isolated and neutral had to be abandoned. The new road chosen was leading westwards in the form of NATO membership. One hoped that a western alliance would secure Norway's future in an unstable global society and pave the way to a more secure future where nations stood together.<sup>91</sup> However, the integration in global politics did not go without friction back home. It seemed that an alliance was the only way to defend the country

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<sup>88</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 55-56.

<sup>89</sup> Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, 1.

<sup>90</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 405-406.

<sup>91</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 405-406.

in the event of an attack from the East. Whilst, by others, it was interpreted as an unnecessary provocation that might increase tensions with the Soviet Union and as a step that could threaten Norwegian sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>92</sup> According to Knut Einar Eriksen and Helge Øysten Pharo, this tension between participation and isolation was a defining feature of Norwegian foreign politics throughout the period 1949-1965.<sup>93</sup> With this tension came discussions on the precise implication of alliances and international economic cooperation as well as considerations between Norwegian idealism and political realism.<sup>94</sup>

### **Foreign Policy Becomes Public Domain**

As Norway became more integrated in the global society, the country's relationship with the rest of the world touched Norwegian's life and interests in a more significant extent than before. By and large, this posed a paradigmatic shift in which foreign policy issues, once a domain of the political elites, increasingly became a matter of public discourse. This is exemplified by the growing number of ad hoc organisations and their support among the Norwegian people. Eriksen and Pharo point out some commonalities among these organisations. They were built on a growing emotional concern and cross-political mobilisation of the people that could not be channelled through conventional party politics and constitutional organs. They further argue that this was mainly a new phenomenon in the post-war period that signifies growing knowledge about and interest for the rest of the world in this period –which in turn affected the processes of foreign policy.<sup>95</sup>

Central to this context where foreign policy increasingly became a matter of public concern were the protests of the 1960s. At the core of these developments are the Vietnam War protests. Historian James Godbolt argues in *Arven etter 1968* (The Legacy of 1968) that mobilisation around the Vietnam question played an essential role in breaking down the tendency of foreign policy as a field in politics confined to the elite. Within few years, a new generation of dedicated youth, later referred to as the 1968 generation, replaced the notion of American intervention in Vietnam as a necessary reaction towards the spread of communist expansion with the alternative narrative that it was the result of unjustified mass murder caused by moral decay in the West. The swift change in public narrative here is striking. Godbolt argues that the young

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<sup>92</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 32.

<sup>93</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 407.

<sup>94</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 409-413.

<sup>95</sup> Eriksen and Pharo, *Kald krig og internasjonalisering, 1949-1965*, 25-26.

protester's social capital at the time can be particularly attributed to the previous peace movement and its role in legitimizing the protests. The protests against nuclear weapons years prior had mobilized many more. This indicates that a tradition of using social networks in mobilising cross political demonstrations already had historical roots in Norway.<sup>96</sup>

### **Ideas of War and Peace in the Question of Conscientious Objection**

The Cold War context made the question of conscription in the Norwegian army a rhetorical battleground for ideas on war and peace. To be sure, the intensified debates surrounding conscription in the wake of a conflict was not a new phenomenon. Reservations towards conscription have existed as long as armies, and military conscientious objection is a historical phenomenon that dates back to Norwegian independence in 1814.<sup>97</sup> Historically, numbers also tend to rise in correlation with conflicts. Nonetheless, the Cold War seems to have had a particularly catalysing effect on conscientious objection. After several statistical ups and downs, the number of conscientious objections reached an all-time high in the late 1940s that remained stable throughout the Cold War.<sup>98</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy explain these statistical tendencies with a connection between increased domestic militarisation and conscientious objection. According to them, rising military expenditures bring national security issues to the domestic environment and increase public awareness.<sup>99</sup> However, I argue, based on empirical evidence, that one should interpret conscientious objection and Cold War realities as far more closely intertwined in this period. Like in the example of the forty students, objection to military service became a vehicle for communicating distress over a world that many felt was leaving moral principles behind and leaning more and more towards madness.

A report published in 1984 by *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge* (prisoners of conscience in Norway)<sup>100</sup>, documented attitudes, arguments, and actions regarding the question of conscientious objection in the 1960s and 70s. In it, several military conscientious objectors shared their reasons for refusing to do military service. CO1<sup>101</sup> received military training in Sweden during the Second World War and was part of the Norwegian troops that went to Finland in 1945. In 1950, however, he applied to be transferred to alternative military service –

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<sup>96</sup> Godbolt, *Vietnamkrigen i Norge –Ungdomsopprør og politisk protest*, 129-130.

<sup>97</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 4.

<sup>98</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 118.

<sup>99</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 124.

<sup>100</sup> An interest group for conscientious objectors in Norway in calamities with the law.

<sup>101</sup> Short for "conscientious objector 1". For reasons of privacy, the conscientious objectors I mention have been given anonymous names.

of which he was granted. What changed in his attitude to the military between 1945 and 1950, he stated, was the emergence of nuclear weapons and Norwegian endorsement of one of the two “great military blocks”. For CO1, the direct or indirect support of a nation that based its power on the threat or use of nuclear weapons would cause a serious breach with his conscience.<sup>102</sup>

CO2, who applied for exemption from military service in 1969 asserted, in the legal documents around his case, that it would be impossible for him to do service in a NATO-associated military without entering a severe breach with his conscience. His justifications for refusing military service were loaded with moral judgements of Norwegian foreign policy. CO2 presented four main reasons for objecting that he concentrated around his view on the Norwegian alliance with the United States. These reasons were founded in his political standpoint as a communist, the global political situation, nuclear weapons, and the economic exploitation of poor countries.<sup>103</sup> In his terms, the US was a country that committed unprecedented war crimes in Vietnam and threatened the world with total extinction by its possession of nuclear weapons –which they had previously demonstrated their willingness to use. Further, he pointed to Portugal’s brutal suppression of the people in Mozambique and Angola and the rearmament of West Germany. Lastly, he argued that as long as two-thirds of the world’s population were suffering from hunger, he could not accept the massive funding of military rearmament. These are funds that he argued should be spent on peace-related causes instead. He held Norway accountable for being part of an alliance with these countries, which, it seems, were nothing less than cynical criminals in his view. CO2 painted a gloomy picture of the world in 1969, and his decision to refuse to serve as a soldier in the madness he saw was a profound expression of his conscience.<sup>104</sup>

CO3 argued that, in terms of importance and relevance, the Vietnam War became his generations “1940”. The Vietnam War demonstrated that war was the extension of politics and a bleak reminder of how far a superpower was willing to go to promote its political and economic interests. Further, he states that the Vietnam War gave nurture to thoughts around the

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<sup>102</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Sorenskriveren i Orkdal kunngjør*, Case number 2/1970 A, 10.04.70. Box/Parcel: RA/RAFA-2354/D/DA/L0100/0001, 2.

<sup>104</sup> *Sorenskriveren i Orkdal kunngjør*, Case number 2/1970 A, 10.04.70. Box/Parcel: RA/RAFA-2354/D/DA/L0100/0001, 3-4.

military and its function in society. Besides being a political problem, he argued, it was the perhaps most crucial moral problem of their time. The fact that Norway was allied with the superpower USA through NATO should make any individual called for conscription think twice. The NATO membership also brought accept of the use of nuclear weapons, a responsibility each conscript had to evaluate individually.<sup>105</sup>

Conscientious objectors also received some support for their cause. The attorney of CO5, who had his case tried in court in the late 1960s, was highly critical of the legal practice around conscientious objection after the 1965 law was implemented. He argued, after a thorough analysis of several cases, that legal authorities treated these cases very differently despite the fact that the 1922 and 1965 law were practically the same in outlook. He argued that court interpretations had changed with political conditions and deemed it an illusion to think that the individual courts performed an impartial evaluation of each conscientious objector's application. According to this attorney, the evaluation of cases was influenced by the growing number of objectors, compared to the 1920s, and that authorities felt they had to strike harder against conscientious objectors. Further, he stated that the objector in question had thorough knowledge about the problems of his time, seemingly more than the government themselves, and for that reason Norwegian authorities had chosen to dismiss him. Finally, he argued that it could not be expected that all conscientious objectors should reflect on being drafted independently from time and place.<sup>106</sup>

This stark opposition to Norway's position in the Cold War is also expressed in literature of advocacy for conscientious objection. In *Nei, vi elsker* (No, we love), a book on political conscientious objection from 1967, the subject is discussed through ten chapters that handle reasons to object military service. The before mentioned peace researcher and conscientious objector Galtung, was also firm in his criticism towards the Norwegian-American military alliance. In his autobiography, he argued that Norwegian military forces was a tool at the hands of the USA. Because Norway had forsaken its FN-policy and moved towards USA, he encouraged every young man to refuse military service. Not doing so would only facilitate the American road world hegemony. It would be far more honest, he stated, to seek American citizenship than to serve in the Norwegian military forces.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, applicants classified as

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<sup>105</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L153/0001, 19.

<sup>106</sup> Court decision from Oslo Byrett, 08.12.77. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534RAFA-2354/0001, 6.

<sup>107</sup> Galtung, *Johan uten land*, 59.



political conscientious objectors were also aware that their political reasons for refusing military service would lead to them not being accepted. This is expressed by CO9 in a police report regarding his case. He stated that he was aware that his aim of being exempted from military service would go more smoothly if he did not express these beliefs, however, he could not compromise his own conscience. If his case was rejected, and it most likely would be, he would rather have his case go to court.<sup>108</sup>

Although the examples above indicate that numerous objectors rejected military service based on Cold War logic, an important observation would be that these make up only a portion of a diverse group of Norwegian objectors in this period. Moreover, conscientious objectors had various reasons for objecting military service –some of which were not related to the Cold War but rather personally grounded. Another factor that needs consideration is that military service was by many considered a personal burden or simply an inconvenience they wished to avoid, of which there are empirical examples. This view might have led to statements adapted solely to avoid military service and not necessarily expressions of existing ideas and beliefs held by the individual. It is difficult, or, as some would argue, even impossible for the historian to determine the sincerity of statements given by historical actors. The sincerity of utterances by conscientious objectors might, after all, only truly be known by the objectors themselves. These source related problems are essential to take into consideration. At the same time, some interpretative measures can overcome these problems. As I will return to, the examples above represent instances of conscientious objection where exemption from military service likely would not be granted because they did not correspond with legal requirements. If the purpose of the objector was solely to avoid military service, then it is fair to assume that he would formulate reasons that were more in line with the requirements of the law. In this regard, it is more appropriate to interpret these as sincere expressions of beliefs and ideas rather than reasonings fabricated to avoid being drafted. Further, a more precise impression of military conscientious objection's scope and content can be achieved by examining how observers understood and reacted to them. In other words, much can be told by studying them through the lenses of their contemporaries. The Norwegian government's policies and legal framework that concentrated on conscientious objection and the debates related to creating these laws reveals that conscientious objection was understood as a problem that needed to be solved.

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<sup>108</sup> Politiet, *Rapport*, Document nr.14, 14.10.70. Box/Parcel: RA/RAFA-2354/D/DA/L0100/0001.

## **How Deep is Your Pacifism? –The Legal Framework on Conscientious Objection in Norway**

Norway was one of the first countries to allow conscientious objection to military service. Since 1922, men who were subject to conscription could refuse military service based on their beliefs, at the premise of their “serious religious conviction or on other serious grounds of conscience”. Having sincere reservations towards the military was enough to be allowed to refuse military service.<sup>109</sup> This legal framework liberalised the access to military conscientious objection.<sup>110</sup> It opened for all reasons for refusing military service when the objector could provide reason for authorities to believe that his refusal was based on a strong conflict with his conscience. This is not to say that authorities had no reservations against political objection. Legal debates reflect strong disagreements over this issue, and the law gave no clear answers.<sup>111</sup> The comparatively early and broad acceptance of objection to military service seems to confirm the notion of Norway as a peace nation, and as a vanguard for pacifism. The main principles of this law are still in work today, although with some crucial modifications in interpretations after the 1960s which reveals a more ambiguous picture.

Throughout the Cold War, interpretations of the legal framework around conscription tightened and became more restricted for certain groups of military conscientious objectors. The topic of conscientious objection continued to take its place on the political agenda in Norway throughout the twentieth century. In the early stages of the Cold War there was a marked increase in the number of objectors. Objectors such as those from the 1960s and 70s who refused military service because they opposed Norwegian foreign policy became a particularly growing tendency. These objectors are generally referred to as “political” or “selective” objectors –as their reasons for refusing military service were politically and contextually conditioned.<sup>112</sup> Due to their reasons for objecting military service, they altered discussions around conscription and conscientious objection in Norway. As increasingly more objectors accentuated their distance from pacifism and moved towards opposition to foreign policy issues, the government responded by placing pacifism at the very forefront of the law. After years of debate and various proposals for new legislation, a new law was passed in 1965 that, in practice, made the law more restrictive for certain forms of military objection. *Militærnektekløven* §1 states that “*if there is reason to assume that the conscript cannot do military service of any sort without*

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<sup>109</sup> Agøy, *Regulating Conscientious Objection in Norway from the 1890s to 1922*, 20.

<sup>110</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116.

<sup>111</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 261.

<sup>112</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 116.

*entering a conflict with his serious conscience, he is exempted from military service [...]*".<sup>113</sup> Importantly, the formulation "military service of any sort" was emphasised in this legal framework, in addition to the requirement "conflict with his serious conscience". Hence, the government emphasised the objector's refusal to participate in all forms of military service, as well as his reasons for refusing. In practical terms, it would be fair to interpret this as a shift where pacifistic beliefs then became the new premise for refusing military service.

This shift is also indicated in parliamentary debates leading up to the implementation of the law. A Norwegian official declared that it went without saying that a breach of conscience for the conscientious objector must be related to the use of weapons during military service and not disagreements with Norwegian foreign politics or the NATO alliance. The latter, he argued, was not enough to be exempted from military service.<sup>114</sup> According to Gleditsch and Agøy, debates in Parliament shows that legislators had no intensions of accepting strictly "political" or "selective" objection.<sup>115</sup> CO3 commentated on the 1965 legal demands by saying that to imprison a person due to his political and situational opinion simply because it is situational makes a mockery of this individual's political opinion and encourages more to hypocrisy than decency.<sup>116</sup>

There are some interesting mentalities at work in these events. Undoubtedly, one could argue that the growing number of such objectors led military authorities to fear it might cause low recruitment. As discussed, Norway was becoming involved in a global conflict that, in their view, required a national military defence. However, a closer look at the meanings behind "political" and "selective" conscientious objection reveals that this was only part of the picture. With the increase in this form of objection, the refusal to do military service was no longer exclusively confined to the personal beliefs of the individual but became a fierce expression of political stance. They could no longer be dismissed as idealistic individuals not having anything to do with governmental policy. These fears seem to have influenced how the Norwegian government treated them. Based on the changes in legislation, there are indications that "political" and "selective" objection became perceived more as a problem that needed to be

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<sup>113</sup> "Er det grunn til å gå ut fra at en vernepliktig ikke kan gjøre militærtjeneste av noen art uten å komme i konflikt med sin alvorlige overbevisning, fritas han for slik tjeneste [...]" (My own translation). NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 40.

<sup>114</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 41.

<sup>115</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 117.

<sup>116</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 – Om verneplikt*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 19.

“dealt with” in the eyes of the Norwegian government. Arguably, the law of 1965 did not change much for those who were conscientious objectors because of their religious or pacifist beliefs –these were still generally granted status as conscientious objectors. At the same time, the majority of those who did not express pacifist beliefs in their applications were denied status based on the 1965 law that demanded resistance towards “military service of any kind”. If they still refused, their case would go court as a civil case. Here, the result could be either that the case was won, and the objector was assigned to alternative service, or he lost and was convicted for violation of the Military Penal Code if he still refused to do military service. The latter scenario could involve prison sentences.<sup>117</sup>

The reluctance by the government to accept political and selective conscientious objection indicates a clash of ideas between government and these objectors, where one side was reluctant to accept the views of the other. There is an interesting paradox at work in this narrative. The way the Norwegian government attempted to reconceptualise conscientious objection as instances of pacifism signifies an aim to keep political voices separated from politics. This is not to say that pacifism in itself is not political. Instead, it points out that a standpoint in opposition to all warfare would easier be written off as having nothing to do with the Norwegian government specifically –which was beneficial to them. This, in turn, explains why pacifism was made an absolute demand for exemption from military service in the legal framework. Interestingly, even in instances where Norwegian officials acknowledged the objector’s position to be based on opposition to Norwegian politics, i.e., as being political, there were still attempts to ascribe this standpoint to qualities within the individual.

In a court document commenting on CO2s appeal to Høyesterett (The Norwegian Supreme Court), the term *klassenekter* (class-refuser) indicate a negative view of the objector. It was emphasised that he was “far from a pacifist”, only motivated to choose his own enemies and fight on his own terms, not by his conscience.<sup>118</sup> Much seem to suggest that commentators used terms such as these to paint pictures of conscientious objectors as defiant rather than politically aware. True, this objector called himself a communist in police questioning and official statements and stated that his reasons for objecting were closely related to this political identification and class belonging. However, it seems the communist terminology gained a

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<sup>117</sup> Gleditsch and Agøy, *Norway: Toward Full Freedom of Choice?*, 117, and S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 3.

<sup>118</sup> *Tilsvaret til Høyesterett*, 18.02.1971. Box/Parcel: RA/RAFA-2354/D/DA/L0100/0001.

heightened position in how officials perceived him, at the expense of political critiques and pacifistic beliefs which he stated in his application. Commentators do not mention these.<sup>119</sup>

In the before-mentioned report by *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge* (prisoners of conscience in Norway)<sup>120</sup>, several political and selective objectors expressed frustrations over being met with resistance from the government. The report consists of testimonies from ten conscientious objectors, eight of whom received punitive measures for their objection to military service – many of which involved prison sentences. In their experience, the 1965 law criminalised “political” and “selective” conscientious objection, bearing significant consequences that these objectors felt strongly about. CO1 explained these strict reactions not by an incentive to detect criminals (as the law is intends) but rather out of a fear among Norwegian authorities that selective and political refusal might become significant enough threaten military recruitment. Moreover, he argued that punitive measures such as imprisonment were there to pressure people into alignment with the will of military authorities. Further, he drew an interesting parallel. To him, this treatment of objectors was comparable to how ‘enemies of the state’ are treated by authoritarian states that the Norwegian Parliament and people tend to distance themselves from morally.<sup>121</sup>

## Chapter Findings

In this chapter I have explored how Cold War realities informed conscientious objection in the 1960s and 70s. The historical context paints a picture of growing tensions brought on by the Cold War that resulted in attempts made by politicians at achieving national security in an uncertain world. The most important of these security measures was the decision to enter NATO in 1949. This decision did not go unchallenged by the wider Norwegian public, and one can talk of a shift in foreign policy where issues in this area went from being preserved to the highest levels of elite politics to becoming public domain. This is an important historical shift in Norwegian society that happened due to the Cold War.

Further, the chapter has also dealt with in what ways the Cold War context affected the problem of conscientious objection. As it turns out, objecting military service became an important field

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<sup>119</sup> *Utrøndelag politikammer*, 11.02.75. Box/Parcel: RA/RAFA-2354/D/DA/L0100/0001.

<sup>120</sup> An interest group for conscientious objectors in Norway in calamities with the law.

<sup>121</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikten*, 1984. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 3

where ideas of war and peace were formulated and negotiated, and a clash of ideas is highly visible here. Increasingly many objectors refused to do military service because they were fiercely opposed to how Norwegian politicians had handled the growing tensions of the Cold War. To the former, the NATO-membership served as a gateway to supporting the USA whom many objectors argued to be an ethical catastrophe –illustrated by the Vietnam War and the use of nuclear weapons. The Norwegian government largely clung to militarised means of achieving peace when threats of a new conflict arose. This is exemplified by the early decision to become a NATO member, and the use of nuclear weapons for ensuring balance of power that this alliance involved.

This clash of ideas is further illustrated by changes in the legal framework implemented in 1965. authorities' reluctance to accept political reasons for objecting military service. Although not freed from ambiguities, the 1922 legal framework had been open for political objectors. This changed in 1965 when the legal framework tightened, and pacifism was put at the forefront of demands for granting the right to conscientious objection. This indicates that authorities were set on preventing conscientious objectors from interfering with politics on issues of war and peace and adjusts the notion that Norway was lenient on conscientious objection.

The disagreements between Norwegian authorities and conscientious objectors on issues of war and peace discussed in this chapter are made even clearer around the question of alternative service. In the next chapter, I will get down to the practical level and examine how conscientious objector's concrete suggestions to facilitate peace were met by Norwegian authorities through looking at the debates around alternative military service. These discussions also provide insights about the post-war period in Norway.

## Chapter two: The Limits of Liberalism: The debate on alternative military service

Historians tend to label the period 1945-1970 in Norwegian history as “the golden decades” and “the recovery”. The term “social democracy” is also used to sum up the period 1945-1970 within one common framework.<sup>122</sup> These labels indicate a period of political stability under a blooming social democratic order and feed into notions of steady improvement and progress in post-war Norway. Attempts at capturing historical periods under such labels are problematic for various reasons. Historian Finn Olstad warns that “periodisation is insight, but also illusion”.<sup>123</sup> Such successful periodisation become institutions understood as natural, not to be questioned. As such, the notion of “the golden decades” undermines the parallel experience in this period of anxieties tied to a new global conflict with the potential use of massively destructive nuclear weapons.<sup>124</sup> It is crucial to keep in mind that although categorisations are helpful to contemporary observers of history for creating orders and explanations about the past, they might contribute to present-day notions of stability that contemporary people did not necessarily feel.<sup>125</sup>

In this chapter, I take these observations even further and argue that claims of a Norwegian social democratic experience in from the 1960s to the 1980s need further nuancing. It is the debate on alternative military service that reveal more than any other topic that authorities at the time were relatively rigid in their view of who should handle the task of preventing war and promoting peace. In their view, this was still a task that primarily should be handled by the Norwegian state. This perception ran counter to broader ideological currents in this period, where issues of war and peace often were at the core of people’s criticisms towards the Norwegian state. The debate around alternative service signify how Norwegian authorities resisted new ideas on war and peace due to predominant traditional military views that dated back to several decades before 1968. This clash of ideas, in turn, debunks the idea of the 1960s as a period of fundamental change. Thus, the fact that officials excluded parts of the public from participation in these issues ruptures the image of a tolerant social-democratic state, and the limits of liberalism become apparent.

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<sup>122</sup> Lange, *Sosialdemokratisk storhetstid*, norgeshistorie.no. 06.10.21.

<sup>123</sup> “Periodisering er innsikt, men også illusjon” (my own translation), Olstad, *Den lange oppturen*, 41.

<sup>124</sup> Olstad, *Den lange oppturen*, 41-42.

<sup>125</sup> Olstad, *Den lange oppturen*, 12-14.

By contextualising the debate on alternative service within the historical framework of 1968, nuances in the narrative about “the golden decades” are made even more ominous. Historians characterise the 1960s as a period of protests and emerging world views that challenged well-established norms in many societies and caused violent clashes with authorities. The narrative of the 1960s in Norway often depicts peaceful and tranquil protesters met with tolerance by Norwegian authorities, compared to images of raging protests seen in other European cities. By examining how discussions around alternative military service unfolded in Norway during the 1960s and 1970s, I offer a crucial nuance to this depiction. A last part discusses in what ways my findings challenge previous understandings of 1968 in Norway as a peaceful phenomenon.

### **The Right to Work for Peace: Debates in the 1960s**

In the 1960s, demands from conscientious objectors to make alternative military service more peace-related sparked heated debates in Norway that mobilised public opinion on a strikingly large scale. They argued that alternative military service should be their vehicle for contributing to peace by being assigned to various work tasks that were peace relevant. These aims, in turn, would involve restructuring the content of Norwegian alternative military service to facilitate conscientious objectors’ contributions to enforcing peace. Objectors summarised their idea of a more peace related service around five main points. These were: training in non-violent forms of defence, cooperation across military blocks, informational work about disarmament and peace, and service in humanitarian- and peace organisations in Norway.<sup>126</sup> As it turned out, these demands did not go unchallenged by Norwegian authorities. Any attempt at understanding the line of thought behind the Norwegian government’s standpoint must consider the monumental changes that went on in this period. This decade saw one of the most decisive moments of the Cold War, namely the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962.

Westad stresses the importance of technology for the durability of the Cold War system. As paradoxical as it might seem, the build-up of vast arsenals of nuclear weapons became perceived as the determinator for human survival.<sup>127</sup> After the Americans used nuclear weapons on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the way humanity thought about warfare was completely altered. After that point, strategic and military thinking was premised

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<sup>126</sup> .I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 3. Riksarkivets forsvarsarkiver (Defence Archive at the National Archives), Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534RAFA-2354/0001, 17.

<sup>127</sup> Westad, *The Cold War*, 6.



upon the existence of these new weapons.<sup>128</sup> If nuclear weapons' game changing nature was not evident before, it certainly became so after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Americans discovered that the Soviet Union was building nuclear missile sites on Cuba with the capacity to destroy whole American cities. The Kennedy administration responded with a naval blockade to prevent the Soviets from bringing more military supplies into Cuba. No one knew how Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev would respond, and for thirteen days, the world was holding its breath, hoping for a peaceful solution to the duel between the superpowers.<sup>129</sup> There is broad agreement among historians that the situation during the Cuban Missile Crisis is the closest the world has ever been to a third world war. The crisis was a reminder that Cold War tensions could escalate rapidly and lead to the outbreak of war. This realisation combined with the fact that this form of warfare would involve total destruction by nuclear weapons led world leaders to rethink the nature of warfare. One was no longer focused on how to fight wars but rather on how to prevent them, and military technology was at the core of this aim.<sup>130</sup>

These global developments reinforced Norwegian authorities' belief that issues of peace were a domain of the Norwegian military best handled within the realms of high politics. Among Norwegian authorities, the Cold War context brought on conceptual discussions where achieving peace was effectively merged with military activities. At the forefront of discussions here was how the Norwegian military system could be altered to fit the contemporary developments. Rapid technological developments, and changes in military and foreign politics, sparked debates over the purpose and organisation of Norway's military system. In a 1962-63 announcement to *Stortinget* (the Norwegian Parliament), the Department of Defence stated that the Norwegian military should become war-preventative by focusing on activities aimed at removing reasons for war and conflict. Although it is not stated explicitly in the document, it is fair to interpret this as a response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Again, the government placed its trust in the United Nations to act as an international legal authority. Domestically, it was announced that the Norwegian defence should actively shape Norway as a society of peace. The announcement indicates crucial changes in notions of national defence and military activities in Norway that stems from the Cold War context. The increased concern with preventing the causes of war rather than solely fighting its expressions led to new ideas about the content of term such as "conscription" and "defence". Authorities argued that the traditional

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<sup>128</sup> Gaddis, *Den kalde krigen*, 73-75.

<sup>129</sup> John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, *Cuban Missile Crisis*.

<sup>130</sup> Gaddis, *Den kalde krigen*, 102.

content of these terms, tied mainly to experiences from the Second World War and prior, were no longer sufficient in the new global context Norway was part of.<sup>131</sup>

Outside military circles, conceptual talks of an expanded defence gave meaning to the idea of a “total defence”. This understanding saw the only form of national defence –the military, as only one component of a multifaceted defence that also involved, and was side-lined with, alternative service, peace research, service in a peace corps, and other activities considered peace relevant. Advocates of these ideas argued that this new way of thinking around national defence should have positive consequences for conscientious objectors who longed for a more peace relevant service.<sup>132</sup> In 1961, conscientious objectors had issued a committee to evaluate the content of alternative service and propose changes. Among the various suggestions for reforms, the committee particularly emphasised demands of peace-related work. These demands were met with reluctance by the Norwegian government who were more inclined to also include work in the health sector as part of alternative service.<sup>133</sup> Although a jump in chronology, the reference to this committee is an important factor in the wider discussion of alternative service.

The content of alternative military service was first established back in 1922 when conscientious objection became legalised. Those who refused conscription were assigned to work in other sectors of society as an alternative to military service. Alternative military service mainly involved manual labour in Norwegian mines, fields, or forests and was fifty per cent longer than service in military forces. The 1965 changes in legislation around conscientious objection, discussed in the previous chapter, brought on new guidelines for alternative military service issued in 1966. Many conscientious objectors perceived these as a major setback. In the 1966 guidelines for alternative service issued by the Ministry of Justice, it becomes clear that authorities were aware of the discussions that went on in the public about a total defence. However, the document reflects no interest in making changes according to these ideas. The Ministry of Justice declared the proposals legally unsound and felt no obligation to reevaluate the content of alternative military service. Further, authorities argued that work assignments should be useful to society and preferably adapted to the individual performing them. At first

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<sup>131</sup> St. meld. nr. 84 (1962-63), 1,3.

<sup>132</sup> St. meld. nr. 37 (1966-67), 11.

<sup>133</sup> NOU 1979:51, *Verneplik*, 172.

sight, it seems logical to argue that work assignments should fit with the assigned person's skills.

However, at a closer look this formulation signifies a notion that conscientious objectors were not fit for the peace relevant assignments proposed. There are indications that the Ministry of Justice had quite clear notions of what form of work conscientious objectors were most fit to perform. This is further exemplified by a statement saying that work within the health sector was particularly fitting for those doing alternative service. Further, the department recommended removing workplaces such as UN offices in Oslo and fundraisings for Vietnam from alternative military service. By and large, there seems to have been a preference for traditional forms of alternative service over the new proposals that conscientious objectors put forward.<sup>134</sup> Not surprisingly, this steadfast reluctance from Norwegian authorities to change alternative service received fierce criticisms from conscientious objectors, which in turn fuelled another round of principal debates about alternative military service in the late sixties. This time, the debate had intensified. The decisive moments of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the continuing tension between the superpowers had made the aim for positive contributions to the peace cause a moral imperative for many conscientious objectors. Thus, objectors then demanded so-called peace-relevant service.

In 1967, few other minority groups had managed to mobilise public opinion and political parties as much as the objectors who criticised alternative service did.<sup>135</sup> The content of alternative service was again discussed at *Stortinget* in 1968. The debate had forty speakers and went on for nine hours, revealing the scope of the debate. In the opening speech, Johan Østby pointed out that it might seem puzzling to some that a debate like this had become so comprehensive because its potential outcomes would not have dramatic consequences either way. However, he continued, the seriousness underlying this long and intense debate was understandable when considering the vital principle questions it raised. He considered the demands of conscription and the conflict with an individual's conscience it might arise to be important topics in a humane and civilised society.<sup>136</sup> One case that gained considerable attention in the Norwegian public was the imprisonment of conscientious objector Sverre Røed Larsen in 1967. Two years prior, his application for exemption from military service was approved, and he was assigned to do

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<sup>134</sup> St. meld. nr. 37 (1966-67), 12-13.

<sup>135</sup> Linné Eriksen, *Sivilarbeid*, 3.

<sup>136</sup> NOU 1979:51, *Verneplik*, 195.

alternative service at Dillingøy camp in 1966. However, he declared that as long as it was practically possible to do peace-related service, he would not accept being assigned to other forms of alternative service. As the law did not grant any such demands, Røed Larsen did not make a strong case in court. He was sentenced to 16 months of forced labour at Dillingsøy. When he refused to work upon arrival, he was discharged and instead sentenced to do his alternative service in prison.<sup>137</sup>

Unfortunately, Røed Larsen's case was not unique. Many objectors had grown tired of meaningless work assignments, repeated punishments for their demands, and criticised the Norwegian government's tendency to treat them with indifference. They organised campaigns to have the Norwegian Peace Institute (PRIO) and other peace-related institutions approved as workplaces for alternative military service. At the very core of this debate were principal demands of democratic and liberalised access to work for peace. However, the Norwegian government continued to express minimal interest in meeting these demands, and the campaigns had a marginal effect on changing the system. Only a few humanitarian and peace-related institutions became approved as workplaces during alternative military service, and the traditional forms of alternative service remained the norm.<sup>138</sup>

Years of debate seems to have raised public sympathy and understanding outside the government, who continued to see objections to alternative service as the personal wishes of individuals rather than as a political question. This view seems to contrast with how both the Norwegian parliament and other observers perceived the issue. A unanimous Parliamentary Committee of Justice argued that conscientious objectors should gain access to peace relevant work during their alternative service.<sup>139</sup> The debate over alternative military service was also a frequent topic in the Norwegian press and the wider public. In 1967, *Dagbladet* –one of the largest Norwegian newspapers at the time, published a debate article by historian Tore Linné Eriksen. In the article, Linné Eriksen was highly critical of how Norwegian authorities handled the issue and underlined its importance as a political question. Linné Eriksen described a group that were crying out for justice by making decisive political demands. The debate that had taken place till that point, as summed up by Linné Eriksen, was between individuals who were motivated by practical solutions to promoting peace within the political realities of the sixties

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<sup>137</sup> Lofotposten, *Sivil tjenestepliktig Sverre Røed Larsen*, 2, 19.

<sup>138</sup> NOU 1979: 51, 71-72.

<sup>139</sup> NOU 1979:51, 172.

but were met by a government that still clung to negative notions of conscientious objectors as hostile anti-militarists that should be content as long as the government had exempted them from “active violence under military command”.<sup>140</sup>

The same year, in the weekly newspaper *Friheten*, conscientious objector and secretary in *Folkereising mot Krig*,<sup>141</sup> Kjell G. Rosland asked, “Do those who chose alternative military service have the same rights and opportunities to make an effort for peace?”<sup>142</sup> This question captures the core of the debate discussed here. As we have seen, Rosland’s question about whom the quest for peace intended to include or exclude was not unfounded. These concerns were raised in a context where people realised that the outbreak of war would have catastrophic consequences on a global scale, and measures for preventing war and promoting peace were becoming considered paramount. Nonetheless, the Norwegian government continued to resist including conscientious objectors in this task. When considering how this debate took place in the 1960s, it becomes clear that the liberal social-democratic order of post-war Norway had its limits. The way conscientious objectors were actively excluded from politics can hardly be regarded as liberal. As we shall see, this tendency was not particular to the 1960s, but continued throughout the post-war period.

### **Continuing Disagreements Over Alternative Service**

The debate on conscientious objection and alternative service did not fade out as the sixties ended but continued well into the 1970s and even the 1980s. The Cold War was still the main conceptual point of reference, even if both sides drew completely different conclusions. In 1974 a public committee was appointed with the mandate to evaluate the content of conscription. The committee was assigned to discuss if changes needed to be made on the background of contemporary society. The committee summed up their discussion in a 1979 report titled *Verneplikt*. They argued that the question of conscientious objection needed to be discussed in a larger context. Again, the very basis for discussing these issues was the idea that society had developed in a way that demanded a reevaluation of the Norwegian military defence. The committee consisted of four members with various professional backgrounds. Before moving on to an analysis of the report, it is worth mentioning that as many as half of the committee

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<sup>140</sup> “aktiv vold på militærapparatets kommando” (my own translation), Linné Eriksen, *Sivilarbeid*, 3.

<sup>141</sup> The Norwegian branch of *War Resisters International*.

<sup>142</sup> “Har de som velger sivil tjeneste de samme rettigheter og muligheter til å gjøre en innsats for freden?” (my own translation). Rosland, *Sivilarbeidets innhold*, 4.

members had military backgrounds. This is hardly a good starting point for an impartial discussion of conscription. One member, Jon Grepstad, commented that this was unfortunate because their mandate was to handle decisive aspects that were not of military sort.<sup>143</sup>

Like in the sixties, the idea of a total defence was also at the core of these debates. In line with the idea of a total defence, committee member Grepstad argued that the military was only one of several ways to protect peace, and a tool that should only be used under very special circumstances, such as at the outbreak of war. Further, it is apparent that nuclear weapons still played a major role in notions of war and peace. Grepstad pointed out that due to the catastrophic consequences of warfare in their time compared to earlier, measures aimed at keeping peace and preventing war should gain far more importance. These measures should be focused on removing reasons for conflict and building positive relations between nations and people. Moreover, because a conflict in this period would have far more cross-national implications than before, it was argued that global dimensions should be taken into consideration in building a national defence.<sup>144</sup> Although this problem was briefly pointed out by Grepstad, the overall impression of the report is that the total defence-idea seems to have been lukewarm among at least half of the committee members –especially among the members who had military backgrounds.

The access to conscientious objection was made relative to the military-political and strategic needs of the state. Those members with military backgrounds argued that access to conscientious objection should be based on whether it is the interests of the individual or society that should gain “the advantage”. Implicit here is that in a situation where Norwegian society was under threat, the access to conscientious objection should be limited. Grepstad was critical of this emphasis on the needs of the state. He argued that this reasoning promoted a relativistic view on respect for an individual’s conscience and beliefs.<sup>145</sup> Besides, I would argue that it also restricted conscientious objectors access to the political. This is made clearer by the reluctance to take seriously the demands of conscientious objectors when they argued for an expanded military that would include non-traditional ways of defending the country. This continued separation of conscientious objection from politics becomes ironic when considering how many objectors aimed their criticisms directly at politicians. The emphasis on the needs of the state

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<sup>143</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 21.

<sup>144</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 14, 39.

created a situation where the legal framework in general repressed individuals who spoke loudly about means to promote peace and prevent war.

The only instance where the members seem to come close to the idea of a total defence is when they discussed if the act of conscientious objection was unconstitutional. §109 of the 1814 Norwegian Constitution declares that every citizen is obligated to “værne om sit Fædreland” (defend their fatherland).<sup>146</sup> Again, the Cold War context and nuclear weapons make up the framework of interpretation. The discussion concentrated on the idea of an expanded defence altered to fit these contemporary developments. In this expanded understanding, “defending the fatherland” would include all activity that could make Norway more resistant in the event of an external attack on the country. Based on this understanding, one could regard civil defence and service in the health sector as contributions to defending the country, and alternative military service would gain a heightened position to that of military means for defending the country. However, the committee members were split in this regard as well. Perhaps not surprisingly, the four members with military backgrounds argued against interpreting the paragraph so broadly that it included non-military defence and instead emphasised traditional understandings centred around military service. Further, they argued against changing the content of conscription, and found alternative ways of defending the country, such as non-violent methods, to be of no significant use. By and large, their conclusions recommended keeping the status quo.<sup>147</sup>

Grepstad was highly critical of the way the committee handled these questions. He pointed out that besides bringing up the content of conscription in relation to §109, the committee did not seriously discuss changing the content of conscription or alternative forms of defence. Further, he brought up the debate that had been going on since the early sixties and reprimanded the committee for ignoring it. Therefore, he asserted, its conclusions were useless.<sup>148</sup> The fraction of the committee without a background in the military also emphasised that Norwegian society had undergone such vast changes since the creation of the constitution in 1814 that it made little sense to base contemporary understanding of the Norwegian national defence on 1814-world views. They argued that society had become more complicated, technologically far more complex, and far more dependent on developments elsewhere in the world. These

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<sup>146</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 52.

<sup>147</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 62.

<sup>148</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 66.

developments, according to them, called for a new understanding of the term “defence” that involved forms of service aimed at peacekeeping and peace building. A meaningful defence had to address the reasons behind armed conflict, not only its symptoms.<sup>149</sup>

Overall, the committee was split in crucial questions around conscription and national defence, where military background seems to have been the defining feature of their views. Therefore, discussions here offered little more than a thorough commentary of arguments for and against changing the content of Norwegian conscription, where practical recommendations are absent. Considering the composition of the committee, where four out of eight members had military backgrounds, the debates were bound to have strong elements of militaristic interests. Instead of reaching new insights on the questions they discussed, the members were more focused on promoting the values they already had than they were willing to gain new insights, despite years of working on these issues. Based on the strong military interests among the committee, it might not come as a surprise that the NOU had little effect in terms of changing the state of affairs around conscientious objection and alternative military service.

In 1982, five conscientious objectors decided to terminate their service in protest due to its lack of peace relevant content. Hundreds of alternative service workers in Norway expressed their sympathy by conducting a one-day strike from their alternative service. The five objectors received prison sentences for their protest. However, they had set an example for others to follow. One of those who felt inspired by the protest also made it clear that he was not satisfied with his alternative service. Notably, he made it clear that his dissatisfaction did not stem from the work itself. During his alternative service, he worked at an institution for patients diagnosed with MS and expressed great satisfaction with his time at the institution. However, he stated, he was a pacifist. He did not believe the Norwegian military defence would be capable of performing the task it was intended. Interestingly, he also stated that he was not against national defence in itself. He argued that everyone had the duty and right to defend the values they believed in, yet, with the means they regarded as right. Moreover, he pointed out that conscientious objectors did not have those rights in Norway. In his reflections over how he came to this conclusion he explained that after a while, he realised that there was something fundamentally wrong with the alternative service he and other objectors were assigned to. They were, according to him, regarded as cheap labour and not taken seriously in society. In 1983,

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<sup>149</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplik*, 54-56.



after he declared that he would not complete his service until authorities had made it peace relevant, he was sentenced to forcibly complete his alternative service, which in practice meant that he would be going to prison.<sup>150</sup> Although disagreements at this point had gone on for decades, there still seems to have been no agreement in sight. In 1983, the Ministry of Justice issued a declaration that recommended no changes in the content of alternative service. The government once again postponed hopes for a more peace-related service. A conscientious objector commented on this declaration by saying that he could not express his disappointment with the government for its total unwillingness to meet conscientious objectors demands. He discouragely stated that Norwegian prisons were filling up with people asking to serve the peace cause.<sup>151</sup>

### **Conscientious Objectors as Prisoners of Conscience**

The overreaching reluctance by the government to meet the demands of conscientious objectors stretching over several decades seems conspicuous when the disadvantages of being a conscientious objector in Norway in the 1960s and 70s are taken into consideration. As discussed in the previous chapter, “political” and “selective” objectors were denied exemption from military service because they lacked the pacifist beliefs the law required. Often, a denied application ended with prison sentences. In the 1970s, various critics raised their concern about the number of young men in Norwegian prisons for their objection to military service and urged for an improvement of the situation. Moreover, many critics used the label “prisoner of conscience” to describe these objectors, which portrayed Norway as a violator of human rights.

In 1973 Prime Minister Trygve Bratteli received a letter from Amnesty International concerning the imprisonment of conscientious objectors. In the letter, Secretary General Martin Ennals declared that Amnesty International regarded those imprisoned in Norway for refusing military service as prisoners of conscience and urged the Norwegian government to release these young men.<sup>152</sup> This instigated a comprehensive exchange of letters between the Ministry of Justice and Amnesty International. Notwithstanding, the critique from a leading organisation promoting human rights seems to have had little impact on the governments self-perception. An official at the Ministry of Justice wrote that authorities acted according to Norwegian law,

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<sup>150</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 3. Riksarkivets forsvarsarkiver (Defence Archive at the National Archives), Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 16.

<sup>151</sup> S.I.N, *Samvittighetsfanger i Norge, en kommentar til st.meld. 70 –Om verneplikt*, 3. Riksarkivets forsvarsarkiver (Defence Archive at the National Archives), Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 17.

<sup>152</sup> NOU 1979: 51, *Verneplikt*, 344-345.

which did not violate any human rights. The official argued that Norwegian authorities did not find any criticism of Norway's treatment of conscientious objectors as justified. In a note from the state secretary, the criticism from Amnesty that Norway had prisoners of conscience was characterised as a "slightly delicate problem". Moreover, they questioned Amnesty's legitimacy. The state secretary argued that although Amnesty did positive things, one could not leave it to a private organisation to decide where the limits were drawn.<sup>153</sup>

The question of conscientious objectors' human rights also reached parliamentary debates. In 1970, the parliamentary representative for Sosialistisk Venstreparti (socialist left-wing party) Stein Ørnhøi urged for legal change to prevent Norway from having what he characterised as prisoners of conscience. In August that year, another political conscientious objector had received a prison sentence for his objection, which sparked Ørnhøi's criticism. In his appeal, he attacked the Norwegian self-understanding as a "kind country" that had nothing to make up for when it came to freedom of conscience and other democratic rights. Further, he scrutinised the double-moral in the Norwegian tendency to express support for individuals in conflict with other states, particularly states from which Norway felt politically distanced. Ørnhøi stated that, due to the imprisonment of conscientious objectors, Norway had had prisoners of conscience in large parts of the post-war period.<sup>154</sup>

### **"Not the way of Norwegians"?<sup>155</sup> Revising the Notion of Peacefulness**

The discussion thus far makes up a narrative about a protest group in Norway that the Norwegian government responded to with little understanding, intolerance and even punishments through several decades. When it came to discussions of national defence and its conscription demands, it seems that the willingness to communicate with representatives new perspectives on traditional institutions reached its end. Notably, conscientious objectors were not the only protest group in this period. The debate around alternative service happened in a context closely associated with protests by various groups, gathered under the label "1968". The year 1968 has become somewhat synonymous with protest in people's memory. Bringing conscientious objection in the 1960s onwards with 1968 history provides a historical framework for the history of conscientious objection and calls for a more nuanced understanding of the

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<sup>153</sup> Notat, 12.02.86. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001, 5.

<sup>154</sup> <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Stortingsforhandlinger/Saksside/?pid=1970-1981&mtid=34&vt=a&did=DIVL97159> (hvordan referere?), 408-409.

<sup>155</sup> "ikke nordmenns vis" (my own translation), Førland, *1968 som symbol på frihet og selvbestemmelse*, 8.

protests of the 1960s at large. As we shall see in the following, treating conscientious objection as part of this history offers a different perspective of 1968 in Norway.

The ideas and activities associated with 1968 make up a compound narrative in modern history that is not easily summed up by a few sentences. The events that took place had historical roots in previous decades and lasted well into the 70s. Strong transnational currents in these events have led historians Martin Klimke and Mary Nolan to use the term “The Global Sixties”. They characterise it as a period of new ideologies and counterculture that sought to reshape cultural and political contexts in a transnational web of student protests and worker strikes both inside and, importantly, outside Europe.<sup>156</sup> Historians, Knut Dørum and Øyvind Tønnesson argue that it was several movements that partially coincided in terms of themes and content. Included in this complex narrative are students who wanted more democratically structured universities, peace movements that demanded an end to senseless warfare in Vietnam, a civil rights movement that called for equal rights to citizens of colour in the southern USA, a call for democracy and human rights in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, and in Latin-America, a population that revolted against the social inequalities at the hands of religious and political authorities. Events associated with 1968 had dramatic expressions in some cities, where they mobilised millions and were met with brutal reprisals from military and political authorities.

According to Dørum and Tønnesson, the 1968-movements had perhaps greatest effect as a revolt against society’s ruling norms and conventions. It thereby saw people who grew reluctant to play by existing rules, experimented with new ways of living, and took up cultural expressions alien to their parent generation.<sup>157</sup> Thus, the 1968-historical narrative is complex and diverse. Depending on where it happened, it can be characterised as a history of civil movement, revolts, or even revolution. Discussions of its precise content and consequences for later societies have baffled academics and people involved, and a straightforward answer might never be achieved. Perhaps the only clear-cut impression drawn from the history of 1968 is the numerous interpretations it invites. An interpretation that has gained prominence in Norwegian history about 1968 is the notion that the Norwegian version of 1968 was particularly peaceful compared to other countries. This interpretation often emphasises the lack of violence and force, both by authorities and protesters. As historian Tor Egil Førland argues, “Burning cars and guns

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<sup>156</sup> Klimke and Nolan, *The Globalization of the Sixties*, 1.

<sup>157</sup> Dørum and Tønnesson, *Rød, grønn eller blå bunnlinje?*. In *Arven etter 1968*, 13-14.

aimed at protesters is not the way of Norwegians”.<sup>158</sup> In a 2008 article about 1968 in Norway focusing on national particularities, Førland used the characterisation “peaceful” to describe the radicalisation of the 1960s in Norway.<sup>159</sup> He points to the Norwegian version of Vietnam protests and the student revolt as evidence of the peaceful shape 1968 took in Norway. As for the student revolt, Førland argues that there were no sanctions from the government, and university authorities did not make any attempts to counteract the demands of the students.<sup>160</sup> Emphasis on the peaceful form of 1968 in Norway aligns with a long-standing self-perception of Norwegians as tranquil people with a tradition for peacefulness.

Although the depiction of less dramatic protests in Norway undoubtedly holds some truth, as exemplified by Førland, I argue that an essential nuance to this image can be achieved by bringing forth the discussion on alternative military service and conscientious objection that took place in this period. One could rightly argue that objection to military service on one side, and people protesting nuclear weapons in the streets on the other, are two different discussions that belong to separate frames of interpretation. However, pointing out that objectors differed in terms of means to achieve their aims and express their concerns is insufficient ground to exclude the group from this historical framework. The topic of conscientious objection coincided in several ways with more overarching themes of 1968, which makes it fruitful to understand it within this historical context. Although the topic of conscientious objection arguably has some commonalities with the 1968-themes mentioned above, one central area of difference is the way objectors were treated by the Norwegian government. Therefore, the relevance of conscientious objection in this context is urgent for two main reasons. Firstly, the ideas that were put forward by objectors were very much in line with those idealistic concerns that influenced activists traditionally included in the thematic field of 1968, particularly protest against nuclear weapons, the Vietnam war, and scepticism towards American foreign policy as well as the more general theme of reshaping the political and cultural context. Secondly, a look at how the Norwegian government responded to ideas and demands put forward by conscientious objectors provides an alternative depiction to the one of a generous and tolerant Norwegian government when faced with opposition.

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<sup>158</sup> “Brennende biler og skytevåpen mot demonstranter er ikke nordmenns vis” (my own translation), Førland *1968 som symbol på frihet og selvbestemmelse*, in Førland and Rogg Korsvik (eds.), *1968*, 8.

<sup>159</sup> Førland, “1968” in *Norway*, 383.

<sup>160</sup> Førland, “1968” in *Norway*, 383-384.

In a speech at the Symposium on conscientious objection in Strasbourg in 1984, member of the United Nation Sub-commission Asbjørn Eide, accurately pointed out the two-facedness of states: “the commitment to global and human values, and the pursuit of national interest even when these run counter to their proclamations”.<sup>161</sup> This dualism is highly characteristic of the Norwegian state in this period. It proclaimed its support of human rights whilst at the same time neglecting democratic values by refusing conscientious objectors access to peace relevant work. Reasons behind this dualism are undeniably complex. Yet, it seems that the tolerance reflected in the narrative about 1968 in Norway reached its limit when authorities faced a group that touched upon traditional militaristic values that were feared might threaten national interests.

### **Chapter findings**

In this chapter, I have outlined the debate on alternative military service in the 1960s, 70s and briefly 80s. The Cold War context is crucial for understanding how the debate was shaped throughout this period. Although different conclusions were drawn, nuclear weapons and the potential outbreak of war loomed large in the minds of both government officials and conscientious objectors and affected their stance in the debate. The main impression this debate leaves is that the Norwegian government was highly reluctant to meet the demands put forward by conscientious objectors.

At the core of the debate were challenges to traditional understandings of the Norwegian defence via the idea of an expanded defence where military and non-military efforts would work together in defending the nation. The Norwegian government, more inclined to include only military efforts, opposed these ideas. In a broader perspective, the debate on alternative military service was not solely about individuals’ personal aims but a political and democratic question. The debate on alternative service illustrates the limits of liberalism by making it clear that although promoting its self-understanding as a tolerant social-democratic state, the government still had a rigid view of whom they preferred to include in matters of war and peace. This self-understanding is further challenged by including the question of conscientious objection in the narrative of 1968 in Norway. Thus, the debate on alternative service has provided reason for rethinking our understanding of the post-war period in Norwegian history and challenging the predominant self-perception of the Norwegian state as a tolerant, liberal and lenient state.

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<sup>161</sup> Symposium on Conscientious Objection, *Final Report*, 14.

Considering the conflict of ideas visible in this debate, the next question to ask is what mechanisms lie behind these vastly different ways of imagining peace and war. In the next chapter, I aim to study how these ideas were formed through social interaction in the cultural context of the Cold War. I argue that gender is an essential trope for studying how ideas of war and peace were shaped and communicated. Therefore, I will examine the mutually constructive principles of military masculinity and the nation and their role in underpinning the social order in post-war Norway to gain insight into the cultural landscape in which both conscientious objectors and Norwegian had to manoeuvre.

## Chapter Four: Real Men? Conscientious objection and Gender dimensions in formulating ideas of peace

When picking up the Saturday issue of *Dagbladet* on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1950, the first thing catching the eye would be a front-page picture of four young Norwegian men with shovels and rakes in hand, working tirelessly amid typical Norwegian nature of majestic mountains and wide fjords. Above the picture, a statement in bold letters saying “Conscientious objectors works dripping with sweat at Tyin”<sup>162</sup>. The picture is postcard-perfect, portraying Norway at its best; hard working and beautiful. In reality, the picture shows some of the most contested figures in the country at the time, namely conscientious objectors. The men in the picture were assigned to build a road from Tyin to Tyinholmen in the remote countryside of Norway, as part of their alternative service. The reporter, Jon Dørsjø, expressed fascination over the men he was about to meet when he went to visit the conscientious objectors at Tyin. Would he meet religious fanatics, confused idealists, or lazy quitters sabotaging military service? – “One could never know”.<sup>163</sup> The article was an attempt to set the record straight about conscientious objectors, who did not have the best reputation. In the attempt to make conscientious objectors more acceptable to the Norwegian public, Dørsjø wrote an article that emphasised their ability to work hard and be useful to society. He described them as cooperative and cheerful.<sup>164</sup>

Although this article was one of those who painted a positive picture of the conscientious objector, it reveals some interesting mechanisms at work in how objectors were perceived in the Norwegian public. The newsworthiness of the strong, hardworking, cooperative, and cheerful conscientious objector indicates that this was not the usual representation at the time. Further, by portraying the objector around these characteristics the article illustrates some notions about idealised forms of masculinity. As this newspaper article exemplifies, masculinity was a crucial trope around which conscientious objectors were understood in the post-war period. In this chapter, I examine the dynamics of interpretation between conscientious objectors and the wider Norwegian public from a gendered perspective. I argue that gender is an important factor in understanding how ideas of peace were communicated in the Norwegian

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<sup>162</sup> “*Militærnektene arbeider så svetten siler ved Tyin*” (my own translation), *Dagbladet* 19.08.50.

<sup>163</sup> “*Man kan liksom aldri vite*” (my own translation). Dørsjø, *Militærnektene arbeider så svetten siler ved Tyin*, *Dagbladet*. 19.08.50, 1.

<sup>164</sup> Dørsjø, *Militærnektene arbeider så svetten siler ved Tyin* (my own translation), *Dagbladet*. 19.08.50, 11.

Cold War context, and that its central position is highly visible in the debate around conscientious objection.

Gendered notions are understood here as a phenomenon that develops throughout time and bases itself on an accumulation of past experiences. Thus, ideal forms of masculinity are historically and culturally constructed, and undergoing constant change.<sup>165</sup> The discussion will be focused on notions of military masculinity in Norway, how these played out around the topic of conscientious objection and to what degree they determined the discursive field of peace and war in Norway during the Cold War. As I emphasise the possible analytic gains of studying the development of ideas within a cultural framework, the social interaction between conscientious objectors and the wider Norwegian public is at the core of the discussion. Furthermore, I do not treat the analytic category of gender in isolation, but rather as one of several mutually constitutive structuring principles underpinning the social order in Norway after the Second World War. Therefore, gender will be understood as a category that, combined with considerations for the Nation, made up the cultural landscape in which both conscientious objectors and Norwegian authorities had to manoeuvre their ideas of peace. A first section will map out some reoccurring themes in representations of conscientious objectors and discuss the gendered dimensions of these themes. Secondly, I look at how these themes played out in encounters between authorities and objectors, and in public media. A third part handles how conscientious objectors understood themselves in terms of gender. The fourth section contextualise gender in the 1950s and onwards to see how expectations of men and women affected changes in gender roles in Norway. Lastly, I will provide a theoretical framework for discussing the dynamics of masculinity in the question of conscientious objection in Norway.

### **Reoccurring Themes in Notions About the Conscientious Objector**

The experience of the Second World War in the immediate post-war period enforced traditional notions of men's duty to defend the nation. This is illustrated by the prominent role the Second World War experience continued to have in Norwegian culture and national community. This experience was often commemorated along gendered lines. In turn, this had a marginalising effect on conscientious objectors who, in the eyes of many, refused to take on this highly valued gender role.

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<sup>165</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 76.



In the over seventy years that has passed since the German occupation, events from the war have attracted more attention than any other period in Norwegian history. There are several explanations for this. One is the popular appeal of fighting and drama, and stories of heroism and betrayal that the war history is filled with. Another explanation is that through the war years a national epos was created that meets the need of a national self-understanding serving as an ideological force in an increasingly more homogenous society. A last explanation is that this ethos gains its strength from being connected to historical events that all legitimises the Norwegian state. There is much agreement that a legal settlement after the war was necessary. However, historian Ole Kristian Grimnes argues that there is far more disagreement over where the limits of this settlement should be drawn. To him the reason for this is obvious; the limits decided who belonged to the national community, and who were left out.<sup>166</sup> I argue that any attempt at understanding cultural currents behind ideas of war and peace, and consequently, conscientious objection in Norway after the war must take into consideration the massive influence the of war and the function it served for the national community.

Historian Susanne Maerz treats the processing of the occupation years as an important feature of Norwegian identity discourse. According to Maerz, processing the German occupation between 1940-1945 makes up a wide field of both cultural expressions and rituals, and scholarly attempts at reasoning with the past. At the core of this field are discussions of the collective Norwegian identity. As an event that reinforced the Norwegian national community the Occupation had, and continues to have, a strong influence on identity formations in Norway. Further, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May Liberation, which marked the end of German occupation in 1945, was and is interpreted as a national rebirth. Therefore, it serves as an important point of reference in the Norwegian collective memory. Another important element in the memory of the Occupation is how it, at least mentally, divided Norwegian society in two –those who opposed the external enemy and those who didn't. Maerz argues that this division of society and persistent notions about armed and manly heroic resistance to the Nazi occupier has hindered the processing of past experiences and continues to do so. This polarisation affected debates about Second World War history in the 1960s and 70s, and how conflicting stories reflect different forms of commemoration.<sup>167</sup> I would argue that it is possible to project these insights onto other discussions as well, particularly within the Cold War framework. In a discussion about

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<sup>166</sup> Grimnes, *Hvordan har historieskrivingen om okkupasjonstiden skiftet over tid?*, 283.

<sup>167</sup> Maerz, *Okkupasjonstidens lange skygger*, 365-366.

historiography on the occupation, Grimnes argues that the Cold War demanded internal discipline and public support for the national community.<sup>168</sup>

Notions about heroic resistance and its role in enforcing the national community stemming from the war is popularly embodied by the *Motstandsmann* (man of the resistance). He is a well-known character in Norwegian history associated almost exclusively with men who fought the German occupation. *Motstandsmannen* has gained a prominent place in Norwegian culture and collective memory. He is remembered as a heroic figure who with great bravery risked his life to secure the life and liberty of the Norwegian people. To be sure, the discussion here is not an evaluation of how well deserved or accurate this notorious status is. What is interesting in this context is in what ways the image of the *Motstandsmann* affected notions of masculinity and national self-understanding in post-war Norway to further the understanding of gendered notions of conscientious objectors. According to Grimnes, historiography on the Second World War concentrated on stories of heroism up until “the moral turn” in the 1990s. People wanted to hear stories of heroic resistance and bold actions. Those who had their stories told were seamen, resistance fighters, and soldiers of the armed forces. Stories of those who suffered, for example Jews, were shadowed by this focus on praising the heroes.<sup>169</sup>

The prominent role of heroic resistance fighters and soldiers in national commemoration, creates ground for arguing that these male figures had a persisting normative function. As is clearly visible in the empirical material, the norm portraying men as protectors were highly active in the post-war period. As evidenced in the newspaper article I initiated this chapter with, those who refused military service were perceived as a contrast to this norm, leading to marginalisation. Grimnes also talks about a focus on military operations in historiography of the Second World War in Norway. The so called home front consisted of a civil and a military fraction, called Milorg. According to Grimnes, the civil fraction was in focus immediately after the war. By preceding generations, however, attention has been shifted to the military fraction. It is first and foremost here one finds the heroes of the home front today. Weapons, explosions, and sabotage have gained more attention than non-violent forms of resistance.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Grimnes, *Hvordan har historieskrivingen om okkupasjonstiden skiftet over tid?*, 281.

<sup>169</sup> Grimnes, *Hvordan har historieskrivingen om okkupasjonstiden skiftet over tid*, 282.

<sup>170</sup> Grimnes, *Hvordan har historieskrivingen om okkupasjonstiden skiftet over tid*, 284.

Cultural historian Anne Eriksen uses the characterisation “our Norwegian World War” when she explains the role of the Second World War in Norwegian collective memory. Eriksen’s book *Det var noe annet under krigen* (The war was something different), is about Norwegian post-war culture, more precisely about the Second World War’s tradition for collective memory in post-war Norway. It focuses on how knowledge about the war has been transferred and kept alive in the fifty years after the war. She argues that when Norwegians talk about what happened “during the war”, one does not solely refer to the events of a short historical period, but also to a condition and an experience. Similar to Maerz and Grimnes, Eriksen points out that the war has gained a heavy symbolic meaning. Those five years brought events that are regularly repeated by contemporaries, but these experiences have also become important elements in building a Norwegian identity. They have become part of a national value foundation. She argues that the history of war makes up a network of notions that has been active and living through the entire post-war period. Consequently, the war has positioned itself as one of the large narratives in modern Norwegian society, shaping Norwegian values and culture.<sup>171</sup>

Eriksen argues that this continued relevance stems from efforts in making the war experience relevant in various cultural fields. It is retrieved and mentioned throughout different contexts. The myth of the war forms the Norwegian cultural narrative around important existential questions. Imbedded in this history is a message or a “mythical dimension of meaning” that is communicated through various channels. The collective tradition of remembering the war produces, according to Eriksen, mythical knowledge that connects Norwegians to each other and to the national community. The knowledge provides a feeling of belonging and identity. Further, it provides skills in Norwegianness, it increases the individual’s abilities to understand and belong to the Norwegian community. The Norwegian home front is an example of national commemoration tied to national pride. A manifestation of this is *Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum*, Norway’s Resistance Museum, established in 1966. The institution practices research, collecting sources and objects and dissemination of war history. Its official aim is to “give an authentic presentation of the German occupation during World War II. From prelude, through invasion and resistance, to liberation and peace [...]”<sup>172</sup> and to “provide a true and vivid image of the kind of misery and humiliation an occupation is for a people”.<sup>173</sup> Here, the weapons,

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<sup>171</sup> Eriksen, *Det var noe annet under krigen*, 9.

<sup>172</sup> Forsvarets museer, *Information in English*. URL:

<http://forsvaretsmuseer.no/Hjemmefrontmuseet/Information-in-English>

<sup>173</sup> “gi et sant og levende bilde av hvilken ulykke og fornedrelse en okkupasjon er for et folk” (my own translation). Forsvarets museer, *Om Forsvarets Hjemmefrontmuseum*.

uniforms, and struggles of the home front are put on public display. Eriksen interprets the aim to communicate what misery the occupation was as an incentive to keep the history “alive” as an active part of Norwegian culture.<sup>174</sup>

### **Judging Manliness: The Conscientious Objector in Front of the State Commissions and the Media**

The following will illustrate that here is ample evidence showing quite rigid understandings of how a man should be in Norway in this period, and these affected how conscientious objectors were interpreted by others. In a military context, these gendered notions become even clearer. Discussions in chapter two and three have illustrated how the Cold War made considerations for the nation increasingly prominent in the political sphere. The world became an unpredictable environment. Therefore, politicians considered the need to protect the country as one of their most urgent tasks, and the military was an important prerequisite for this protection. As a public sphere heavily dominated by men, the military context created the basis for a discussion on military masculinity in post-war Norway. According to historian Geoff Eley, nationalism and gender are closely intertwined. This close relationship is best illustrated in mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion from the nation. Although shared with class, race, religion and other logics of centeredness and marginalisation, gender has had a prominent role in organising national communities.<sup>175</sup> Further, the infusion of nationalistic focus in foreign politics and the heightened military focus contributed to making the ideas presented by conscientious objectors a particular object of scrutiny. Numerous attempts were made to devalue the conscientious objector by questioning his masculinity and how well he matched expectations of men at the time. These mechanisms not only affected how objectors and their ideas were understood but were also an important departure for how conscientious objectors formulated their struggle for a more peace-oriented world order.

One fruitful context for analysing gendered paradigms in the question of conscientious objection is their direct encounter with authorities. When a conscientious objector had filled out an application and sent it to the state instance dealing with military enrolment, formerly called Krigskommissariat, this application would be sent to the local police department. The applicant would then be summoned by the police to render an oral explanation for his application in front of a committee. To be sure, these “oral statements” are more accurately referred to as police

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<sup>174</sup> Eriksen, *Det var noe annet under krigen*, 109-110.

<sup>175</sup> Eley, *Culture, Nation and Gender*, 31-32.

questionings. A closer look at the emphasis of pacifism through a gendered perspective, suggests that attempts were made by state representatives to categorise conscientious objectors in a way that was more associated with femininity. The seriousness of these questionings should not be downplayed. This was a “make it or break it”-situation for the applicant. The questions were formulated so that if the objector gave the wrong answers, he admitted to himself and authorities that he was a coward. In a guidance booklet for conscientious objectors from 1969, those who had been through the process gave advice to those who were planning on applying. The formulations here give a good impression of the importance of how an objector conducted himself during the police questioning. Future objectors were told to take their time when answering questions, to write them down, have them specified, and to refuse answering vague and ambiguous questions. Also, they encouraged applicants to demand having their answers read out loud by the committee.<sup>176</sup>

The purpose of these questionings can be interpreted in various ways. That they served as an opportunity for authorities to listen to a conscientious objector’s ideas and opinions, however, seems unlikely. Applications for exemption were often thoroughly filled out and consisted of page after page of reasons why the objector had taken his stand, and authorities had a good chance to gain an impression of what the objector thought about the military.<sup>177</sup> Despite this, questions were highly confrontational and so were, at times, the response. When asked again why he refused military service, CO7 bluntly replied “It says so in the application”.<sup>178</sup> CO8’s application was sixteen pages long.<sup>179</sup> It would be fair to assume that this should have given legal authorities more than enough to base their decisions on. Therefore, much seems to suggest that police questionings rather served as a kind of test to find out what situation would push the objector to compromise his standpoint. The questions were also highly dubious. The applicant was presented with various hypothetical situations and asked if any of these would lead him to use weapons or participate in military activity. For example, he was asked what he would do if the country was under an attack or if his family (wife, children, parents, siblings) were attacked by hostile soldiers and his life and honour was at stake. The reference to family and the male role in this constellation here is highly discernible. It points to rights and duties in the nation

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<sup>176</sup> Benestad (et al.), *Militærnekte? En veiledning*, 6.

<sup>177</sup> Benestad (et.al.), *Militærnekte? En veiledning*, 20-23.

<sup>178</sup> “Det star jo på søknaden” (my own translation). Stavanger Politikammer, *Avhørt på Stavanger politikammer*, 19.05.1976. Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001.

<sup>179</sup> 21.05.1980-HBP-alt.II (avslag), *Søknad om fritaking fra militærtjeneste*, Box/Parcel: RA/S-4346/D/L1534/0001.

state. In this framework, the duty to protect fell on men, whilst women were presumed to be weak and in need of protection.<sup>180</sup> Related to his perspectives on mechanisms for inclusion and exclusion in the nation, Eley argues that gender and the nation are strongly defined by metaphors of family and conventional family norms.<sup>181</sup> Based on these insights, the objector would not only have his masculinity questioned if he answered wrongly to this question, but his membership in the national community was also put to the test. Further, objectors would also be asked if anyone else had led them to their standpoint.<sup>182</sup> These standard questions came in different variants. Many objectors pointed out the absurdity of taking a stance in these hypothetical scenarios. When faced with these hypothetical situations, conscientious objector Andreas Galtung allegedly responded, “I suggest you answer these questions yourself”.<sup>183</sup>

A closer look at the emphasis of pacifism through a gendered perspective suggests that attempts were made to categorise conscientious objectors in a way that was more associated with femininity. The interviews focused almost solely on pacifism which is expressed in the various questions about the use of weapons. This is in line with the legal emphasis on pacifism as a requirement for being granted status as a conscientious objector. However, the question of whether the objector was a pacifist would be clearly stated in his application, and the police questionings thereby seems redundant. The emphasis on pacifism was a crucial element in the debate about conscientious objection. As discussed in chapter two, Norwegian authorities used pacifism as a tool for marginalising so called political and situational objectors. Peace researchers Dan Smith and Inger Skjelsbæk argues that the unsuitability of women in combat roles has long been taken for granted.<sup>184</sup> This widespread assumption that women should not be in the military was prominent also in Norway. The occasions where conscription for women were discussed, it was done with swiftness and an underlying matter of course.<sup>185</sup> In turn, the association to women as peaceful reinforced the association of masculine characteristics to the soldier, and effeminated conscientious objectors, understood as a passive, docile, and fanatic “other”.

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<sup>180</sup> Blom, *Gender and Nation in International Comparison*, 15.

<sup>181</sup> Eley, *Culture, Nation and Gender*, 32.

<sup>182</sup> Benestad (et al.), *Militærnekte? En veiledning*, 5-6.

<sup>183</sup> “Jeg foreslår at dere besvarer disse spørsmålene selv” (my own translation), Galtung, *Johan uten land*, 57.

<sup>184</sup> Skjelsbæk and Smith, *Gender, Peace & Conflict*, 6.

<sup>185</sup> See “2.3.5 Verneplikt for kvinner” in NOU:1979:51, 23, and 76-79, and Justis- og politidepartementet, *St. Meld. Nr. 70 Om verneplikt*, 52-53.

The stark dichotomies between enemies and allies typical for Cold War political discourse is reflected in the police questionings and their emphasis on pacifism. They express a rigid understanding of the military, where either one was for the military and its use of weapons, or one was against it, with little room for debate and nuances. If the objector answered yes to any questions regarding the willingness to use weapons, his application would likely be denied. The Cold War east west rhetoric also functioned well as a provider of an enemy. The enemy threat, in turn, rendered Norway in a vulnerable state in need of protection. The responsibility fell on men. Moreover, the willingness to use weapons and protect the country are conveyed as closely intertwined. This framework provides little room for an objector to get out of these questions in a positive manner. If he answered that he was willing to protect the country with weapons, his application would be denied. If he answered no, he would probably be granted status, but his role as male protector would be lost. Thus, removing the access of conscientious objectors to a “proper manhood”. Moreover, the Cold War anxieties discussed in chapter two are highly present. The hypothetical scenarios reflect fears of national security and the threat of an external invader.

Associations to pacifism also made conscientious objectors more object to misunderstandings and scepticism along gendered lines in the wider public. A conversation between a conscientious objector and a military-friendly Norwegian reproduced in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* 1954 exemplifies such interpretations. The objector was asked if “we” [Norwegians] should have defended themselves in 1940. He answered that it was principally right to fight an enemy of that sort, but not with military weapons. An exclamation point added to this sentence signifies the authors view on this statement as outrageous. The objector’s conversation-partner allegedly found himself so discouraged by this statement that he was tempted to give up any attempt at having a conversation because there was an abyss between his and the objector’s outlook on life. The objector was characterised by the author as idealistic and naïve, living in a fantasy world. The author also stressed that a *mannfolk*—a real man, should protect himself and his loved ones against assault and rape. Here, a highly sexualised way of thinking about war is communicated which carries visible assumptions about the roles of men and women during wartime. Pacifism was described as a beautiful daydream in a time of wolfs, the fact that enlightened youth didn’t understand this, he stated, was beyond comprehension.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> *Radiokommentar*, *Aftenposten* 27.01.54, 4.

In a 1954 issue of *Aftenposten* an article opens with the alleged statement of a Norwegian woman saying, in 1939, that the country did not need a national defence. If the country was attacked, she allegedly stated, the mothers of the country would chase them away. The author gave a comment expressing that no women defended the country when it was occupied in 1940. The author then went on to say that the 1939 woman had gained companionship in her opinion. A conscientious objector from Velfjord in Northern Norway allegedly had said that Hitler would not have attacked Norway during the Second World War if the country did not have a national defence. The author further stated that objection to bear arms for religious reason was respectable, as long as one was certain it came from an honest place. The respect for pacifist statements such as the one from Velfjord, however, was seen as a misinterpreted lesson from the Second World War.<sup>187</sup> The verification of these alleged statements is difficult, if not impossible, to attain. At best, one could argue that their reproduction in *Aftenposten* seem exaggerated. However, the article gives a good testimony to what kinds of versions of pacifism and conscientious objectors were reproduced in the Norwegian public. Further, the themes here correlate. Both articles focus on the Second World War, gendered notions, and the importance of the nation.

Almost two decades later, in 1969, these themes were still recurring in Norwegian newspapers. An article in *Aftenposten* opened with a statement saying that politically aware youth, especially those belonging to the Left wing, were expressing irritation over the past generation; “It [the older generation] is never done with the war, they say.”<sup>188</sup> This article exemplifies a generational gap in Norway between those with experiences from the Second World War, and the following generation that ideologically associated themselves with the cultural changes of the sixties. As these generations and their experiences were brought together under the framework of the Cold War, their different notions about war and peace becomes clear. What follows is that these two generations had experiences shaped by different gender perceptions and ideas about the nation, that collided in negotiations on war and peace. The author of the *Aftenposten*-article goes on to say that the youth wanted to create a new society, in replacement of the old, that they viewed as “rotten”. Their aims were summed up as youthful impatience with all those who didn’t follow their journey. The author referred to a TV-interview of Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen and his son Rune Gerhardsen, from the popular debate TV-program

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<sup>187</sup> *Misforstått*, *Aftenposten*, 22.04.54, 2.

<sup>188</sup> “Den blir aldri ferdig med krigen, sier de” (my own translation), *Hvis de vil*, *Aftenposten*, 30.04.69, 2.



*Åpen Post*.<sup>189</sup> Einar and Rune Gerhardsen belonged to different sides of the generational divide referred to in the newspaper article. Gerhardsen senior was asked if he would be a conscientious objector and NATO-opposer if he was twenty years old in 1969. He replied that if he was twenty years old and had the experiences of 1940-45, he would not be a conscientious objector. This answer, praised by the reporter, was described as illustrative of the difference between youthful idealism and political experience. One couldn't expect this younger generation to have political experience but if they wanted to be taken seriously, one would expect them to see the reality of their circumstances. According to the author of this article, the older generation would never forget the traumatising experience of war and "The younger, impatient at heart must forgive the older generation for that".<sup>190</sup>

### **New Manliness: How Conscientious Objectors Understood Themselves in Terms of Gender**

The reoccurring themes in other's perceptions of conscientious objectors discussed here coupled with an increasingly more uncertain Cold War world also shaped how conscientious objectors viewed themselves and their struggle for radical changes promoting a more peaceful world. This complex and subtle dialectic between visions of peace and the experience of collective violence is at the core of historian Jay Winter's *Dreams of Peace and Freedom*. Winter argues that in the twentieth century, the different set of upheavals arising from the collective violence of the two world wars was a determining factor for visionaries of peace. The emergence of total war in this period has shaped visions of a more peaceful world and enforced their sense of urgency. A keyword in this understanding of social action is experience. Winter applies historian Reinard Koselleck's interpretation of historical thinking as a framework for the study of social visions in a time of collective violence. Koselleck argued that because experience is finite and expectations are infinite, there is a binary and asymmetrical relationship between the space of past experience, and how people project that experience onto the future. This asymmetrical relationship generates the understanding of historical time. It is not only the two world wars that dominate this interpretation, but also wars of decolonisation such as those in Algeria and Vietnam.<sup>191</sup> This renders the twentieth century as one wide backdrop for

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<sup>189</sup> The interview can be found here: <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/her-og-naa-tv/1969/FUHA00004469/avspiller>

<sup>190</sup> "De unge utålmodige av hjertet må tilgi den eldre generasjon det" (my own translation), *Hvis de vil*, Aftenposten, 30.04.69, 2.

<sup>191</sup> Winter, *Dreams of Peace and Freedom*, 5-8.

understanding how historical actors have formulated their world views among outbreaks of violence, political uncertainties, and turmoil.

Importantly, this framework for interpreting history affected the Norwegian population at large, and visionaries of peace –here represented by conscientious objectors. This makes the process of formulating ideas through social action more complex and interwoven. Objectors shaped their own self-image as a response to existing notions about them. One area where this is detectable is in the rhetoric used by objectors, which often seems like a response to the allegations presented in the newspaper articles above. The magazine *Militærnekeren* was issued from 1961-91 by representatives for objectors doing alternative service. Several texts in this magazine deal with conscientious objector’s struggle for recognition. In a 1965 text titled *Svikter vi vår plikt?* (Are we betraying our duty?), an unknown author advocates for more action from conscientious objectors. He reminded the reader that objectors were still perceived as defiant negativists, religious fanatics, clinging to political fantasies. The author argued that few knew the usefulness of conscientious objector’s struggle, and argued that as long as people were beguiled, it was objectors’ duty to speak out. The soldiers had their duties, objectors had theirs.<sup>192</sup> From this angle, the male role as protector of the nation has gained a vastly different content.

As in the example from the introduction, conscientious objectors also attempted to reformulate alternative military service in masculine terms. One objector emphasised the toughness of forestry work, and that this was no work for the weak minded. No one could deny that this butch lifestyle had its effect on the workers, who started growing beards and grew fond of a life in the Norwegian woods.<sup>193</sup> Arguably, this should be seen as a response to the many charges against alternative service for not being equally burdensome and tough as regular military service.<sup>194</sup> What we see here is a reconfiguring and reinforcement of masculinity, however, in a widely different context. The norms of masculinity are the same, but they are carried out in a different context, by different historical actors.

### **Gender Roles in Transition**

In many ways, gender norms in the military context seem to have stood still whilst gender roles in the wider Norwegian society underwent drastic changes. The period up till 1950 is commonly

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<sup>192</sup> “Svikter vi vår plikt?”, *Militærnekeren*, 1/1965, 10.

<sup>193</sup> “Min arbeidsplass”, *Militærnekeren*, 1/1965, 16.

<sup>194</sup> “Otto Lyng vil stramme inn for sivilarbeidere”, *Militærnekeren*, 5/1965, 2.

characterised as the epoch in which women were so called housewives, and men did the work outside the home. In the 1960s and onwards, however, these roles were subject to frequent criticism by the many political movements in the period. The polarised understanding of manliness and womanliness that dominated in the 1950s was gradually replaced by a focus on diversity in understandings about gender. Through several decades of Norwegian history notions about gender changed from its emphasis on the average and typical about men and women's attributes, work areas and responsibility, to accepting variations within each gender.<sup>195</sup>

The prominent norm of the married woman as housewife is evident in historian Kari Melby characterisation of the period until 1950 as "husmortid" (the period of the housewife). Legally, the genders were equal, but there were still significant social differences between men and women, both in the work sector and in the political sphere. These differences followed the separation between the private and the public sphere. Such patterns remained intact despite considerable industrial, political, and demographic changes in Norwegian society. The label "housewife" not only refers to the fact that married women were responsible for housework and childcare, and that this division of labour was strong throughout the period, but also, and importantly, to how women were ideologically defined in society. Thus, this definition governed expectations of what it meant to be a woman.<sup>196</sup> What is important to note here, is that although the Housewife was strongly positioned in notions about women and their place in society, this does not mean that debates about equality and feminism did not occur.<sup>197</sup> Melby describes a period where gender equality and differentiation happened simultaneously.<sup>198</sup>

The 1960s and 70s saw further developments of feministic ideas from earlier decades. In these contexts, the marginalisation of women and their political situation was discussed in new lingual terms such as patriarchy, sisterhood, and awareness. There were also strong international currents in these movements. International literature presented ground-breaking thoughts about women and their place in society which caused strong paradigmatic changes in the way women criticised gender relations. Many argued that real liberation of women would involve massive political, social, and economic reforms. Feminist scholar Sunnøve Lidtner illustrates how these international feminist currents made their way into Norwegian journals

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<sup>195</sup> Blom, *Brudd og kontinuitet*, 388.

<sup>196</sup> Melby, *Husmortid*, 257-260.

<sup>197</sup> Lindtner, *1968 og feminisismen*, 168.

<sup>198</sup> Melby, *Husmortid*, 257-260.

and literature and became important tools for many women in reformulating ideas about gender in Norway. Also, feminist academic analyses began launching gender as a culturally constructed category. In this sense, the differentiation of women from men was not biologically determined. Instead, one argued that women were repressed through social mechanisms governed by cultural notions about women.

In the majority of scholarly accounts with a broad perspective of 1968, the women's movement is integrated as an important thematic field. It would be fair to argue that this is not merely because women's movements temporally coincided with 1968, but that they also correlated thematically. The "new wave" of feminists in the 1970s emerged as a critique of earlier forms of feminism. She argues that this must be seen in the context of the Leftist movements strong critique of the political establishment, which they saw as repressive and instrumental. All these efforts at bettering women's position in society and altering cultural notions of who women were, led to drastic political reforms in the 1970s. Lidtner argues that the women's movement politically and culturally turned Norwegian society upside down.<sup>199</sup>

In a context where modernisation and political developments affected notions about women, and where these changes were object to strong criticisms and revisions, it would be fair to assume that notions about men also changed. If the 1950s saw the height of the housewife-period where the married woman's place was in the home, such as the term "housewife" suggests, then it would be fair to assume that the role as husband also involved some cultural expectations. Historian Hilde Gunn Slottemo argues that the married man as a good provider was a strong norm in Norwegian society in the 1950s and 60s. The welfare of the family relied on his pay-check, and it was his duty to provide a stable income. Men's responsibilities, largely tied to considerations for the community, is at the core of Slottemo's perspective on expectations of masculinity. This is contrasted to what Melby writes about the history of women's movements where the individual, the woman, was the primal concern.

The individual versus community contrasts here are manifested in economic factors –the income. A man's income was considered a necessity for survival, whilst the woman's income was more understood as a supplement, providing consumption of pleasurable commodities. Slottemo argues that burdens of masculine duties have been overshadowed by the women's

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<sup>199</sup> Lindtner, *1968 og feminismen*, 167-173, and 186.

movements focus on access to paid work for women. This side of the gendered equation has, according to her, been defined in terms of privileges and power and an important right to be gained in the name of gender equality. From the perspective of women, this analysis is appropriate. However, when dealing with the male perspective, one must take into account the limits these responsibilities, strongly located within communal considerations, put on individual freedom. This, in turn, provides a nuance to notions of paid work as a masculine privilege. Moreover, Slottemo argues that men's association with paid work should not merely be interpreted as a source of power, but also as an expression of care for the family.<sup>200</sup>

Although the historiography is filled with how gender perceptions have changed in Norway since the 1950s, there seems to be a general lack of perspectives treating the experiences of the Second World War, and its effects on gender. The war period is rather used to separate what came before from what came after, and is largely treated as something separate, something that “we put behind us”. There is also a tendency to treat the military outside narratives about changes in family constellations, politics, industry, and everyday life in general. Based on the defining moments the Second World War and the Cold War undoubtedly were, however, I argue that the military sphere should be brought in as an analytical category in this narrative. The process where these conflicts affected how conscientious objectors and the wider public negotiated ideas of peace is a good testimony how important it is to include military experiences in discussions of gender. This perspective becomes clearer by the theoretical discussions of masculinity and the military.

### **Dynamics of Hegemonic Masculinities: Theoretical Framework**

The empirical material has illustrated ways in which conscientious objectors were measured up against experiences from the Second World War and the courage, strength and patriotism of resistance fighters, suggest that this was a preferred version of masculinity. To better understand the ways in which such preferred notions of masculinity operate in society, it is constructive to have a look at the social dynamics between men. These dynamics are illuminating for the question of why some masculinities are preferred whilst others are marginalised.

Sociologist Raewyn Connell has offered one of the most influential and cited contributions to research on masculinity. She argues that to understand important tropes in society such as class,

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<sup>200</sup> Slottemo, *Ansvarlighetens menn*, 65-67.

race, or global inequality, one must always include gender –and vice versa. By this, her framework centered on gender has become increasingly regarded an analytic key to understanding society as a whole. Therefore, gender politics gained a central place in analyses of seemingly unrelated social structures. One of her most influential insight is that masculinity is not a monolithic identity but rather that several masculinities exist at the same time and are defined by their relationship with each other. In her book *Masculinities*, she insists that to keep this analysis dynamic, one must focus on the gender relations among men. The idea of multiple existing forms of masculinities operating in relation to each other gave meaning to Connell’s Gramsci-inspired concept of “hegemonic masculinity”. This type of masculinity embodied the currently most acknowledged traits of a man. She argued that “hegemonic masculinity” is not a fixed character type that never changes across various contexts. Instead, it is “the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable”.<sup>201</sup> Thereby, it is historically constructed.

Connell later pointed out that this was “the element of optimism in an otherwise rather bleak theory”. It meant that there could be a struggle for hegemony where new forms of masculinity could replace older ones.<sup>202</sup> However, in her consideration of the practices and relations that construct main patterns of masculinity in the current Western order, she tied the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” to the problem of legitimising the patriarchy. When the cultural conditions for maintaining the patriarchy changes, so does the dominance of various types of masculinities. This understanding of hegemony as a historically mobile relation closely tied to the upholding of patriarchy is a key element of the picture Connell draws of masculinity. Another important part of this framework is Connell’s emphasis on complicity. She points out that although a certain type of masculinity might be dominant over others, and hence possess a hegemonic position within a specific cultural context, this does not imply that all or most men within that context actually embody the traits of this masculinity. Rather, “hegemonic masculinity” functions as a normative definition of masculinity, and a problem that arises is that not many men meet these normative standards. The idea of complicity enters the frame as the majority of men still gain from the patriarchal divide between men and women, held up by a “hegemonic masculinity” they do not themselves possess. Moreover, the domination of a normative form of masculinity lead to subordination of other groups of men through material practices. Connell emphasizes the, sometimes brutal, subordination of homosexual

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<sup>201</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 76.

<sup>202</sup> Connell and Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity*, 833.

masculinities, but points out that this subordination might also apply to heterosexual groups of men, and boys.<sup>203</sup>

As is often the case with comprehensive theoretical frameworks that handles large societal themes, Connells “hegemonic masculinity” has been subject to much criticism and revisions.<sup>204</sup> Gender historian Ida Blom proposes the term “gender systems”, understood as a basic trait of social relations. These gender systems, she argues, can increase our understanding of how deeply internalised notions about gender relations and differences can be determinative for human action. Particularly interesting, according to Blom, are the ways in which these notions have contributed to the organising of society, and under what circumstances these notions change. She challenges patriarchal perspectives such as the one promoted in Connell’s theoretical framework, and their focus on unveiling power relations between the genders. She argues that this focus lacks nuances. Instead, she promotes more focus on both the feminine and masculine side of the gender variable.<sup>205</sup>

Insights provided by Sociologists Paul Higate and John Hopton creates ground for understanding mechanisms behind the gendered parameters in discussions about conscientious objection. They use the framework provided by Connell in their discussion of war, militarism, and masculinity in the British context. They connect military masculinity to “hegemonic masculinity”. According to them, the position of military organisations, pageantry, success, and rituals in the public sphere exemplifies the endorsement of military values, and their institutionalisation in national culture. In line with the section above on reoccurring themes about conscientious objectors, they draw a direct historical connection between military masculinity and the needs of the state. The reciprocal relationship between masculinity and militarism is, according to them, crucial for the state to maintain public support for its use of violence to achieve political goals domestically and abroad. Higate and Hopton emphasise the interests of the state in maintaining strong ideological links between militarism and masculinity. Further, they argue that ideologies of hegemonic masculinity find its foremost support in militarism’s eroticising and institutionalising of its values. This is not to say that there are not alternative contexts where traditional masculine virtues are promoted, but that these, however,

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<sup>203</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 78-79.

<sup>204</sup> For a thorough discussion and evaluation of these criticisms, see Connell and Messerschmidt, *Hegemonic Masculinity*.

<sup>205</sup> Blom, *Det er forskjell på folk*, 113-114.

fail to link masculinity to the needs of the state.<sup>206</sup> Moreover, they show how men who have rejected militarism have been portrayed as “effeminate, naïve, untrustworthy, or even politically dangerous”.<sup>207</sup>

In the article *The others: Gender and Conscientious Objection in the First World War*, international relations scholar Lee Jones deploys Connell’s framework to analyse the conscientious objectors struggle in First World War Britain. He argues that the hegemonic masculinity in this context was martial masculinity, which emphasised heroism, courage, physicality, and self-sacrifice. In line with Connell’s theory, Jones points out that although few men lived up to this norm, they were forced to position themselves in relation to it. Because of this, they were complicit in the maintenance of martial masculinity and shamed into enlisting. The marginalised and suppressed in this context, according to Jones, were conscientious objectors. Furthermore, Jones expands Connell’s theory, and supports the incentive of others to move beyond Connell’s strong emphasis on hegemonic masculinities’ role in legitimising patriarchy. He argues that, historically, hegemonic masculinity has also played an important role in supporting other power relations. Jones questions the isolationist focus on gender in Connell’s understandings and argues that hegemonic masculinity does not govern power relations on its own, but rather in combination with other ideological and material factors.<sup>208</sup> Similar to Jones’ objection, gender historian Ida Blom emphasises the importance of rethinking the intricate relationship between gender systems and whatever topic one investigates. Thereby, gender will appear as a basic feature interacting with other fundamental societal structures.<sup>209</sup> In this sense, masculinity is seen as one of several hierarchical principles that operate together to determine the structures of a social order. This is particularly valuable when considering counter-hegemonic struggles such as the one between conscientious objectors and the Norwegian military establishment. Jones’ emphasis on the interplay between several cultural fields shows that such struggles cannot be defined by a single category like gender.<sup>210</sup>

The perspective laid out by Jones makes Connell’s theory more tangible in a context like that of conscientious objection during the Cold War. He opens a space for understanding the cultural field in which conscientious objectors had to manoeuvre and gives them agency by pointing out

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<sup>206</sup> Higate & Hopton, *War, Militarism, and Masculinities*, 3-5.

<sup>207</sup> Higate & Hopton, *War, Militarism, and Masculinities*, 12.

<sup>208</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 100-101.

<sup>209</sup> Blom, *Det er forskjell på folk*, 113.

<sup>210</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 100-101.



the way objectors tactically organized their struggle. Conscientious objectors in WWI Britain rejected the martial masculinity's claim to bravery and heroic protectors, embodied by the soldier. Further, they raised awareness that this form of masculinity was tactically constructed and attacked the institutions that had facilitated this construction. Instead of promoting the martial masculinity that at the time possessed the hegemonic position, they embraced what Jones describes as "nurturing identities traditionally assigned to women".<sup>211</sup> This attack on martial masculinity did not sit well with the wider population in Britain, and conscientious objectors were met with resistance and hostility. One example of this is that those objectors who accepted alternative service were forced to do in meaningless, menial work assignments that demeaned their male identity.<sup>212</sup> As the foregoing evidence suggests, however, conscientious objectors in Norway responded to charges of unmanliness by reformulating their position in masculine terms. For example, by emphasising the manliness of alternative service and speaking of the peace cause as a means to protect the nation. In Connell's aspect of complicity, this might be interpreted as reinforcing the traits of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, Jones insights on counter-hegemonic struggles and its broadened perspective invites an interpretation that these were part of larger political schemes where gender is one of several factors.<sup>213</sup> The context Jones' insights are based on is vastly different from Cold War Norway and comparing these should be exercised with caution. Jones not only situates his analysis in a period several decades before the 60s and 70s, but also in a society involved in a global war of large-scale active warfare. However, there are legitimate reasons to argue that the counter-hegemonic struggle Jones points out in relation to the topic of conscientious objection, can be transferred as a paradigm to understand what happened in the 1960s and 70s in Norway. Firstly, it is important to keep in mind that martial masculinity probably did not first occur in the First World War but was formulated through years of experience and made hegemonic in the context of war. Higate and Hopton, for instance, argue that recruitment of volunteer soldiers in Britain during the First World War owed much to Victorian ideologies that defined masculinity in terms of strength, courage, determination, and patriotism.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 103.

<sup>212</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 105.

<sup>213</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 108.

<sup>214</sup> Higate & Hopton, *War, Militarism, and Masculinities*, 4.

These theoretical considerations create space for arguing that this form of masculinity did not fade as ink touched paper in Versailles in 1919<sup>215</sup>, but rather left cultural traces that gained prominence in later times of conflict. According to this understanding, traits such as heroism, physicality and self-sacrifice might arise in several different context but still have the same idealistic or social origin. As discussed in the previous chapter, historiography on the post-war period in Norway has tended to draw a stark line in 1945 and emphasised the period after as fundamentally different from what came before. Instead of separating the war experience from the post-war period, I argue that some close connections can be found by examining gendered perceptions about conscientious objectors that enhances the understanding of these as a subordinated group in Norwegian society. The hegemonic masculinity tied to militarism was largely shaped by the Second World War experience and the masculinity of the “motstandsmann”. Jones also argues that those with different, subaltern identities tend to be marginalized, suppressed, and used as reviled “others” to bolster the hegemonic norm.<sup>216</sup>

## Chapter Findings

In this chapter, I have examined the topic of conscientious objection through a gendered perspective. This is to better understand the process in which ideas of peace were formed through social action against a cultural backdrop where militaristic and masculine values were prominent. The themes that made up notions of conscientious objectors during the 1960s and 70s were the nation, masculinity, and the Second World War. These themes did not form separate trajectories but worked together in shaping perceptions of conscientious objectors. Considerations for the nation demanded men to take on the role as protector. This male protector was shaped through military masculinity and its emphasis of braveness, strength, and general manliness. Experiences from the Second World War, made highly culturally relevant in post-war Norway, projected these values on to the *Motstandsmann*, which held a heightened position of masculinity.

Through empirical evidence, I have illustrated how these reoccurring themes fed into attempts at effeminising conscientious objectors. During dubious police questionings objectors were confronted with questions aimed at examining how they matched gendered expectations. The strong emphasis on pacifism during these questionings holds links to gendered ideas about men

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<sup>215</sup> The peace treaty of Versailles, marked the formal ending of the First World War: <https://snl.no/Versailles-traktaten>

<sup>216</sup> Jones, *The Others*, 100.

and women's role in war, and linked objectors to the latter. Pacifist associations were also prominent in how objectors were portrayed in the wider public. Conscientious objectors were talked about with scepticism and distrust in Norwegian newspapers that attacked their reluctance to military service on the basis of a man's duty to defend the country. Because objectors were excluded from the traditional framework of military masculinity, they created their own understandings of masculinity, and the peace cause became an important determining factor in this process.

Much seem to suggest that conscientious objectors had little effect on changes in gender roles in Norway during the 1960s and 70s, which were more connected to topics such as access to paid work, and new ideas aimed at rearranging the gendered separation between the private and public sphere. Thus, it is the military sphere that first and foremost affected notions about conscientious objectors, making it important to draw in different contexts in understanding gender relations.

These processes are made clearer by the theoretical framework formulated around the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" where acknowledged masculine traits are understood as a changeable and dualistic, operating in a complex interplay with other central tropes of society. This brings together considerations for the nation, the cultural relevance of the war, and military masculinity under one common framework for interpretation. Thus, the prominent role of masculinities formed by the war experience, and conscientious objector's counter-hegemonic struggles are illuminated. By historicising masculinity in the context of the Cold War, I have illustrated how concepts are constantly changing depending on the context they are made formulated in. In turn, by putting these into play with concepts of peace and war in the 1960s and 70s, I also support my main argument that it is the Cold War framework that shaped ideas of peace in this period, in a close interplay with other concepts.

## **Conclusion**

In this thesis I have set out to identify how ideas of peace and war were negotiated around the question of conscientious objection in Norway during the Cold War. This topic has provided fertile ground to examine how different historical actors in Norwegian society approached questions of peace and war. I have studied how several young Norwegian men thought about peace and war by analysing what reasons they gave for refusing to serve in the Norwegian military, and how they promoted these ideas through various channels. By virtue of being a protest group, this dialogue took place, in large parts, between the conscientious objectors and the Norwegian state. As it turns out, these sides had vastly different ways of imagining how to promote peace and prevent war, which is evident around the legal system, alternative military service and political discussions concerning conscientious objection. In addition, the social and cultural mechanisms that steered interpretations of conscientious objections have provided basis to expand our understanding of Norwegian post-war history, as well as understanding what role the Cold War framework possesses in this narrative. In the following section, I will map out my main findings in closer detail and explain their relevance in historical research.

The Cold War created a specific historical trajectory for negotiating peace. The growing tensions between the great powers USA and the Soviet Union, and the employment of nuclear deterrence as a strategy for power balance created feelings of insecurity in Norway. This context of growing tensions reveals how various actors in Norwegian society envisaged the outbreak of war, and what measures they argued were necessary to avoid this catastrophic scenario from the 1960s onwards. Although the Cold War was a shared point of reference for both Norwegian authorities, conscientious objectors, and the wider Norwegian public on this matter, they drew completely different conclusions. Norwegian decision makers put their faith in military solutions. From their perspective the growing tensions made it imperative to seek military security in order to protect Norwegian interests. The faith put in military measures can be traced back to the traumatising experiences of German occupation during the Second World War –an experience that still had a prominent place in Norwegian collective memory and culture. This is illustrated by the decision to enter the military alliance NATO in 1949, which brought Norwegian and American foreign politics closer than ever before. This was by no means an uncontested decision.

The alliance made Norway more integrated in the global society than it had been in the past, which increased public awareness of foreign politics. A social transition happened where such issues of high politics became a growing concern for the wider population. One can talk about a shift where issues of war and peace became public domain. As more voices entered the discussion it became more polarised, and an important arena for the debate was the topic of conscription. Conscientious objection rates soared as a response to increased militarisation and can thus be interpreted as a protest to contemporary developments. This is further supported by the fact that conscientious objectors expressed fierce criticisms towards how the Norwegian government handled Cold War tensions. Numerous young Norwegian men refused military service based on these developments. At the core of this refusal was resentment of the increasingly closer bond between the USA and Norway. American foreign politics became for many a symbol of moral decay, and conscientious objectors argued that they could not partake in a military system involved in this decay.

To highlight their refusal as a direct response to contemporary realities, objectors gained a tendency to express their distance from pacifism. Doing so emphasised that their stance of refusing to partake in the Norwegian military was a political decision rooted in resentment of Norwegian authorities. At this point, refusing military service had become a moral imperative for many due to reports of atrocities in Vietnam and weapons of mass destruction –both of which were traced to American foreign policy. Thus, conscientious objection had become a rhetoric battleground for negotiating war and peace. The strong disagreements between authorities and objectors are visible in alterations of the legal system aimed to restrict political conscientious objection. Whilst many objectors had disclaimed pacifism as a reason for objecting, authorities brought this concept to the forefront in interpretations of the law. In other words, conscientious objectors had to be either religious or a pacifist to have his application for exemption from military service approved, indicating that political objectors were not acknowledged.

This clash of ideas is also visible in the heated debates on alternative military service from the 1960s to the 1980s. At the core of these debates were the demands put forward by conscientious objectors to make their alternative military service more peace relevant. The alternative service At that time, objectors doing alternative service were mainly assigned to do manual labour in fields and forests or to take care of the elderly and other patients in the health sector. An important note here is that emerging demands of changing alternative service did not come from

an overall dissatisfaction towards this work, but rather that alternative service neglected the moral obligation many felt to work for the peace cause. The suggestions for changes objectors put forth give a good indication of what measures they viewed as peace promoting. Summed up, they emphasised non-violence, international cooperation, humanitarian work, advocacy about disarmament and peace, and promoting peace organisations. There were also talks of an “expanded defence” which was manifested as a reconceptualization of the Norwegian national defence. The idea was that recent developments had made it urgent to change the way people thought about the Norwegian national defence. Those in favour, mainly conscientious objectors, argued that the task of defending the country should not be exclusively handled by the military, but rather in a combination with non-violent methods. The reason why these demands led to an extensive debate, was the reluctance of Norwegian authorities. I emphasise the necessity of taking the context into account when assessing what people here based their actions on. At the time of these debates, the Cuban Missile Crisis made the threat of a nuclear disaster seem more likely than ever before, and the way people thought about war was significantly altered as a result. In Norway, these developments fuelled ideas that peace issues were to be handled in high politics under the domain of the military. We have here a situation where these experiences made objectors push to have peace issues handled outside the military, while Norwegian authorities emphasised the military even more than previously. Based on this, there is ample evidence that not only did Cold War realities inform conscientious objection in the 1960s and 70s, but it also had wide implications for ideas on achieving peace and preventing war. Furthermore, my findings suggest that historical actors can indeed draw vastly different lessons from the same context.

My thesis findings also point in a different direction. Despite the changes brought on by Cold War realities, there are clear contours of historical continuity in this narrative. These are made clear by the overreaching focus on the interests of the state, and the military as an essential means of protecting these interests. My analysis shows that the overreaching faith put in military solutions has its roots in the period long before the Cold War, in the Union with Sweden in the nineteenth century. As dissolving the Union was forthcoming, the question of national sovereignty fed into ideas about the need for a solid military defence, and conscientious objectors consequently became marginalised. In this context, any antimilitaristic sentiments, of which there were many, were considered as problems that had to be overcome. The process of legalising conscientious objection was rough, and objectors were treated unjustly.

After the First World War, antimilitarist sentiments grew in scope, but so did the resentment of these. Objecting military service finally became legalised in 1922. Still, the distaste for political objectors so widespread during the Cold War was also a tendency at that time. Thus, the reluctance to accept conscientious objection in Norway was linked just as much to the emphasis of the state as it is to the Cold War framework. The already strong emphasis of the needs of the state was catalysed by the German occupation during the Second World War. However, again we see that people interpreted these experiences very differently. During the Nuremberg trials after the war, it was declared that every soldier is responsible for his actions. This assertion was taken up by many objectors, and their moral reservations from being a soldier became even stronger. Furthermore, the grotesque nature of warfare made many even more convinced that any means for achieving and maintaining peace should be at the top of the international agenda. To Norwegian authorities on the other hand, the Second World War experience of being unable to defend Norwegian sovereignty strengthened the belief that peace and security was best achieved through military means.

I argue that much of the reluctance we have seen from Norwegian authorities towards conscientious objection in this thesis are best explained by this prevailing emphasis on the needs of the state. This brings me to another important aspect of the thesis, namely the discussion about conscientious objection and gendered dimensions in formulating ideas of peace. I argue that the overreaching national and military emphasis was negotiated through gendered dimensions. National and the military interests are embodied in the duty to defend the nation. A prominent feature of military rhetoric is that this duty is directed at men, and the social and cultural traits of these male protectors give meaning to a concept of military masculinity. In societies where the military is valued, such as Norway, this form of masculinity gains a heightened position in people's ideas of preferred manliness. Because conscientious objectors, for various reasons, refused to take on this duty, they wound up excluded from the community of military masculinity. This exclusion is visible in how objectors were perceived as unmanly by many Norwegians in the 1960s to 1980s. My analysis illustrates that attempts were made to effeminise conscientious objectors portraying them as cowardly delusional utopians unwilling to defend the national community. In addition to the strong bond between nation and gender, an important point I have made in that section is that gendered notions are a phenomenon that develops throughout time and bases itself on the accumulation of past experience. Thus, the Cold War framework is replaced by a wider historical context spanning further back in time. I locate the importance of the duty to defend the nation to the very beginning of Norwegian

independence in 1814. Under a blooming interest for military matters and the national community, pacifism was linked to presumed weak women, and thereby constructed as something feminine. Additionally, notions of a common Norwegian belonging were shaped by prevailing characteristics of men and women. The latter, who did not have the right to vote at this point, lacked the same belonging to the nation as men.

I also argue that the attempts of effeminising conscientious objectors in the 1960s and 70s stems from the experiences of the Second World War. The German occupation left a huge mark on Norwegian pride and national community. Based on a thorough account of the war's continuing relevance in Norwegian society and culture, especially the glorification of the *Motstandsmann*, I argue that the war was commemorated along gendered lines, and defending the nation became a highly valued masculine gender role –a hegemonic masculinity. As a result, conscientious objector's manliness became devalued. This is evidenced by the many references to the Second World War in police questionings and Norwegian newspapers, where men were portrayed as protectors and objectors were confronted with these assumptions. These themes in turn affected how conscientious objectors viewed themselves and their purpose. They shaped their own self-image as a response to effeminised notions about them, and reclaimed manhood by articulating the peace cause as a duty and a struggle, and alternative service as masculine. Based on the picture presented here, I argue that several changeable and dualistic masculinities existed under the same cultural framework in a complex interplay, with the central trope of militarism in Norway in this period. In line with these findings, I argue that instead of being a source for novel ideas about war and peace, the Cold War framework amplified already existing ideas. Therefore, the Cold War is better understood in this context as a container of long-standing ideas rather than their origin. These continuities might also explain why conscientious objection has remained small in scope and size, compared to other western countries, such as Germany, Spain and Italy. Military interests seem deeply rooted within Norwegian society throughout the entire period, and conscientious objectors have remained a marginal movement as a result.

My findings have some wider implications. This thesis provides ample reason to reassess common perceptions of Norwegian history and self-perception. This reassessment is particularly related to the idea of Norway as a peace nation, of political stability under a liberal democratic state, and steady improvement in the post-war period. I argue for some important nuances to these depictions that should be considered. First, the overreaching reluctance from the side of Norwegian authorities to meet, or even at times to acknowledge the ideas and aims



put forward by conscientious objectors suggest that the post-war liberalism had clear limits. Second, this reluctance to negotiate with oppositional voices in society on matters of war and peace provide reason to rethink the idea of Norway as a vanguard for peace. The debate around alternative service has illustrated that Norwegian authorities were quite traditional in their views of peace, and traditional in this context means militaristic. This is further supported by their rigidity towards a group in society that had untraditional concepts for negotiating peace, such as non-violence and pacifism. Lastly, the marginalisation conscientious objectors experienced in form of having their identity and manhood scrutinised, being imprisoned, and their ideas largely overlooked suggest that also the democratic experience one talks of in the post-war period might not have been a standing principle for everyone. In fact, the debate on alternative service illustrates that certain opinions were not welcomed by Norwegian authorities when crucial decisions of war and peace were made.

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