

Abstract

The analysis of the social ties of soldiers participating in the peacekeeping military mission in the diverse socio-cultural environment of Afghanistan on the example of the 21st Highland Rifle Brigade.

The issue of the participation of the Polish Army in foreign missions is a topic that is increasingly appearing in the circle of interest of sociologists as one of the areas in which research on the military is conducted. Like any soldier performing tasks in foreign missions, the author had the opportunity to serve in an allied environment and perform tasks far away from family and loved ones in a different cultural environment.

The participants of this research were soldiers of the 21st Highland Rifle Brigade taking part in the peacekeeping military mission in Afghanistan. The research aim was to analyse the social processes involving soldiers during their service abroad. This topic is especially important at a time of crucial decision-making surrounding the war in Ukraine and securing peace within their country.

The research focused on the sociological aspects of soldiers' participation in the military mission in Afghanistan, and the 21st Highland Rifle Brigade, one of the elite brigades in the Polish Army. The study was conducted through an analysis of the available literature on the subject, including statistical studies and various compilation documents, and the use of surveys and interviews with respondents.

This dissertation is divided into three parts: theoretical, methodological and empirical and consists of six chapters.

The theoretical part of the thesis has been developed on the basis of the literature on the subject as well as own observations and experiences, and includes two chapters.

The first chapter discusses the theoretical aspects of the existence of the army as a group and social institution, and as a created dispositional group aimed at fulfilling the tasks of state defence and coalition agreements by which it guarantees the existence of the state and ensures the security of citizens in the face of internal and external threats.

The second chapter presents, on the example of Afghanistan, the new and different environment with which the soldiers – mission participants were met, and how this affected their functioning. The author introduces us to the special natural, cultural and economic conditions of the Afghan society.

The third chapter is entirely devoted to the presentation of the methodological foundations of the author's own research. It presents in detail both the subject and the purpose of the research, both in the cognitive and practical dimensions. The author presents research problems and hypotheses adopted for the verification of this research. It describes the methods and techniques, followed by the course of empirical research. In the last part of this chapter, the author describes and characterizes the population of soldiers covered by the study.

The next three chapters present the results of the empirical research obtained through quantitative and qualitative methods on the social aspects of soldiers' participation in the military mission in Afghanistan, the functioning of soldiers in military bases in the context of intercultural contacts, as well as the public perception and sense of satisfaction from participation in the military mission in Afghanistan.

The fourth chapter begins with an analysis of soldiers' motives when deciding to go abroad for a military mission. It also involves the comparison of their own goals to the objectives of the mission, and the level of approval of the mission objectives expressed by the soldiers. This is followed by a further analysis of the preparatory period for the mission and an assessment of the correctness and suitability of the training for military mission operations in hazardous conditions in different social and geographical conditions. The involvement of soldiers in this period was also assessed.

The fifth chapter looks into the activities of soldiers during the performance of tasks in a military mission abroad. During the mission, the soldiers stayed in military bases and their entire life and functioning was limited to the area of the base. Military bases and conditions of military service in extreme situations, with a high threat from the enemy, as well as different geographical and cultural conditions, had to be adapted to the situation. Interpersonal relations with the closest colleagues, superiors, soldiers of allied armies, Afghan society, and the family that the soldiers left behind in their country were analysed.

Chapter six is devoted to the analysis of the soldiers' closest and more distant social circle's perceptions of their military mission participation, as well as the satisfaction that soldiers felt after returning home from this military mission.