

Abstract

The breakthrough of the 20th and 21st centuries, viewed with hope by many Europeans as the beginning of a new world order free of conflict and war, brought us the opposite - a series of wars and campaigns waged by NATO-affiliated countries. These operations, conducted under the common banner of the "war on terror," have taken the soldiers of the Polish Army to remote regions of the world in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. While the presence of the Polish Armed Forces, in view of their previous activities in these regions within the framework of the United Nations mission, was not something unusual, the new factor here was the nature of their stay. The citizens of our country, accustomed to the image of a soldier bringing peace and stability, were confronted with a new reality, a soldier conducting combat operations and often paying the highest price for it. While the mission in Iraq and the "African" missions, despite the losses incurred, remained in the general public perception, still stabilization and peace missions, the referral of the Polish Combat Group to Afghanistan in 2007 came as a shock to many citizens of our country. Polish soldiers were no longer peacemakers in blue helmets, separating warring sides or forces trying to support the reconstruction of the country as was the case in Iraq.

Despite the many similarities to the Iraq mission, however, this one was a unique mission. In it, Polish soldiers carried out a full spectrum of activities, from patrols, ambushes and the delivery of humanitarian aid through strikes by artillery, aviation, attack helicopters and the reconstruction of the country's structures and infrastructure. In the shadow of the line units, soldiers of military intelligence and counterintelligence, personal reconnaissance operators, specialists in civil-military cooperation and psychological operations and many other specialties carried out their activities. One of the key elements of conducting such operations is the situation of the civilian population. Unlike in classical warfare, where it remains on the periphery of military interest, in counterinsurgency operations the population becomes the main focus of interest for commanders of both warring sides. The entire dynamics and course of the rebellion is closely linked to the region's population, a phenomenon many Polish military officers, who view the operation as a balance of their own and the enemy's losses, did not understand. The tendency to conduct operations without paying attention to the political, social and economic situation of the region of operations, continued with small changes throughout the period of the Polish Combat Group.

For the most part, the examples cited in the study represent only a slice of the experience of soldiers serving at an isolated contingent base, on the periphery of a zone of responsibility in a region without much operational or strategic significance.

As a result of the study, its main objective was achieved. It was shown that cultural training is an important factor affecting the conduct of military operations in culturally distinct regions. Equally important here is the fact, the quality of training, enabling future mission participants to learn as much as possible about the specifics of the region in which they will come to serve. This allows us to draw key conclusions for this issue, such as the necessity of conducting specialized training, diversified in its content and adapted to the nature of the tasks performed by the personnel on mission. The hypotheses formulated in the work, are reflected in the analyzed cases, confirming that the essence of critical incidents between the civilian and military environment in the area of operations was primarily the complexity and specificity of the local community environment surrounding the coalition bases. Also, the hypothesis that the conduct of military operations led to the disorganization of social life with all its consequences is reflected in the case studies. The possibility of sudden loss of life or health, the maintenance of conditions for a comfortable life, the psychological consequences of growing up and functioning in the reality of war, the destruction of the local social infrastructure or the internal breakdown of the communities in question translated directly into social reactions to the actions taken by coalition soldiers. Soldiers unfamiliar with the specifics of the local community often did not understand the consequences of their actions. The conducted analysis showed that taking appropriate measures by the armed forces in the area of cultural training can contribute to the formation of awareness of contingent personnel on the impact of cultural factors on the overall activities carried out.

Therefore, as the work shows, it is recommended to develop and implement a cultural training program, closely linked to training in the conduct of stability and counterinsurgency operations is in the state of preparation of soldiers for the effective implementation of such operations. In conjunction with the system of intercultural education of the civilian environment, shaping knowledge and social attitudes geared towards understanding cultural differences, it is necessary to create an effective tool for conducting operations not only in the military sphere, but also affecting other aspects of the functioning of the state and society.

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