

Faraway, So Close: Fighting the Taliban and other Others in the Grey Zone

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Abstract

Denmark has deployed troops to Afghanistan since 2001. From mid-2006 and onwards the Danish effort has been concentrated in the Province of Helmand. In the Danish public this effort seems in particular, perhaps not least thanks to *Armadillo* the movie, to be defined by Danish infantrymen fighting Taliban in the Green Zone. However, in 2012 the focus of the Danish effort shifted from battle operations to educating, training, and supporting the Afghan National Security Forces. In February 2013, the last Danish infantry company left Afghanistan, and the emphasis of the Danish effort changed, on the one hand, to bringing home military equipment, and, on the other, to providing continued battle support to allied ISAF troops.

Drawing upon my ethnographic fieldwork in progress inside some of the very last Danish combat units in Afghanistan, the aim of this paper is to explore grey zones emerging from fighting a war without actually fighting. That is, this paper examines ambiguities, insecurities, and contradictions related to: a) why 'we' fight, b) where 'we' fight, c) how 'we' fight, and d) who 'we' research. More specifically, this paper sheds light on how these four grey zones tend to be constituted by an increased legalisation of the war in Afghanistan. As such, the paper scrutinises how law, understood as constellations of normative orders, affects both the researched and the researcher as they each seek to find their way through intersecting spheres of legality and illegality.