

MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIETHNIC ASPECTS OF EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE POLISH SOLDIERS ABROAD

Bartosz SYLWESTRZAK*

* Wyższa Szkoła Oficerska Wojsk Lądowych imienia generała Tadeusza Kościuszki
e-mail: b.sylwestrzak@wso.wroc.pl

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Abstract:

The article concerns the issue of multicultural and multiethnic aspects of the activity of the Polish soldiers during missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Chad and Kosovo. The first part shows explanations of the ideas of culture and civilization. The second part presents the potential problems in the situation of the clash of cultures and civilizations. In the final part of the article the author highlights the perspective aspects of expeditionary operations conducted by the Polish soldiers abroad.

Keywords:

international security, peacekeeping missions, stabilization operations, culture, civilization

INTRODUCTION

Conducting peace-keeping and stabilization missions by the Polish soldiers abroad has been inextricably linked with the necessity of following the rules of cooperation with the representatives of local authorities, local population and respecting their cultural identity. The essence of this cooperation is the awareness of how to operate in different cultural and religious conditions, as compared to the conditions prevailing in the home country, and the resulting necessity of respecting these differences. In striving to achieve their goals, the soldiers have to conform to the conditions dictated by the local cultural factors, by customs and by legal regulations. Each case of their violation becomes a threat to the intended political and military objectives [10]. Persons participating in missions abroad themselves admit that *“most attacks stem from ignorance*

and lack of respect for the Muslim cultural norms on the part of the coalition forces' soldiers. This often manifests itself an act of insulting, either deliberately or through ignorance, the Islam, the Quran or a mosque, violation of the privacy of (...) women, improper treatment of the elders of the community, while being convinced of the superiority of their own culture. The best and the most efficient method is gaining trust (...) of the partners, which, however, requires patience, willingness to listen, equal treatment and respecting their difference"[3].

1. CULTURE OR CIVILISATION?

It is generally thought that the idea of culture appears in parallel (and is often used interchangeably) with the term: civilization. A sound explanation in this area was provided by Jacques Maritain¹, who stated that *culture and civilizations became almost synonymous (...) however culture relates to a reasonable and moral life, whereas civilization refers to a political and organizational life* [2]. In the light of the statement, culture exists *when the man battles themselves, and each time they transform the world, we can talk about civilization* [2]. Therefore culture can be said to consist of e.g. knowledge, conviction, values, norms, customs, symbols, signs, languages and gestures. One of the more clear typologies of culture is based on the so-called formula of five questions. Within this classification, members of different cultures provided their answers and thereby created an interesting table (Table 1). It is worth noting, however, that only three main cultures have been identified in the typology presented, which in our modern, multi-polar multicultural and multiethnic world seems a rather fragmented and insufficient outlook.

Table 1. Typologies of cultures acc. to F. Kluckhohn and R. Strodtbeck

Value (cultural) orientation	Islamic culture	Far East culture	Western culture
1. Human-nature orientation	1. Humans are subjugated to nature	1. Humans live in harmony with nature	1. Humans are masters of nature
2. Human motivator for behaviour	2. To express oneself spontaneously	2. Behaviour motivated by the holistic vision of the world	2. Behaviour oriented towards achievement
3. What is the key aspect of the time phenomenon?	3. The past	3. The present	3. The future
4. What is the character of human nature?	4. Innately evil	4. A mixture of good and evil	4. Innately good

¹ French theologian, philosopher, and political theoretician, advocate of the cooperation of different religions in order to lay the groundwork for a democratic country.

Value (cultural) orientation	Islamic culture	Far East culture	Western culture
5. What is the relationship between the individual and the group?	5. The goals of the group are the priority	5. The goals of the individual are the priority	5. The goals of the group are the priority

Source: [1]

A somewhat different cultural typology was proposed by prof. Józef Koziellecki², who, basing on the studies of an American political scientist Samuel Huntington, distinguished the eight so-called Great Cultures (civilizations), which extend over a given continent or subcontinent. Therefore he listed the following cultures:

- Western;
- Orthodox;
- Sinic (Chinese);
- Japanese;
- Islamic;
- Hindu;
- Latin American;
- African.

It is worth noting here that the above-mentioned cultures differ significantly not only as far as e.g. the language spoken-, the religion practiced-, the tradition-, history-, value system-, art-, identity-, customs-, styles- and modes of behaviour are concerned, but in the operation of public institutions and legal system as well. Nonetheless, the basis of these specific cultural totalities is formed by great religions, and within some cultural systems subcultures (sub-civilizations) can be distinguished, such as Arabic, Turkish, Persian or Malayan culture within the Great Islamic Culture [9].

In the modern, complex world the idea of multiculturalism is irreversibly connected with the culture or civilization. This is only confirmed in the words of Edmund Lewandowski that *21st century is the age of multiculturalism – an age of convergence, dialogue and interaction of different cultures, their mutual relations and the necessity of coexistence within the society of a given country* [9]. Although these worlds reflect the reality of the modern times, it should be noted that multiculturalism is not the sole domain of the present times. It is, however, the natural consequence of cultural diver-

² Psychologist, professor at the Warsaw University, expert on transgression and specialist in the area of cognitive psychology. Author of the book entitled *Transgresja i kultura* - Wyd. Akademickie „Żak”, Warszawa 2002.

sities, which, due to the dynamic nature of social phenomena have been focused on one geographic territory and in one specific context.

The complexity of the today's world, generation of one conflict and threat after another is determined by the phenomenon of culture (civilization) clash. According to some researchers, the cultural conflicts stem from three main areas on which the societies function, and which are entangled in interrelationships [1]:

- culture, along with its symbolic system;
- structure of the society;
- interactions between persons who adjust to each other as the result of direct interaction.

Figure 1 presents determinants of the generation of cultural conflicts, which include those elements of the culture, which are symbolic; the interactions within the social structure and the persons forming the social structure.

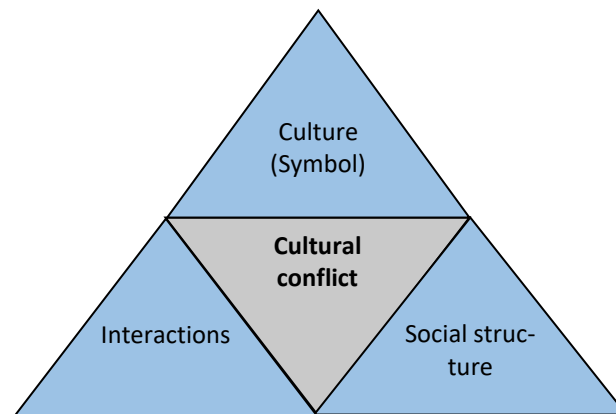


Fig. 1. Determinants of cultural conflicts

Source: Own work based on: [1]

The difference between the cultures under contemporary conditions can also be illustrated using the three paradigmatic concepts. These include the paradigm of differentiation (polarization) by Samuel Huntington, sameness (homogenization) by George Ritzer and interconnectedness (hybridization) of cultural units by Ulf Hannerz. All of the three concepts differ in the manner in which they perceive the borders of culture. For Huntington, the culture is the totality connected with the given geographic area. In Marian Kempnys's opinion, Huntington equates two forms of civilization and culture and their geopolitical counterparts. Different problems relative to culture are presented by Hannerz [6], for whom it is a formation without clear boundaries, a hybrid with a trans-local and cross-boarder dimension.

Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations [7] results directly from his assumptions regarding the very essence of civilizations as self-contained and isolated wholes, impenetrable for one another. This leads to conflicts between them because a dialogue and exchange of ideas is impossible. Civilization division line is therefore

a boarder/damn for the flow of cultural models. The concept of a “clash” negates the possibility of cultural change and the capability of a given civilization to develop. Furthermore, it omits the phenomena of a broad cultural exchange and the flow of ideas, which did take place in the past and which are the foundation of the contracts and interactions between civilizations. What may raise doubts is the understanding of the culture of Islam as an enclosed and static totality which strives to confront the West, as some scholars divide the followers of Islam into three groups: the largest group, the so-called Mecca Muslims, vary of the modern word and modernity; the Medina Muslims – extremists who would rather turn back the clock and go back to the times of Muhammad, and the reformists, who would attempt to tailor Islam to the reality of the 21st century [15].

The clash of cultures already took place during the European expansion, as the result of which the Islam culture found itself subjugated and dependent on the Western world. A number of elements of the Western culture permeated the Arabic world and eventually lead to the change in the identity of its societies. Huntington’s idea does not reflect the scale and the complexity of the processes which took place as the result of the contact of the colonial Arab world with the West. The subsequent changes shape therefore the modern relations between the two civilizations. However, a question arises: does the phenomenon of the clash of cultures concern only some of them or are we dealing, in this case, with all civilizations? Irrespective, the answer is relatively simple: only some of them are characterized by an expansion factor³, which is being activated at various points in time, leading in turn, to the inevitable clash of civilizations. On the other hand, the idea of *McDonaldization* by Ritzer [13] emphasizes the expansion of one value system from a specific centre towards other cultural areas. This is a model of a progressive and gradual annihilation of cultural difference in favour of emergence of a culture with a universal system. Blending of cultural contents is the third approach of the intercultural relations. It encompasses the closeness and the interconnectedness of various areas of culture, the generation of a special space of cultural exchange and interactions, where the culture is characterized mainly by the dynamic structuring of the manifold aspects of life. It is his opinion that culture is boundless and it directly contributes to reinforcing the cultural awareness and distinctiveness in the world.

The colonization experience makes the Arab societies particularly sensitive to any and all manifestations of the Western culture. The often occurring adoption of Western models⁴ generally concerns the material sphere mostly but does not manifest in the change of behaviour or customs. Similarly, hybridization is not possible as a free mixing

³ Undoubtedly, Western civilization has its place among the civilizations containing this factor. This may be the longest, from the perspective of time, widening of the “sphere of influence” using a full spectrum of tools, containing, among other, also culture, religion, as well as the military factor.

⁴ The term *culture and Western models* was used not so much in order to refer to the clash of civilization by Huntington but in the context of the followers of religions other than Islam in the Transatlantic area.

of various cultural elements because the post-colonial societies protect their own identity and create it anew, drawing from the values of their own culture.

2. CULTURAL AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE IN THE REGIONS OF EXPEDITIONARY OPERATIONS BY THE POLISH MILITARY CONTINGENT

The character and specifics of different environments, where the expeditionary operations were conducted by the Polish Military Contingents (Polish: PKW) and an attempt of presenting the multicultural character of those missions will be demonstrated using the two largest Polish contingents – in Iraq and in Afghanistan. In order to illustrate the problem more fully, Polish military contingents in Chad and Kosovo will be analysed as well.

The largest number of Polish soldiers who carried out tasks as part of PKW served in Afghanistan⁵. This is a country, whose society is described as a multicultural and multi-ethnic. Since the 18th century it has existed as a cohesive and independent single state. This is a country with rich history, marked by internal fighting, civil wars, and uprisings in the name of state independence. It has a population not much larger than 33 mln⁶. The population is distributed very unevenly; main habitations include mountainous valleys and oases in the North-East part of the country. Highland areas in the North and semi-deserts in the South are almost uninhabited. The country is a mosaic of different ethnic groups and tribes, which predominantly lived side by side through centuries. These include: the Pashtun, the Tajik, the Uzbek, the Turkmen, the Alimaq, the Baloch, the Brahui, the Nuristanis, the Pashayi, the Pamirians, the Kyrgyz people, the Mongols and the Arabs. Additionally, a large population of nomads and some small groups of Hindu and Sikh live in Afghanistan. Each of those groups speaks a different language or dialect. About 57 ethnic groups have been identified; people speak in almost 50 languages and dialects. The official languages include *Dari* (Afghan variety of the Persian language) and *Pashto*. Afghanistan owns its diversity to its location at the intersection of historic trade routes to the South-East and the South-West Asia, including the *Silk Route*. It is in Afghanistan that the great cultures and the interest of world powers interacted.

The Pashtun people, as the most numerous ethnic group in Afghanistan, live mostly in the South and East of the country, with significantly larger communities having settled in the North and West. Several thousands of them lead a nomadic lifestyle. They speak Pashto and make up about 42% of the whole Afghan population. In the Nangarhar, Paktia and Kandahar provinces they are the majority. The Pashtun largely retained the ancestral/tribal structure which in the light of the lack of Afghan state up to 18th century, was the only system governing their economic-, administrative and political life.

⁵ Throughout the seven years of the current ISAF mission, and earlier, during the OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, over 28 000 soldiers served in Afghanistan (27 100 as part of ISAF and 1300 within OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM).

⁶ The data on the population of Afghanistan are only estimate. United Nations Development Programme in Afghanistan estimated the population to be 33.4 million. The last Population Census was held in 1979 and, according to the data from that period, it reported 15 million 540 Afghan people.

They form a federation of tribes divided into a significant number of clans and kinship groups (ca. 30 main tribal groups). The most important form of organizing the tribes and a method of making decisions in a tribe is the *Jirga* – an assembly of elders the tribe. The decisions by this assembly are based on the Afghan law called *Ravaj*, as interpreted by the elders, and on the Islamic law – *Sharia*. The Pashtun follow the ethical code of conduct called *Pashtunwali*⁷, which is an honour code, the model of behaviour and specifies the ethical laws, as well as social and political ideas. It is defined by values. Thorough the centuries it was transmitted orally. The code had been written down by Jalal al-Din Khan ibn Tokhtamysh and first issued in Kabul in 1953. The rules of the code were being taught since childhood, and in spite of being at odds with the law in force, they were sacred to the majority of the Pashtun people.

The Tajik are the second most numerous ethnic group, second to the Pashtun. The ancestral/tribal system grew weaker in the Tajik. For centuries the Tajik dealt with farming, crafts and trade. They are also connected with the administration, education and culture. They comprise ca. 27% of the Afghan population. Only small groups of the Tajik lead a nomadic lifestyle. The majority is a population settled. Tajik speak *Dari* which derives from the Persian language (Farsi).

The Hazara are inhabitants of uplands and mountainous region of the Hazarajat in the central Afghanistan. Their appearance (they are stocky build, medium-height, with pronounced cheekbones and a monolid) makes them distinct from the above-mentioned ethnic groups. They speak their own dialect which is a dialect of Persian. They cultivate the land, raise cattle and practice crafts, and many of them left for the cities and towns to in pursuit of work. They are known as ward-working and disciplined people. They undertake most strenuous jobs and their social status is very low. They are treated badly due to being Shia, which is a religious minority in the prevailingly Sunni Afghanistan. They comprise about 9% of the population.

The Uzbek is a Turkish-speaking ethnic group from the northern Afghanistan and large cities. The Uzbek people have been living in Afghanistan since the 16th century and a substantial group of the Uzbek found themselves in Afghanistan following the conquest of the Central Asia by Russia in the 19th century. They mostly engage in farming and make up about 8% of the population.

All the remaining ethnic groups inhabiting Afghanistan, such as the Turkmen, the Baloch, the Nuristanis and others form a smaller percentage of the population, they do contribute to the complexity of this society, its diversity and richness. On the other hand, however, this only attests to the dissimilarity in ethnic and cultural background of the Polish soldiers caring out tasks within the stabilization operation in that region of the world.

Ethnic divisions are not the only dividing lines among the population of Afghanistan. Another key division runs along the creed adopted and religion practiced. Muslims⁸ are

⁷ Pashtunwali is a term depicting the way of life and the style of living of the Pashtu.

⁸ Muslims comprise about 99% of the population of Afghanistan.

the overwhelming majority in Afghanistan, and among them 80% are the Sunni of the Hanafi School⁹. These are the Tajik, the Pashtun, and the Uzbek. The Shia are therefore in the minority, and these include mostly the Hazara. Other religious minorities include the Sikh and the Hindu. Despite the attempts of the communistic regime to secularize the Afghan society, the Islamic practices permeate all aspects of life. Islam was the corner stone of the resistance against both the Soviet invasion in the 1980s, and the NATO operations at the beginning of the 21st century. Islamic religious traditions and rules, along with the traditional practice, are the fundamentals of how a life should be lead and how legal disputes should be resolved. Apart from the large city dwellers, the majority of the Afghan people are divided into tribes and other communities with their own leaders, practicing ancient traditions and religious practices.

The Afghan are attached to centuries-old customs and traditions, they cherish celebrating various holidays and celebrations, including the New Year (*Nowruz* or *Nauruz*). The sporting events, such as the *buzkashi* tournaments, played usually during the New Year in Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul and other cities in the North enjoy a large audience. Outside the period of the New Year, the games are usually played on Friday and draw a number of spectators. *Buzkashi* is the national sport of Afghanistan. *Buz* means “goat” and *kashi* means “to grab”, so the name of the game is “goat grabbing” (nowadays a calf is used most often). This is a game between two teams. Horse-mounted players called *chapandos* attempt to place a goat carcass, weighing several dozen kilograms, in a goal – a circle marked on the ground.

Ramadan is a month of fasting, when Muslims do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar and migrates through the seasons. Each year *Ramadan* ends with a three day holiday of *Eid-e Said-e Fetr*. A few days before the holidays all the Afghan clean their houses and do their holiday shopping. They do all they can so that each one can wear new clothes.

Eid-e Qurban (Eid Al-Adha) is the second most important Muslim holiday. It commemorates the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ishmael, to Allah. This holiday falls on the 10th day of the Muslim *Dhu al-Hijjah* (month of the Mecca pilgrimage) and lasts for four days. During this holiday, the Afghan people congregate for a prayer, and those who can afford it, offer animals (cows, camels, sheep, rams, goats) as a sacrifice, dividing the meat fort themselves, their family and next of kin and friends.

This characteristic of Afghanistan, its ethnic-, cultural- and religious diversity illustrates how different and diverse this country is and how dissimilar the Afghani rules of conduct are. This implies the necessity of due preparation of the soldiers who are to be deployed and to carry out tasks in that region, both in terms of their theoretical educa-

⁹ The school is named after he scholar Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nu‘man ibn Thābit (d. 767) who as the first developed a full doctrine of the Islamic law. It was his goal to systematise the rules and regulations which governed the Islamic law. He stated that those rules and regulation should be derived mostly from the Quran. Should neither the Qur’an nor a sunna nor resolve a dilemma, then *quias* – analogical thinking, an *ijma* – agreement of the scholars or *ra’y* – the scholar’s own opinion (common sense), should be followed.

tion and the awareness that the act of ignoring the rules discussed can thwart the political and military aims of a given operation.

The studies conducted point to significant similarity with the cultural and religious diversity in Iraq. This is an Arabic country located in the Middle East on the Persian Gulf. It is divided composed of 18 governorates called *muhafadhah*, three of which: Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk and Erbil (located in the north-east) form an autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region. The ethnic groups in Iraq is as follows [17]:

- the Arabs (77% of the population);
- the Kurds (19%);
- the Turkmen (1,6%);
- the Assyrians (3%);
- the Persians (1%);
- other minorities (the Armenians, the Jews –under 1%).

Iraq is also inhabited by other, smaller minorities, such as the Palestinians (ca. 35 000) and a number of immigrants from other Arabic countries and from the whole Asia which is difficult to estimate.

The religious structure is also nonhomogenous: the Muslim form 94% to 96% of the country's citizens, with the Shia Muslims representing 65%, and the Sunni – 35% of the Muslim population. The other remaining religions include Christianity (5%) and the Judaism (under 3%).

The safety in Iraq depends both on the area and the time, as well as the developments concerning this country. Most certainly, the safest regions include the provinces of Iraqi Kurdistan; relatively safe areas spread south of Baghdad through Basra itself. This country struggled with the presence of Iraqi branch of *Al-Qaida* and other terrorist organizations. Northern provinces up to the boarder with Syria are currently dominated by the highly dangerous and ruthless in its modus operandi terrorist organization called the *Islamic State (ISIS)*. Its aim is to establish a theocratic state based on the *Sharia* law (Quranic law) on a largest area possible¹⁰, and the method is uses are characterized by unparalleled brutality and violence.

The dissimilarity of that region of is determined by the Arabian world, its customs and religion. Both the stay and stabilization operations in such a place most certainly require the knowledge of the basic customs of the local populace and respecting, often difficult to comprehend, the various matters and behaviours. Nonetheless, being guided by the simple rule that if one does not know how to behave, one should behave in

¹⁰ The „area of interest” for the Islamic state is not limited to Iraq or Syria only. It stretches much further, not only to the Arabian Peninsula, but also northern and central Africa.

a decent manner¹¹, common language can be achieved and all the barriers can be breached.

There are defined norms among the inhabitants of that area: clothes worn by women should not be scant; one should not look directly in the eyes of the Iraqi women, otherwise they may spit and the men in their families could react violently; it is unadvisable to make contact with Arabic women in a public place, it is unadvisable to show one's interlocutor the soles of one's shoes; all the talks should be preceded by an exchange of pleasantries (a small talk) etc. Foreigners have always been treated with respect in Iraq; however the circumstances after the war and the presence of military forces resulted in a certain change in behaviour. Everyday contacts should be somewhat restrained, courteous and in no way demonstrate the feeling of superiority. Any gatherings or demonstrations should be avoided. One should not enter a mosque, especially during the time of prayers. It is practically forbidden to consume alcohol in public places, in spite of the fact that it is available at selected stores and can be served in restaurants. The Iraqi people do not drink alcohol, they do not eat pork and they pray five times a day. During the Ramadan the Iraqi do not eat, do not drink, or smoke and do not organize parties during the day. As soon as the dusk falls, however, they start to feast. The people in Iraq are tolerant, nonetheless it should be remembered that in the areas and cities inhabited by the Shia Muslims (Najaf, Karbala, Kufa) the Islamic customs are adhered to very strictly. Cities in Iraq are usually similar to each other. They are centred around the *Souq* – a marketplace (bazaar) where practically everything could be purchased.

The search for the answers regarding the cultural and religious differences of the regions, where the Polish soldiers took part in expeditionary operations should also be conducted in one African country. The presence of the Polish soldiers in that region of the world implied the necessity of preparing them in a proper way, in particular with regard to the knowledge of local culture, religion and the prevailing customs.

Within the peacekeeping force EUFOR Tchad/RCA, Polish soldiers carried out their tasks in Chad from September 2008 till December 2009. From March, 2009 the Polish Military Contingent became an element of a UN force called MINURCAT, as the result of taking over the mandate by the UN. Chad is located in the centre of the African continent. Its total area equals 1 284 000 km² and the country's population is over 9 million. The society is highly diverse; as far as ethnicity and culture are concerned. Chad has more than 200 ethnic groups, the most prominent of which include the Sara, the Arabs, the Baguirmi, the Kreish, the Teda, the Mbum, the Masalit, the Maba, the Mimi, the Tama, The Mubi, the Kanuri, the Hausa, the Massa and the Kotoko. Almost 25% of the population are Sudanese Arabs who live mostly in the eastern and central part of the country. Citizens of Chad speak almost 100 different languages. Generally speaking, the north of the country is inhabited the followers of Islam (44% of general popu-

¹¹ Acc. to the theory of *independent ethics* and the *figure of a yielding caretaker* developed by the great Polish philosopher, logician and ethicist, Tadeusz Kotarbinski.

lation), Christianity (33%) and animists (23%)¹². None of the chief religions are uniform. The animist religions are very diverse, with the cult of ancestors playing a particularly vital role. As far as the Muslims are concerned, most of them are part of moderate fractions and these embraced a lot of the local, African elements. Chad is a multinational, multicultural and multilingual country. This is thanks to this richness that the country has ample traditions. The economy of Chad is chiefly based on agriculture, where 75% of economically active people work. The main crops include sorghum, millet, rice, cotton and peanuts. Cattle-raising is also pays an important role. The industry in Chad is poorly developed, and according to a number of sources, this is one of the most impoverished and corrupt countries in the world. From the point of view of the Coalition countries, the geographic conditions, the climate, the threat posed by the rebel forces and the severely limited infrastructure make it possible to describe this region of the globe as one in which conduct operations in very difficult.

Another region where some of the Polish soldiers have conducted operations and still operate within peacekeeping missions is the territory of former Yugoslavia. Polish Military Contingent within international peacekeeping force in Kosovo (about 900 soldiers and civilians) started to function at the end of June 1999 and beginning of July, 1999¹³. The mission of the Polish–Ukrainian Peace Force Battalion (POLUKRBAT), as part of KFOR¹⁴, stated in July, 2000. KFOR's main regions of operation are the four northern Kosovo districts of Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potoc and Zvecan. Mountainous region, unfavourable weather conditions, as well as complicated political and social situation in the region, make the service difficult for both the soldiers, and their commanding officers. The Polish soldiers cooperate with the soldiers of other contingents, among other with the Americans, Germans, Moroccans, Turks, Ukrainians and Greeks. However, it was the cultural similarity between the Polish soldiers and the Kosovo Serbs that positively impacted the perception of KFOR forces and made the accomplishment of the assigned tasks much easier too. PKW KFOR was tasked to monitor honouring of the international agreements and treaties in order to create conditions for safe existence and normalization of the situation in its area of responsibility. PKW efforts were focused on countering the organized crime, smuggling and corruption and to support local authorities and law enforcement agencies in their attempts of maintaining peace and securing. Just to illustrate the level of commitment on the part of the Polish Armed Forces in KFOR operation, PLW's 30th tour, which served in Kosovo in 2014, included 220 soldiers and civilians. In total, several thousand Polish soldiers have been part of this mission so far.

¹² Animism (Lat. *animus* – spirit, *anima* – soul) – according to some scholars the fundamental belief system, the essence of which is can be summarized in the common belief in the existence of immaterial souls, capable of independent existence which give life to all the elements of the universe and nature, including the human being.

¹³ The peacekeeping mission was initiated by the soldiers and civilians working for the 6th Airborne Brigade, 18th Air Assault Battalion in Bielsko-Biala.

¹⁴ Acronym for Kosovo Force – an international NATO force stationed in the area of Kosovo, as part of a peacekeeping operation.

The political situation in Kosovo, and particularly its presence on an international stage, is somewhat complicated. The conflicts which have erupted in the area of former Republic of Yugoslavia were clearly ethnically and nationalistically-motivated. Parallel to the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, serious incidents took place in Kosovo, although the conflicts between the Serbs and the Albanians had emerged a long time ago. At the end of the 1990s, the conflict escalated even further. On the day when Kosovo declared its independence¹⁵, the Serbian authorities condemned this act, as being contrary to the international law. However, UN General Assembly motioned that the International Court of Justice on July 22nd, 2010, deemed the Kosovo declaration of independence from 2008 without prejudice to the rules and regulations of the international law. However, up to this day, not all the countries have recognized Kosovo's independence¹⁶.

Kosovo's population equals about 2 million, of which the Albanians form 90%, the Serbs and the Gorani – 7%, the Bosnians, the Turks, and the Romani – each about 1%. Islam is the dominating religion. It is practiced by the Albanians, the Bosnians, the Gorani and the Turks. Serbs are followers of Orthodox Church, and about 3% of Albanians are Catholics. Kosovo witnessed acts of desecration of religious symbols (such as in March 2004) during the attacks on Christian temples. As the result of these acts of aggression, a number of Orthodox churches of great historic value have been destroyed and several thousand Christians have been either banished or murdered. The religious structure as of 2010 looked as follows: Islam - 87%, Christianity – 11.4% (Orthodox Christianity –6.9%, Catholicism – 2.3%), atheists – 1.6%¹⁷. The difficult situation in the country is all the more complicated due to highest in Europe unemployment rate (45%), no political stability and the pervasive corruption which paralyses the economic development and causes foreign investors avoid this country like a plague [8]. Conflicts on grounds of nationality and religious differences, as well as the unclear political situation on international stage and economic predicaments to boot – all contribute to the fact that fulfilling the mandated tasks by the Polish soldiers in that region is not easy. 30th tour of PKW Kosovo just shows that this is one of the longest military missions.

Comparing the information gathered regarding the characteristics of the foreign environments, in which operations with the participation of the Polish soldiers have been carried out or are still carried out, it can be stated that not only are these areas different, as far as the religion and culture are concerned, but they bring with them additional obstacles for carrying out the tasks in the form of climatic conditions and, in many cases, various ethnicities. What follows is that on one hand such situation imposes the necessity of a body of knowledge regarding the proper rules of conduct, the culture and the customs of the local population. On the other hand what is key is the

¹⁵ Kosovo's independence was declared on February 17th, 2008.

¹⁶ Among other, such countries as: the Russian Federation, Mexico and Argentina have not recognized the independence of Kosovo.

¹⁷ Acc. to *Pew Research Center*: <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-percentages/>.

awareness of certain limitations, as far as the nationalities themselves and mandates relative to the operations are concerned (Table 2).

Table 2. Characteristic of the regions where PKW operations were conducted

Region	Religion	Ethnicities	Climatic conditions	Culture
Afghanistan	Islam	very diverse	difficult	very different
Iraq	Islam	very diverse	difficult	very different
Chad	Islam, Christianity	very diverse	very difficult	different
Kosovo	Islam, Christianity	diverse	moderate	slightly different

Source: Own work

CONCLUSIONS

The changes in the system of global security and the protean nature of modern conflicts forced the evolution of the approach towards methods of maintaining the world order. The divisions in the today's world grow more and more apparent. Technological progress and the expansion of the global market lead to rapid increase of the demand for food, water and energy raw materials and cause the new grounds for possible conflicts. The situation is even more complicated by the fact that many region of the word are unstable – there exist many points of potential outbreaks¹⁸ and weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems¹⁹ are being proliferated. This is accompanied by the steady erosion of preventative measures. What results from the projections is that in the upcoming decades the scale of transnational²⁰ and asymmetric threats of global and transboundary character and disconnected from a specific perpetrator country or a specific territory, such as terrorism or cybercrime, will widen.

It is in this context that an extremely vital issue question seems to be finding balance and respecting cultural-, ethnic- and religious difference of each and every human being in the world. The awareness of coexistence and dialog between cultures should guide all parties and all religions, which would make the world a more safe and diverse place.

For the above reasons, the matters of cultural and religious diversity in the theatre of operations should be, to a large degree, the focal point of the preparation of the Polish soldiers and other participants of the operations abroad. Insufficient education on these issues, or treatment of the usages and customs of the local population without due respect will cause major difficulties in reaching the military and political objectives

¹⁸ In particular, the destabilized Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, eastern Ukraine and northern and central Africa.

¹⁹ Development projects on weapons of mass destruction carried out in North Korea.

²⁰ Uncontrolled escalation of the immigration crisis in Europe and international organised crime.

of the given mission. This is particularly essential in the context of the situation when the prevailing majority of expeditionary operations was and is being conducted in the regions, where the population follows different religions and it is steeped in a different culture.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Bartosz SYLWESTRZAK, Ph.D. - graduate of the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław (1998), University of Wrocław (2001) and National Defence Academy, where in 2015 he received his doctorate at the faculty of Management and Command. He held a command post at the Military Academy of Land Forces and a staff post at the Command of the 2nd Mechanised Corps in Cracow. Author of a number of publications on teaching, military history and international peacekeeping- and stabilization operations.

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