

Activism and security in Scandinavian international engagement. Lessons from Afghanistan 2001-2014.

In the post-Cold War period, the Scandinavian countries have all pursued foreign policies marked by an active international engagement, with development aid, peace efforts, as well as humanitarian engagement and military interventions as areas of particular engagement. In the case of Norway, since the 1990s, this active engagement spurred academic and public discourses revolving around the idea of a particular Norwegian policy of involvement (*engasjementspolitikk*), prominently featuring peace efforts. Following 9/11, however, development and peace efforts have become increasingly securitized, whilst at the same time, military interventions have increasingly emphasized humanitarian approaches, aiming to 'win the hearts and minds' of affected populations. This close interweaving of development, peace, and military involvement was particularly visible in Afghanistan 2001-2014, as expressed through NATO's Comprehensive Approach and Counter Insurgency strategy (COIN), both developed during the 2000s in close connection to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) experiences.

Taking Norwegian experiences in Afghanistan as its point of departure, this talk asks whether the interwoven nature of humanitarian and military engagement, as well as the relative weight of security and peace considerations behind the involvement, points towards a need to rethink the conceptualization of Norwegian foreign policy and international engagement. Considering Swedish and Danish experiences in Afghanistan, may we indeed observe any changes in recent Scandinavian international engagement? Lastly, what repercussions does this have for the academic study of Scandinavian international engagement?