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**Impact of Allied Military Presence in Poland
on Local Communities**

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List of Key Abbreviations Used in the Text

- ABCT – Armored Brigade Combat Team
- AMB(s) – Anti-Base Movement(s)
- EDA – Exploratory Data Analysis
- eFP – Enhanced Forward Presence
- FMB(s) – Foreign Military Base(s)
- FMP – Foreign Military Presence
- FOS – Forward Operating Site
- NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- NFP – Narrative Framework Policy
- NIMBY – Not In My Backyard
- NSF – Naval Support Facility
- RP – Republic of Poland (*Rzeczpospolita Polska*)
- SOFA – Status of Forces Agreement
- YIMBY – Yes In My Backyard

1. Introduction

This doctoral dissertation is devoted to analyzing the impact of allied military presence on local communities in Poland. The work provides a synthetic summary of over four years of research presented in three individual scientific publications and one co-authored academic paper.

In the introductory section, I discuss the reasons why examining the effects of foreign military forces in Poland is significant, formulate the research questions, and present the data sources and research methods applied. The following section outlines the current state of research, as well as the conceptual and methodological frameworks used in studies concerning foreign military presence, highlighting the main academic achievements in this field.

Subsequently, I present the results of the empirical research, including the scientific articles that constitute the core of this dissertation, accompanied by a synthesis and summary of the most important findings. The final chapter contains the conclusions, where I relate the obtained results to the current state of research and analyze the answers to the research questions posed.

In the analysis, I distinguish between issues related to the physical object in space (*foreign military base* – FMB) and those concerning the activities of the military personnel stationed within it (*foreign military presence* – FMP).

1.1. Why Poland and Allied Forces

War correspondent Elizabeth Becker, describing the actions of American troops during the Vietnam War, observed that “maps form the skeleton of the story of war.” In turn, the famous Clausewitzian maxim asserts that “war is the continuation of politics by other means.” A synthesis of these two statements suggests that geography should be among the academic disciplines particularly concerned with the study of military phenomena. Its task ought to be the development of a narrative framework for understanding spatial transformations and interrelations resulting from military activities – a task that, in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, is of particular importance for advancing scientific knowledge in Poland. This constitutes one of the main motivations behind the research undertaken in this doctoral dissertation.

Research on FMP in Poland holds both theoretical and practical significance. On one hand, it fills an identified research gap and contributes to the development of academic knowledge.

On the other, it serves as a source of information and a tool for developing strategies by local governments in areas affected by FMP. The research provides essential insights into the multidimensional impacts of this phenomenon – social, economic, environmental, and political – and identifies key factors shaping public attitudes toward foreign military presence. This dissertation fills a notable gap at the national level and can serve as a basis for comparative analyses with other regions hosting foreign forces.

Due to its historical experiences – such as the partitions, occupations, and membership in the Warsaw Pact – Poland has repeatedly served as a territory for the stationing of foreign troops in various capacities. This historical context underscores the social relevance of the present study. It enables an assessment of the scope and intensity of the impact of foreign military presence, as well as the public attitudes it generates – both negative (Not In My Backyard – NIMBY) and positive (Yes In My Backyard – YIMBY). The study also allows for an evaluation of civil–military cooperation between allied forces and local populations, identifying potential directions for development, opportunities, as well as possible limitations and risks.

The constant readiness of military units to carry out defensive operations requires the use of extensive areas with specific characteristics and local resources. Therefore, the analysis of local and regional conditions is particularly important, as it allows for the identification of sectors of the economy that benefit most and those that suffer the greatest losses from proximity to FMBs.

This research makes it possible to analyze economic impacts, such as effects on local labor markets and infrastructure development, while also identifying the environmental consequences of allied military activities. These impacts are not limited to the exploitation of isolated areas such as training grounds. The development of military infrastructure can influence spatial transformations, contributing to changes in the structure of urban and rural areas and the expansion of urbanized zones.

The conducted research is unique in character, as similar studies have rarely been carried out in countries that were once members of the Warsaw Pact, an alliance established in opposition to NATO. Moreover, existing studies seldom focus on foreign military bases operating in a rotational mode, as is the case for most FMBs in Poland. This rotation involves the periodic replacement of stationed units, typically every six to nine months. Rotational deployment is associated with the absence of permanent housing, the non-presence of soldiers' families,

and limited supporting infrastructure. Consequently, it may lead to increased demand for local services and resources – an aspect of particular importance when analyzing local impacts and community attitudes toward FMP.

This dissertation demonstrates that the presence of allied forces in Poland should be understood not only as a component of deterrence against potential international threats but also as a driver of socio-economic dynamics at the local level. It highlights the multidimensional significance of Poland's participation in political and military alliances and the country's broader role in the international arena. Furthermore, it raises questions about citizens' fundamental rights in the context of sovereignty and public participation in key security-related decisions.

Poland has become one of the many states hosting elements of the United States' vast global network of military installations. This means that the phenomena analyzed in this dissertation possess a global dimension, emphasizing their universality and applied potential. At the same time, this research establishes narrative and analytical frameworks for the study of military geography and the functioning of FMBs in Poland.

1.2. Aim and Scope of the Study

The primary aim of this research was to determine the impact of allied military presence in Poland on local communities and to identify public attitudes toward foreign military bases. The research was conducted between October 2020 and February 2025 and focused on the contemporary presence of foreign troops in Poland.

The spatial scope of the study covered the entire territory of Poland, with particular emphasis on four selected locations that differ in their geographical, social, economic, and historical conditions. The research included both an analysis of individual areas and comparative assessments between locations, as well as a synthetic approach highlighting the broad range of FMB impacts and the factors influencing them.

The thematic scope centered primarily on social aspects, particularly public attitudes toward FMP, but also encompassed economic and environmental dimensions.

This dissertation addresses three key research questions (RQs):

[RQ1] What are the attitudes of local communities toward foreign soldiers?

This question aims to assess the level of social engagement and to analyze the positive and negative aspects of civil–military cooperation at both local and national levels. The analysis considers factors shaping public attitudes, drawing upon studies in spatial behavior and the geography of perception (Domański, 1989; Montello, 2018).

[RQ2] What are the economic, social, and environmental effects of allied military presence at the local level?

This question focuses on analyzing the influence of allied military presence on local economies, societies, and natural environments. The goal is to identify the aspects of socio-economic and environmental life in which the impact of FMP is most strongly perceived by local communities – both in positive and negative terms.

[RQ3] How does the spatial context influence social attitudes toward foreign troops and military infrastructure?

This question explores the role of spatial context in shaping public attitudes toward FMP as a phenomenon and toward FMBs as physical entities in space. The analysis identifies spatial determinants that affect the range and intensity of military base impacts. This dissertation consists of a series of four scientific publications, three of which were authored independently and one co-authored. They have been published in international academic journals or as chapters in scholarly monographs.

The first publication, *NIMBY or YIMBY? Understanding the Complex Relationships Between Foreign Military Bases and Host Societies*, provides a comprehensive literature review of the effects of FMP, its forms, dynamics, and related social attitudes.

The second publication, *Foreign Military Bases and the Sovereignty of Local Communities: The Case of Poland*, presents a complex picture of local attitudes toward FMP in Poland, a NATO member state. Based on the concept of sovereignty, it reports findings from pilot interviews and also addresses the historical context of foreign troop stationing in Poland.

The third publication, *At the Edge of War: Frontline Ally Support for the United States Military*, examines nationwide attitudes toward the U.S. military presence in Poland. The study focuses

on factors shaping these attitudes, including geographical proximity, economic benefits, personal interactions, and perceptions of external threats.

The final publication, *From Allies to Neighbors: Unraveling the Impact of Foreign Military Presence on Local Societies in Poland*, presents qualitative and quantitative research results conducted in four selected localities. It also introduces an original conceptual framework for understanding relationships between allied forces and local communities.

The dissertation concludes with a summary chapter, which synthesizes the main findings and highlights the most significant research implications.

1.3. Data Sources, Methods, and Research Techniques

Previous analyses concerning the impact of FMBs and public attitudes toward their activities have been conducted primarily at supra-regional or national scales. Due to the lack of detailed, locally focused studies, this research undertook the task of creating a database and knowledge base on foreign military units stationed in Poland. As a result, the study assumes an exploratory character, opening new research avenues for future scientific inquiry.

At the outset, I conducted a review of the academic literature to identify existing research trends and approaches, which enabled me to define the research gap. Additionally, I carried out an analysis of national and international documents regulating the stationing of allied forces in Poland, as well as a review of online content and social media sources, to supplement the data and information base. I analyzed data related to fourteen areas of allied troop deployment, officially listed in government communications (www.gov.pl/obrona-narodowa- as of 2021).

To assess the scale of the phenomenon, I reviewed data from the Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland (GUS) covering the years 2013–2022, focusing on social, economic, and environmental indicators. The analysis did not reveal statistically significant changes in municipalities hosting bases or in adjacent municipalities, either over time or compared with control areas, which influenced the choice of subsequent research methods.

The adopted research strategy allowed for the relatively rapid collection of information on a poorly explored issue, enabling the design of further research steps and the preparation of appropriate research tools, including a pilot interview framework. The identified dimensions of foreign military impact and the diversity of social attitudes necessitated distinguishing key

research domains, allowing for the most comprehensive possible characterization of FMB functioning in Poland. The study focused primarily on social, economic, and environmental aspects, while giving lesser attention to political, historical, and international contexts.

A key stage of the research was the pilot study conducted in 2021, which helped to define the scope and scale of the phenomenon under investigation. This phase employed field observation, photographic documentation, and preliminary interviews. The pilot study was conducted in seven locations (official FMB designations in parentheses):

- Bemowo Piskie – Orzysz, Warmian–Masurian Voivodeship (Enhanced Forward Presence [eFP] Battlegroup)
- Powidz, Greater Poland Voivodeship (Forward Operating Site [FOS])
- Redzikowo (Słupsk), Pomeranian Voivodeship (Naval Support Facility [NSF])
- Bolesławiec, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (Armored Brigade Combat Team [ABCT] Element)
- Żagań, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (Armored Brigade Combat Team [ABCT] Element)
- Łask, Łódź Voivodeship (52nd Operations Group Detachment 1)
- Mirosławiec, West Pomeranian Voivodeship (52nd Operations Group Detachment 2)

Insights from the pilot research enabled the design of detailed quantitative studies. Between February and March 2023, a nationwide survey was conducted to analyze public attitudes toward the U.S. military presence in Poland, depending on various narratives and scenarios presented to respondents. To verify five research hypotheses, a survey experiment was conducted to examine how information about external security threats and potential economic benefits resulting from new U.S. troop deployments in Poland influenced respondents' declared attitudes toward the presence and placement of American military bases.

At the beginning of the study, respondents provided demographic data and were then randomly assigned to one of four groups: a control group, which received only general information about U.S. troops in Poland, or one of three experimental groups, each exposed to a specific narrative:

- a) security threat from the Russian Federation,
- b) potential economic benefits from FMP,
- c) a combination of both narratives.

The results were analyzed using statistical models, which allowed for the confirmation or falsification of the hypotheses and determination of how public attitudes were shaped toward the idea of a new hypothetical U.S. military base in Poland. A detailed description of this experiment is provided in Publication 3.

Based on pilot findings and collected data, four final study locations were selected for in-depth qualitative and quantitative research:

- Bemowo Piskie – Orzysz, Warmian–Masurian Voivodeship (Enhanced Forward Presence [eFP] Battlegroup)
- Powidz, Greater Poland Voivodeship (Forward Operating Site [FOS])
- Redzikowo, Pomeranian Voivodeship (Naval Support Facility [NSF])
- Żagań, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (Armored Brigade Combat Team [ABCT] Element)

The selection criteria included research safety, data accessibility, respondent availability, and the feasibility of extensive fieldwork. These areas provided a diverse and representative perspective in both internal dimensions (e.g., the size and type of military units) and external contexts (e.g., municipal characteristics, physiographic conditions, distance from regional centers, and spatial relationships between the FMB and the local community).

Quantitative field studies were conducted between September and December 2023, using both paper-based and electronic surveys, ensuring broad respondent participation. The qualitative research included in-depth individual interviews, field observations, and photographic documentation. To allow for comparative analysis between sites, consistent methodological tools were applied.

Despite the increasing number of foreign soldiers and new stationing sites following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, I decided to retain the original study areas, enabling the analysis of changes in public attitudes over time by comparing pre- and post-escalation data. Between 2022 and 2024, I continued field observations in the four selected areas and conducted additional in-depth interviews, while updating the FMP database to include information on new sites – an effort that may serve as a foundation for future research.

This approach proved especially beneficial given the numerous challenges encountered in fieldwork. For instance, local authorities in one municipality confiscated survey materials,

and in several others, reluctance or concern about participation stemmed from the sensitive nature of the topic, which touched on national and international security, classified information, and the potential risk of foreign intelligence activities. Despite these difficulties, valuable results were obtained. The use of mixed methods, based on methodological triangulation, enabled the integration of inductive and deductive approaches. Detailed descriptions of the methodologies employed are presented in the individual articles comprising this dissertation.

It is worth noting that, in parallel with this research, I established a collaboration with the University of Prishtina (Kosovo), resulting in work on an academic article related to – but not included in – the present dissertation. The paper examines perceptions of international peacekeeping forces in a post-conflict region, including units of the Polish Armed Forces. This collaboration has enriched the comparative and theoretical perspectives on FMP functioning in other national contexts.

2. State of art - Foreign Military Presence

Identifying the precise beginnings of research on FMBs presents a challenge, as any analysis concerning the activities of armed forces beyond their home territory may be considered part of this field. Thus, one might include studies of Alexander the Great's military encampments, the deployment of Roman garrisons, medieval crusades, the Age of Discovery, and the territorial expansions of the United States, Great Britain, France, and other twentieth-century powers. However, systematic and interdisciplinary research on FMBs began to develop only in the second half of the twentieth century, in connection with the Cold War, decolonization processes, and the global military presence of superpowers. During this period, scholars initiated analyses of international FMB networks from political, social, and economic perspectives.

Early studies referring to FMBs focused mainly on their political determinants. Huntington (1957) introduced the concept of "objective control", arguing that as military institutions modernize and professionalize, they become increasingly subordinate to civilian authority, resulting in political neutrality. In the following decade, Finer (1962) emphasized that armed forces refrain from political interference as long as they recognize the primacy of civilian power. Welch (1985) was among the first to study the social impacts of military bases, analyzing interactions and consequences arising from their operation within civil–military relations. These early studies encompassed issues from psychology, sociology, economics,

history, and notably, geography. They assumed that differences in values, attitudes, and organizational structures exist between local communities and civilian and military institutions.

The specific nature of FMBs positions them within the broader category of noxious facilities, whose spatial and social effects have been examined in behavioral geography. This research area grew substantially in the 1980s, exploring various facilities such as mental health institutions (Smith & Hanham, 1981). Although FMBs were not initially central to this discourse, their inclusion increased over time, and research on their impacts continues today.

The year 1989, often viewed as a turning point in world history, marked the emergence of new approaches to studying the military and its societal effects. Geyer (1989, p. 79) defined militarization as a “contradictory and tense social process in which society organizes itself for the production of violence.” From the 1990s onward, studies on FMBs became increasingly interdisciplinary, addressing social, economic, environmental, and legal implications of foreign military deployments.

After 1989, the complexity of defining FMP became apparent. Its interpretation varies across time and space, and its influence – dynamic, multifaceted, and often uneven – extends to numerous areas of social life. One persistent challenge has been the terminological ambiguity in defining foreign forces stationed abroad. In the international literature, FMBs are referred to as “military installations,” “military presence,” or “military facilities”, which complicates comparative analyses of their impacts on host communities.

In recent years, research on the effects of FMBs has focused on their multidimensional impacts, particularly within three domains: social, economic, and environmental.

In the social domain, FMBs have been portrayed as factors that disrupt social structures, intensify tensions (Enloe, 2014), and marginalize local cultures and communities. The lack of social dialogue regarding cultural, economic, and societal aspects – such as security, integration, ethics, aesthetics, solidarity, and quality of life – remains a key concern (Horlings, 2015). Social attitudes and acceptance levels toward FMP are described as being spatially conditioned (Allen et al., 2022; Hikotani, Horiuchi & Tago, 2023). Geographic proximity may generate negative reactions and public opposition (Horiuchi & Tago, 2023; Kim, 2023). Drawing on Allport’s (1954) contact theory, Allen et al. (2020, 2022) demonstrate that the

degree of interaction with foreign military personnel also shapes perceptions of FMP.

The economic impact of FMBs is portrayed both positively – as a stimulus for local economies (Lutz, 2015) – and negatively, as a potential source of economic instability (Berry, 1990). Long-term economic effects have been widely discussed in studies concerning South Korea (Moon, 1997; Martin, 2018).

Regarding the environmental dimension, scholars note that FMBs can cause ecosystem degradation and environmental pollution (Havlick, 2016). After 1989, literature increasingly emphasized militarization (Bernazzoli & Flint, 2009), understood as the penetration of military symbols, behaviors, and values into everyday life (Eichler, 2011; Sjoberg, 2010; Hohn & Moon, 2010). This is reflected in the concept of military landscapes (Rech et al., 2015), which suggests that FMBs can simultaneously generate benefits and adverse consequences for local communities. In this context, the NIMBY phenomenon (Dear, 1992) provides a useful framework for analyzing social resistance to FMB construction (Hikotani, Horiuchi & Tago, 2023).

An additional consequence of militarization related to FMBs includes permanent land-use changes and the emergence of new spatial forms (Gillem, 2005; Jones, 2022). The infrastructure associated with FMP also creates a unique relationship between architecture, urbanism, and the global security complex (Kripa & Mueller, 2019).

FMBs are also crucial elements of international politics, raising questions about host-state sovereignty. They typically operate under lease agreements, which regulate the use of land by the sending state's armed forces while requiring the host nation to temporarily limit its sovereignty, particularly in matters of jurisdiction (Strauss, 2021). On local and national levels, anti-base movements (ABMs) often emerge, highlighting the negative consequences of FMB presence – such as environmental degradation, social conflicts, violence, and economic stagnation (Allen et al., 2022; Hikotani, Horiuchi & Tago, 2023; Kim, 2023; Vine, 2019).

Studies on FMBs have also incorporated policy, gender, legal, international relations, security, and domestic politics perspectives, as discussed in detail in the first publication of this dissertation. The most recent research explores shifts in narratives and rhetoric within ABMs following geopolitical transformations after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (Willis, 2019; Kim, 2023). Despite numerous studies – especially on social interactions

and economic impacts – scholars (e.g., Allen et al., 2022; Hikotani, Horiuchi & Tago, 2023) note a persistent research gap concerning the influence of FMBs on public attitudes.

Categorizing the literature by location is problematic, as many studies encompass multiple countries or dependent territories. Most research focuses on the global U.S. base network, particularly in Europe and Asia, though attention has also been given to Sub-Saharan Africa (Dahir, 2019; Ezeh & Ezirim, 2023) and Central America (Lindsay–Poland, 2009). Studies have likewise addressed the bases of other powers, such as Russia (Rogozińska & Olech, 2020; Gorenburg, 2020), China (Cabestan, 2021; Kardon, 2022), France (Sun & Zoubir, 2011), the United Kingdom (Stergiou, 2015), and Turkey (Quamar, 2017). However, research focusing on the former Warsaw Pact countries, including Poland, remains scarce.

A notable contribution addressing FMB impacts in Poland is the collective work on Powidz municipality’s development strategy, edited by Kołsut (2018). The authors analyze local community attitudes toward FMP and outline development opportunities considering the military presence (Churski et al., 2018). Findings reveal that FMBs can serve as both drivers of development and sources of local tension. Residents and municipal authorities recognized positive effects on employment, infrastructure, international visibility, and external relations, while expressing concerns over the potential takeover of Polish units by U.S. forces, labor market disruption, and security incidents involving American soldiers. Interviews with U.S. personnel further enriched the study, indicating both satisfaction with deployment locations and frustration over limited access to goods and services meeting their needs.

Other Polish studies have primarily focused on the socio-economic effects of domestic military units (Sirko, Kozubal & Piotrowska–Trybull, 2019) and civil–military relations at the municipal level (Sirko, 2013). Research on NATO installations has concentrated mainly on the U.S. missile defense site in Redzikowo, with Materka (2012) and Lipińska (2021) highlighting public concerns over the remilitarization of the region, noting that the missile defense system was established on the site of a former military airfield. Additional theoretical contributions include studies on the proposed “Fort Trump” base (Jureńczyk, 2021) and media narratives surrounding the arrival of U.S. troops in 2017 (Bartoszewicz, 2020). Earlier publications also examined the legal status of foreign forces in Poland, primarily in the context of Poland’s early NATO membership (Zwierzyńska, 2000), when allied troops had not yet been stationed in the country.

The existing academic literature indicates that FMBs often operate as extraterritorial spaces, a phenomenon of particular importance to this dissertation and to the disciplinary framework within which it is situated. Despite numerous multidimensional and sophisticated analyses, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies incorporating the perspective of socio-economic geography and regional studies – a gap that continues to limit a full understanding of the local and regional impacts of Foreign Military Presence.

3. Results

3.1. NIMBY or YIMBY? Understanding the Complex Relationships Between Foreign Military Bases and Host Societies

Smulek, G. (2024). NIMBY or YIMBY? Understanding the Complex Relationships Between Foreign Military Bases and Host Societies. Moravian Geographical Reports, 32(1), 2–13.

The first article is a review study focusing on the theoretical frameworks, approaches, and scientific concepts present in the literature concerning the effects of FMP. It provides an overview of prior research on public attitudes toward FMBs and discusses factors that reveal the unique character of FMBs as spatial entities.

The study analyzed open-access scientific publications released since 1990 that directly address FMP-related topics. Using the scoping review method, 67 studies were selected and examined through the lens of the Narrative Framework Policy (NFP) model.

In the first section of the article, I present key theoretical foundations for analyzing the selected literature, including Devine-Wright's (2007) theory of influence, the four models of civil–military relations proposed by Pion-Berlin and Dudley (2020), and the concept of NIMBY (Dear, 1992). The reviewed works indicate that FMBs exert a broad range of impacts – social, economic, and environmental. A particularly significant factor influencing the dynamics and scope of these effects is the intensity of FMB operations, which shapes the militarization process of surrounding areas.

The second section of the article analyzes the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of FMP impacts, illustrating the complex and multifaceted nature of relations between FMBs and local communities – representing both opportunities and threats.

In the social sphere, effects are considered across multiple spatial scales – from global

to regional. At the international level, authors note that FMBs often operate on the principle of extraterritoriality, leading host countries to partially or entirely lose control over parts of their territory. As a result, local communities, which bear the greatest consequences of FMB presence, have little influence over decisions made at the central government level (Roznitti, 2008). This can generate political tensions and opposition, as FMBs are perceived not only as noxious facilities but also as instruments of external influence or dominance (Simon, 2008).

FMP can trigger population influx, altering social structures and creating cultural or ethnic tensions, nationalist sentiment, or even anti-state attitudes (Rassbach, 2010). In extreme cases, these dynamics have been linked to human trafficking or sexual violence (Yeo, 2006).

Most studies addressing social unrest classify these phenomena under anti-base movements (ABMs). These movements are typically shaped by narratives of violence, local marginalization, environmental degradation, and anti-war or anti-militarist sentiments. Although ABMs appear across multiple scales, attempts to internationalize them and unite protest groups worldwide have failed to overcome local contextual differences, revealing the heterogeneity of such movements and the difficulty of developing a unified strategy. In some isolated cases, public pressure has led to the limitation or modification of military activities, and rarely, to the closure of bases (Vine, 2019).

From an economic perspective, the reviewed literature shows that FMBs can serve as catalysts for local economies, leading to:

- a) the development of services and infrastructure (Alexander, 2016);
- b) increased revenues for local businesses (Allen et al., 2020);
- c) the enhancement of regional attractiveness (Simon, 2008).

However, negative outcomes are also observed, such as:

- a) economic dependency or collapse following overreliance on military institutions (Sharp, 1990);
- b) weakening of local entrepreneurship (Alexander, 2013);
- c) rising property prices and gentrification (Davis, 2007).

At a broader level, such effects may increase public expenditure due to base maintenance or financial compensation required for local governments (Lostumbo et al., 2013). Some

communities have adapted to FMP by establishing special economic zones (Moore et al., 2014). Following base closures, localities faced new challenges, though freed land often underwent conversion for business or tourism purposes (Andersson et al., 2007). Yet, abandoned sites are frequently environmentally degraded and require substantial rehabilitation investments (Davis, 2007).

The environmental effects of FMP are most often illustrated through examples of ecosystem degradation, such as deforestation (Colgan, 2018). Military operations involving heavy equipment and hazardous emissions may lead to soil, water, and air contamination (Davis, 2007; Wright, 2015). The scale of impact depends on the type of stationed forces – for instance, air bases generate noise pollution, vibrations, and harmful effects on fauna (Lutz, 2015). In conflict zones, toxic substances such as uranium or thorium have been linked to health anomalies in children living near FMBs (Savabieasfahani et al., 2019).

The article's next section provides a synthetic overview of the reviewed literature, highlighting major theoretical frameworks, geographic coverage, and categories of FMB impacts. The results reveal a dominance of social and geopolitical perspectives, with key narratives revolving around ABMs, base policy, and international relations. In recent years, however, there has been growing attention to economic and environmental dimensions. Geographically, most studies focus on Europe and Southeast Asia, followed by research with global coverage.

The analysis also demonstrates that FMP as a phenomenon and FMB as a spatial entity are defined in diverse ways. Three main conceptual categories were identified:

- a) location- or object-based definitions;
- b) non-spatial definitions;
- c) function- or characteristic-based definitions, with the first category being most prevalent.

In the final part of the article, I identify factors that underscore the unique character of FMBs when analyzed through the NIMBY framework and spatial militarization processes. Among the 67 reviewed studies, only nine mention the NIMBY phenomenon and just one refers to YIMBY (Williams, 2013). These works largely concern Asian contexts or, in Vine's (2019) case, a global analysis.

Although the existing literature spans a wide interdisciplinary range, there remains a lack

of research explicitly addressing spatial contexts. I note that FMBs often attract social groups with specific hierarchical structures, potentially creating social tension and fragmentation. In the discussion and conclusions, I distinguish six dimensions that, in my view, have been insufficiently explored in FMB-related research:

Internal social dimension – the introduction of culturally diverse (especially American) social groups with differing norms and practices that may conflict with, or transform, local cultural patterns. The non-democratic, hierarchical structure inherent to military institutions also affects local interactions.

External social dimension – the degree of acceptance and civil–military integration depends on local social and cultural characteristics, including historical conditions, education level (especially foreign language proficiency), access to cultural life, and local governance policies. More conservative or peripheral communities may exhibit stronger opposition to FMBs.

Horizontal spatial dimension – the spatial influence of FMBs extends beyond adjacent areas, reaching regional and supraregional levels, while bases functioning as semi-closed enclaves may generate alienation and isolation.

Vertical spatial dimension – the FMB environment represents an intersection between global (e.g., international military alliances) and local scales, producing hybrid spaces that combine local and international characteristics.

Military dimension – public attitudes toward FMP depend on the type of stationed units, operational scope, and leadership style of commanding officers, which shape the nature of military–civil interactions.

Temporal dimension – particularly relevant in the Polish context, it distinguishes between permanent and rotational bases, emphasizing the lack of prior analyses in this area and the importance of short- and long-term factors shaping FMB impacts.

The analyses presented in this article demonstrate that FMBs may be perceived both positively (YIMBY) and negatively (NIMBY), and that their perception evolves over time and space. The study underscores the underutilization of geographical approaches in existing scholarship, highlighting a significant research gap in understanding the spatial dimensions of foreign military presence.

3.2. Foreign military bases and the sovereignty of local communities: the case of Poland

Smulek, G. (2023). Foreign military bases and the sovereignty of local communities: the case of Poland. In War, State and Sovereignty: Interdisciplinary Challenges and Perspectives for the Social Sciences (pp. 231–250). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.

The second publication included in this doctoral dissertation is devoted to the analysis of pilot studies involving preliminary interviews and field observations. These studies were conducted during the first and second series of field research trips in 2021 and 2022. To better understand the mechanisms of how FMBs function and the social dilemmas associated with them, I grounded the research in the concept of sovereignty. In the first part of the article, I refer to various schools of thought describing sovereignty (including Westphalian, legal, international, internal, and interdependent sovereignty), emphasizing that the operation of FMBs is a complex and extraterritorial phenomenon. The following section of the article focuses on the importance of analyzing FMBs in Poland and, more broadly, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which were once part of the Warsaw Pact. It highlights the historical context and processes that have taken place over the years – from the stationing of Soviet troops until 1993, through Poland's accession to NATO, to the decision to establish multinational military contingents. Presenting the research methodology – forty semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in six locations in Poland among local community leaders – I focused on the impact of FMP on the everyday lives of residents. Additionally, I analyzed the existing and potential challenges, opportunities, and threats arising from the functioning of FMBs.

The main part of the publication presents the results of the research. At the outset, I presented public opinions, attitudes, and the main areas of impact identified by local leaders. I distinguished two fundamental issues concerning living in proximity to FMBs: first, the lack of sufficient support from central authorities (especially in the initial stages and before the bases began operating), and second, the change in social attitudes caused by the invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation in February 2022. This event, on the one hand, led to greater overall acceptance of the stationed troops, while on the other hand, it increased fears of becoming a target in the event of an armed conflict. At the same time, I observed that, unlike the anti-base movements (ABMs) described in the literature, the form and scale of social opposition in Poland were limited and appeared mainly in the Redzikowo area concerning the so-called missile defense shield.

The second part of the results presents the negative effects of FMP on the surrounding environment. Respondents primarily pointed to the lack of involvement and support of local communities in decisions related to the establishment of FMBs in their area. In most cases, no public consultations were conducted, and the responses of central government authorities to the initiatives of local governments were marginal or even dismissive. Infrastructure and transportation issues also proved significant – road and infrastructure damage, differences in driving culture, and frequent traffic accidents involving U.S. soldiers. Additionally, respondents drew attention to increased noise levels, exhaust emissions, and other forms of environmental degradation. In the social sphere, negative phenomena such as personal incidents (including those related to alcohol use), rising living costs, and inconveniences such as noise and vibrations caused by heavy military equipment were noted. Respondents also indicated difficulties in building relationships and cooperation due to the rotational nature of foreign troops. In the economic sphere, they pointed to the marginalization of local businesses in opportunities to cooperate with allied forces.

Despite the negative effects of FMB operations mentioned above, the research revealed a number of positive aspects. These include improved security – both in the context of the war in Ukraine and through the involvement of foreign soldiers in crisis management and humanitarian operations. Respondents noted a positive impact on education and culture, including a higher level of English language instruction and greater opportunities to organize joint initiatives. A change in social attitudes toward base personnel was also observed, including a decline in racist behavior and prejudice toward individuals from other cultural groups, increased social openness, and a greater willingness to interact. Local leaders also emphasized the participation of foreign soldiers in local events, often of an intercultural nature.

The next section of the article focuses on comparing the current attitudes of respondents with the social expectations that had emerged before the bases became operational. In the initial stage of hosting allied troops, residents expected benefits stemming from economic development; however, in the longer term – partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic – they experienced disappointment. The reasons indicated included the lack of expected investments and the absence of an increase in employment opportunities. Respondents highlighted a growing sense of alienation and marginalization, which may also have resulted from the lack of an appropriate strategy tailored to these areas and the absence of dialogue with representatives of national authorities. Some respondents who remembered the period of Soviet

troop stationing drew comparisons, pointing out what they perceived as better conditions of cooperation with soldiers of the Soviet Army, who had previously been stationed in the same area. Narratives also emerged suggesting that foreign forces perceive Polish territory primarily as a strategic military space rather than as the territory of an equal partner within an alliance.

At the end of the article, I summarized the obtained results, indicating the wide range of effects stemming from the functioning of FMBs on local communities. I emphasized the significant problem of a communication deficit, the lack of a clear civil–military cooperation strategy, and the insufficient engagement of state institutions in this process. I pointed out that the impact of FMBs and the nature of relations between residents and military personnel differ depending on location. Among the identified factors were differences in the activities and involvement of local institutions and authorities, the characteristics of the stationed military unit, the attitudes of foreign soldiers, and the leadership styles within rotational units. Referring to the theoretical concepts discussed earlier, I argued that the studied communities may find themselves in a “sovereignty trap” between the local and national scales (Agnew, 1994). To some extent, they are deprived of sovereignty in favor of higher objectives, such as national defense and the maintenance of international alliances. Recalling the ongoing events in Ukraine, I emphasized the importance of local and regional research in building civil–military relations. I observed that, in the era of globalization, sovereignty at the local level is just as important as national sovereignty.

3.3. At the Edge of War: Frontline Ally Support for the United States Military

Allen, M., Flynn, M., Martínez Machain, C., & Smulek, G. (2025). At the Edge of War: Frontline Ally Support for the United States Military. International Interactions, 1–30.

The next publication included in this doctoral dissertation concerns public attitudes toward the presence of U.S. military forces in Poland from a nationwide perspective. The study was prepared in collaboration with experts from American universities, which made it possible to broaden the scope of analysis by incorporating the perspective of researchers from the country whose troops are stationed in Poland. This collaboration also allowed for the implementation of research on a larger scale while simultaneously making use of experience gained from previous local-level studies. The first part of this publication presents the international context by discussing the global network of U.S. military bases under conditions of increasing geopolitical rivalry with China and Russia. It then justifies the choice

of Poland as the area of study. First, Poland serves as an example of a U.S. ally located on NATO's so-called "frontline," directly experiencing the consequences of the aggressive policies of one of the United States' rivals – Russia. Second, the influx of U.S. troops and military infrastructure into Poland represents the most significant expansion of U.S. military presence in allied countries in recent years. Third, the Polish case enables an analysis of the impact of armed conflict on regions situated near zones of military activity conducted by a U.S. rival. The publication formulated the following research questions regarding Poland:

1. What are the factors influencing support or opposition to the U.S. military presence?
2. How do local narratives and the geopolitical context affect decisions about the location of American military bases?
3. What are the social and economic consequences of the presence of U.S. troops?

The next section outlines the theoretical framework of the study, encompassing theories of perceived external threats and geographical proximity of FMBs, as well as the NIMBY concept. It also discusses issues related to security and economic development in the context of the U.S. military presence. The following part of the article presents the applied research methods aimed at verifying the proposed hypotheses. The analysis is based on an experimental survey designed to determine the impact of information concerning external threats and potential economic benefits resulting from the increased FMP in Poland on public attitudes toward U.S. troops and military infrastructure.

Five research hypotheses were examined, each assuming specific public attitudes in Poland depending on the narrative (stimulus) presented to respondents. The first hypothesis assumed that individuals exposed to the narrative concerning the threat posed by Russia would show a higher probability of supporting the establishment of new U.S. military bases in Poland compared to those who received no narrative. The second hypothesis assumed that individuals presented with a narrative emphasizing potential economic benefits stemming from the presence of U.S. troops would be more likely to declare support for a new U.S. military base than those who received no narrative, while their level of support would be lower than that of the group exposed to the Russian threat narrative. The third hypothesis posited that individuals exposed to both narratives – of Russian threats and economic benefits – would show the highest probability of supporting the new U.S. military presence in Poland. The fourth hypothesis predicted that among those presented with the Russian threat narrative,

support for the U.S. military presence would be higher if the proposed base were located farther from their place of residence. The fifth hypothesis assumed that among individuals exposed to the economic benefit narrative, support for the U.S. presence would be higher if the proposed base were located closer to their place of residence, as this would entail potential direct economic gains.

The survey was conducted online by the research company Qualtrics between February and March 2023. The sample included approximately 2,250 adult respondents (aged 18 and above) residing in Poland and was representative in terms of gender, age, and income levels. Qualtrics provided compensation to study participants. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, respondents answered sociodemographic questions, allowing the determination of their socioeconomic profile. In the second part, participants were randomly assigned (with equal probability, 25% each) to one of four groups: a control group or one of three experimental groups. This design allowed for comparison of responses and empirical testing of the proposed hypotheses.

The control group (no experimental stimulus) received only a neutral statement about the potential construction of a new U.S. military base in Poland, which would host several thousand soldiers along with heavy equipment (e.g., helicopters, tanks). The narrative was neutral, without highlighting either the potential benefits or negative consequences of such a base. In the experimental groups, this narrative was supplemented with additional information designed to influence respondents' attitudes. The first experimental group received information about Russia's aggression against Ukraine, emphasizing security threats. The second group received a narrative highlighting the potential local economic benefits associated with the presence of U.S. troops. The third group was exposed to both narratives – security threats and economic benefits.

After reviewing the respective narratives, respondents were asked to express their opinion on whether they would support the construction of a new U.S. military base located 100 km and 5 km from their place of residence. This experimental setup made it possible to evaluate how geographical proximity and different narratives affect public attitudes toward foreign military presence in Poland.

The article then discusses the modeling strategies applied in the analysis of results. A Bayesian multilevel multinomial logistic regression model was used, providing greater flexibility

in estimating hierarchical choice models and achieving better convergence compared to frequentist methods. This approach allows for more efficient estimation of obtained values and reduces the required sample size compared to simpler two-dimensional modeling strategies (Hernández, Steyerberg & Habbema 2004; Mutz, Pemantle & Pham 2019). Additionally, models incorporating demographic and ideological differences were tested. Spatial differences were analyzed at the county level, while sociodemographic variables were included as controls. The estimation strategy also incorporated predictor variables relevant to respondents' answers, including demographic, ideological, and spatial context factors.

The next part of the article, dedicated to the analysis of results, consists of three sections. The first evaluates the influence of experimental stimuli and informational narratives (scenarios used in experimental groups 1–3) on respondents' attitudes toward FMP, with a particular focus on support for constructing a new base. The second section examines the impact of geographical proximity on shaping attitudes toward the U.S. military presence. The third analyzes how respondents' personal contact with American military personnel affected their opinions on the U.S. presence.

The results indicate that overall support for the U.S. military presence in Poland is high – the median response “Support” was 77% when the base was 100 km away and 63% when it was 5 km away. The predicted probability of the response “Oppose” remained relatively low in both models, though slightly higher when the base was closer (5 km). Among all experimental groups, the median value of “Oppose” responses was 0.08 for the 100 km model and 0.18 for the 5 km model.

At the same time, ambiguous evidence was found that experimental variables influenced how respondents answered. Specifically, the results related to security narratives showed an effect opposite to that hypothesized. The Russian threat narrative did not increase support for a new military base but instead led to higher opposition levels. Introducing this narrative increased the likelihood of “Oppose” responses and decreased the likelihood of “Support.” However, these effects were small – the median posterior estimates were approximately ± 0.05 – 0.06 , corresponding to a 10–12 percentage-point shift toward greater opposition and reduced support. A similar pattern was observed for the security stimulus across both distances, while the combined stimulus (used in the third experimental group) exhibited greater uncertainty, particularly in results for the 5 km model.

The findings do not support hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. The economic benefit narrative did not increase support for constructing a new FMB, and the stimuli referencing security threats appeared to reduce such support. It is possible that the military threat narrative made respondents aware that, as residents of a frontline state, they might be more exposed to the consequences of armed conflict. Moreover, in Poland – a country already characterized by a high level of support for the U.S. military presence – a ceiling effect may be at play, meaning that further increases in support are limited regardless of the narrative used. This may result from the high saturation of security-related information in Poland, leading to stable responses unaffected by narrative framing.

Analyzing the results regarding the distance of the proposed new U.S. military base, all four experimental groups showed that respondents were less likely to support and more likely to oppose the base as the distance decreased from 100 km to 5 km. These results support Hypothesis 4 but not Hypothesis 5, aligning with earlier studies indicating strong NIMBY attitudes in areas hosting U.S. military bases (Hikotani, Horiuchi & Tago 2023). At the same time, the findings demonstrate that NIMBY attitudes do not necessarily imply general opposition to U.S. forces in the host country – they may occur even in contexts where overall support for the U.S. is high. This suggests that while respondents may hold favorable views of American troops, they are also aware of the potential negative externalities associated with their stationing nearby.

Findings related to interpersonal contact indicate that approximately 11% of respondents had contact with U.S. soldiers. Interaction types were pre-defined as response options in the survey, but participants could also describe their experiences in open-ended responses. Most free-text descriptions elaborated on previously defined categories. The most frequently reported interactions involved brief encounters in public spaces such as public transport, shops, bars, or restaurants. Incorporating the interpersonal contact variable into analytical models revealed that personal contact can modify some of the analyzed effects. For example, while the security stimulus reduced the predicted probability of “Support,” respondents who reported personal contact with U.S. soldiers exhibited the opposite effect. Although base proximity would be expected to trigger NIMBY responses, individuals who had interacted with U.S. soldiers were more likely to support the construction of a new FMB and less likely to oppose it – even if the base were to be located only 5 km from their residence.

The results confirm a general trend observed in the literature: the closer the proposed FMB,

the lower the probability of support and the higher the probability of opposition – consistent with previous studies comparing distances of 5 km and 100 km. However, accounting for interpersonal contact reverses this pattern, suggesting that direct interactions can mitigate NIMBY tendencies and increase acceptance of U.S. military presence in Poland. It is possible that results are partially influenced by self-selection, as some individuals may consciously and voluntarily engage with U.S. soldiers. Nonetheless, most reported interactions were incidental, arising from daily encounters in public spaces rather than deliberate efforts to meet military personnel.

The final section of the publication presents the discussion and conclusions, along with suggestions for future research. The analysis allowed for the formulation of four key findings that contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge. First, the study found higher support for the U.S. military presence in Poland compared to results from Allen et al. (2022) based on data from 2018–2020. This finding is particularly significant because it is rare to analyze public attitudes before and after an exogenous shock of the scale of a major power's invasion of a smaller neighboring state. The full-scale war in Ukraine, launched in February 2022, suggests that support for the U.S. military presence in Poland increased in the face of external threats. Second, the threat narrative (referring to the conflict in Ukraine) may heighten awareness of military risks for Poland, producing the opposite of the intended effect – a higher level of opposition to new FMB construction. It is possible that respondents in allied countries located further from the conflict zone (e.g., Spain) are less saturated with information about the war in Ukraine than respondents in Poland, which could influence their support for NATO rearmament. Consequently, baseline support for U.S. forces in those countries may be lower. Furthermore, adding the narrative of potential economic benefits had no significant effect on support levels. When respondents were asked about their stance toward a new base located 100 km away and then again at a distance of 5 km, support levels typically declined.

Third, personal contact with U.S. soldiers mitigates the negative NIMBY effect, leading to higher acceptance of a new FMB. This finding suggests that individuals with direct experience of interaction with U.S. troops are less likely to perceive their presence as negative and more likely to accept their stationing near their place of residence. Fourth, there may exist a balance between the way threats generate demand for FMP and the way awareness of those threats simultaneously creates uncertainty as to whether FMP itself may pose an additional risk to civilians in the host state (Śliwiński 2012). The Russian invasion of Ukraine provides a strong

argument in favor of the U.S. presence, yet recalling this event may simultaneously heighten fears about potential risks to local communities.

Future research should focus on testing different communication strategies and ways of framing arguments in favor of the U.S. military presence, especially in the context of NATO's support for Ukraine in its war with the Russian Federation. One promising research direction would be to analyze the impact of referencing Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) on the perception of U.S. military presence in Poland. Future studies could test whether explicitly stating that American soldiers are subject to Polish law would influence the level of acceptance for the U.S. military presence among Polish respondents.

3.4. From allies to neighbors: Unraveling the impact of NATO military presence on local societies in Poland.

Smulek G. From allies to neighbors: Unraveling the impact of NATO military presence on local societies in Poland – Praca złożona do recenzji w Quaestiones Geographicae.

The final article comprising this doctoral dissertation presents a detailed analysis of the conducted quantitative and qualitative research, focusing on the impact of FMP on the local environment across three key spheres: social, economic, and environmental. The analysis takes into account the dynamics and factors determining the processes through which FMBs influence their surroundings. The article also examines public attitudes toward FMP, factors shaping these attitudes, and identified patterns related to sociodemographic variables. The research results are summarized with theoretical and practical implications, as well as directions for further studies.

The article begins by discussing the role of FMBs as a key instrument of the military policy of states and international alliances. It also outlines the historical context emphasizing Poland's strategic importance in international relations and its geographically sensitive location. I highlighted that the research findings presented in this article respond to the needs of civilian and military institutions at different administrative levels. After a brief discussion of the theoretical framework and state of research, I identified the main research areas.

A research gap was identified regarding studies on FMBs in Central and Eastern Europe, with particular reference to Poland. Previous studies on Poland have focused primarily on the impact of the Polish Armed Forces on local environments (Sirko, 2013; Sirko, Kozubal & Piotrowska

–Trybull, 2019) or on FMBs in two areas: Redzikowo (Materka, 2012; Lipińska, 2021) and Powidz (Kołsut, 2018).

Next, I presented the objectives and research questions reflecting the main assumptions of this doctoral dissertation, as well as the research methodology, including a description of four selected study areas. The research process was divided into six stages, encompassing, among others, desk research, individual interviews, surveys, and the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

To assess spatial changes, I reviewed data from Poland's Local Data Bank (GUS) for the period 2013–2022, focusing on social, economic, and environmental indicators. The analysis did not reveal significant changes in municipalities hosting FMBs or in neighboring municipalities, either over time or relative to control areas. The limited availability of data due to the specific nature of the research subject indicated the local and selective character of FMB impacts, underscoring the need for further in-depth studies. As part of the qualitative research conducted in 2021, I carried out semi-structured in-depth interviews with twenty-four local leaders (both men and women). The same respondents were interviewed again in 2023, allowing for a comparative analysis. Quantitative surveys conducted in 2023, both in paper and online formats, included a total of 470 respondents – representing at least 1% of the adult population within the selected study areas. The research adopted an interdisciplinary approach, combining behavioral geography, sociological concepts, and other methodological perspectives. I used exploratory data analysis (EDA) methods and software tools such as MAXQDA and RStudio. The identified social attitudes were interpreted based on the ABC model of attitudes (Maio et al., 2018), which conceptualizes attitudes as a structure composed of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components.

The results revealed diverse dynamics in the relationships between FMBs and local communities. They indicate variation in the degree of social contact with foreign soldiers, which influences perceptions of their presence. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported frequent visual contact, but only 19% had direct interactions with foreign troops. Encounters most commonly occurred in shops, on roads, and in restaurants. The highest number of contacts was observed in Powidz, and the lowest in Redzikowo. The research sample primarily consisted of employed, well-educated respondents, mostly women, with a predominance of individuals aged 36–50. Most participants had no direct ties to the military, and 78% declared knowledge of English, which may influence openness toward FMP.

The level and dynamics of civil–military integration vary locally, but a common factor is the negative effect of troop rotation and the gradual decline in engagement over time as the FMP becomes permanent. Younger, employed, and better-educated respondents, as well as women, were more likely to perceive benefits from FMP, while older and less-educated individuals were more likely to view it as a threat. Powidz, as an area of strong foreign military presence, combines the greatest perceived benefits with the greatest resistance to further expansion. A significant portion of respondents expressed concerns about becoming a potential target in case of armed conflict. However, consistent with earlier studies (Kołsut, 2018), the source of negative attitudes toward FMP expansion may primarily stem from fears of domination by foreign troops leading to the marginalization – or even displacement – of the existing Polish military unit. Such a scenario would entail significant changes in residents’ daily lives, many of whom have professional ties to the Polish Armed Forces.

These findings underscore the importance of local context, although similar patterns of FMB perception recur across multiple sites. Alongside formal socio-economic linkages, examples of activities within the so-called informal or “gray” economy also emerged. In providing critical opinions, respondents sometimes skipped demographic questions, possibly indicating reluctance to express dissenting views openly.

Interviews revealed that interactions with soldiers may occasionally lead to social tensions, particularly involving alcohol-related incidents. Each new troop rotation may alter local social dynamics, reshaping the socio-cultural landscape. However, drawbacks and risks coexist with benefits such as the development of services, support for education, and local events. Residents’ attitudes are diverse and depend on location, personal contact, language skills, and prior experiences.

According to respondents, FMP brought the most visible benefits in sectors such as gastronomy, employment, and infrastructure development – findings that are also supported by qualitative data. The emergence of new businesses and service providers catering to bases, such as catering or cleaning companies, was particularly notable. These benefits were more often recognized by working respondents, especially self-employed individuals and full-time employees, as well as by women.

The most frequent criticism concerned the lack of improvement in public transportation, which in many towns had already been perceived as underdeveloped. Many respondents did not notice

any significant changes in this area, possibly due to the limited spatial reach of FMP in peripheral regions. Some residents mentioned additional municipal revenues, although many lacked sufficient knowledge to assess this. Respondents with weaker English skills were more likely to express critical opinions, suggesting that language competence plays a role in the perception of FMP benefits. Influxes of population and tourism were generally rated as neutral, possibly indicating a localized or negligible impact. Younger respondents more frequently expressed positive views on these aspects.

The most visible economic changes occurred near base areas – food trucks, bars, and service salons appeared, introducing urban elements into small towns. This was also reflected in the emergence of large-scale advertisements targeting foreign soldiers. Nevertheless, economic benefits did not translate into support for base expansion, highlighting the complexity of local attitudes toward FMP.

Despite the generally positive assessment of FMP's influence on local development, environmental issues remain the most frequently cited sources of criticism and potential tension. Respondents most often pointed to noise, littering, restricted access to green areas, and environmental concerns. Many participants, however, could not assess FMP's impact on air, water, or soil quality, which may indicate limited awareness, lack of reliable information, or negligible effects. The highest number of critical opinions was recorded in Powidz, where proximity between residential areas and the base may intensify local opposition.

Referring to existing scientific concepts, this article also includes a discussion highlighting the study's limitations and potential areas for further research. Based on empirical findings and literature analysis, I present a model of civil–military relations outlining key actors whose roles vary depending on local conditions, as well as a model of rotational foreign military presence in Poland since 2017.

Several dominant trends and correlations shaping perceptions of allied troops were identified. Urban areas and places characterized by greater social and cultural diversity tended to exhibit higher openness toward interactions with foreign soldiers, whereas culturally homogeneous areas such as Powidz or Orzysz displayed stronger emotional reactions – both positive and negative. The proximity of FMBs to residential zones significantly influenced perceptions of FMP. Residents living in direct proximity to bases were more likely to experience anxiety, partly due to fears of potential threats during armed conflict. Rural and small-town residents

placed greater emphasis on environmental pollution, noise, and restricted access to natural areas.

The findings may indicate a considerable degree of path dependency, meaning that historical trajectories influence contemporary perceptions of FMP in a given location. Local leaders often referred to the military past of their regions or – such as in Żagań – compared the nature of U.S. and Soviet military presence. The data suggest relatively lower levels of concern over FMP's negative effects in Żagań, which may be linked to residents' prior experiences with both Polish and Soviet military presence. However, there is no conclusive evidence that these historical factors directly shape current perceptions of U.S. troops. Importantly, current FMB locations are situated in areas already militarized in the past, due to the availability of existing infrastructure and spatial conditions necessary for military operations.

These phenomena are also influenced by the characteristics of the rotating military contingents. As a result, even in the same location, the impact of FMBs may differ depending on which unit is stationed at a given time, affecting the level of local interaction. While some local governments attempt to adapt by institutionalizing temporary economic benefits, others face growing disillusionment. Comparing data from 2021 and 2023 reveals a decline in perceived benefits from FMP, possibly caused by troop rotations or social fatigue. Interactions between soldiers and residents are typically episodic, institutional, and short-term, limiting the development of trust and deeper relationships.

Spatial transformations in studied localities show that foreign soldiers, through interactions with local communities, co-create a new type of space that blends international and local cultural patterns. This phenomenon manifests as a hybridization of urban and rural characteristics. Observed transformations include increased vehicle traffic and the emergence of services such as pizzerias, barber shops, tattoo studios, and electric scooters – typically associated with larger cities. I refer to this process as a “scale jump,” denoting the sudden appearance of urban features in small-town settings, bypassing the gradual process of suburbanization.

In the discussion section concluding the publication, I note that initial public enthusiasm toward FMP gradually gave way to disappointment, primarily due to the lack of tangible state support. This pattern mirrors trends observed in other countries hosting FMBs, where economic hopes diminish in the absence of sustained institutional engagement. In some locations, however,

proximity to FMBs – despite perceived costs and inconveniences – may increase the likelihood of central government investments, particularly in infrastructure, due to the area’s growing strategic importance. This may lead to improvements in local socioeconomic status – a phenomenon I term “upside-down possibilities.” In Żagań, this mechanism was reflected in road infrastructure investments financed by the state, as highlighted by both local leaders and residents. This occurred despite frequent complaints about heavy traffic and the driving behavior of U.S. soldiers. A narrative gap was also evident: local leaders tended to speak positively about FMP, whereas residents were more critical.

Environmental concerns remain among the most frequently criticized aspects of FMP, including noise, declining air and soil quality, littering, and restricted access to green areas. These phenomena fit into the broader process of spatial militarization, in which the dominance of military functions gradually displaces social and recreational uses of space. Assessing FMP’s environmental impact is complicated, as residents often cannot distinguish between the effects of allied and Polish military activity, especially in areas of shared training grounds or air operations.

The discussion also highlights that the militarization of everyday life can lead to the erosion of local identity, potentially resulting in placelessness in Relph’s (1976) sense – when a place loses its original character under externally imposed functions. Simultaneously, it may generate various forms of social resistance to military dominance. Sustainable civil–military integration requires long-term, participatory strategies and stronger institutional support tailored to local conditions. The article emphasizes the need for continued research, including comparative studies incorporating the perspectives of military representatives and experiences from other post-socialist countries.

Following the ABC model, I categorized the identified social attitudes. The cognitive component includes both positive expectations (e.g., economic benefits, cultural exchange) and concerns (e.g., noise, traffic, environmental impact). Emotional reactions range from enthusiasm and pride through indifference and adaptation to aversion. Behavioral attitudes manifest as opposition to base expansion or active support for civil–military cooperation.

In response to identified challenges, I proposed measures to strengthen civil–military relations, adapted to local contexts. These include broader social research, information campaigns about the role of FMBs, training, and integration events promoting social and economic cooperation.

At the regional level, I recommend promoting a positive image of bases and supporting community integration initiatives. At the national level, I propose developing a comprehensive report on existing cooperation and intensifying efforts to enhance the participation of local businesses in the FMP framework.

The study demonstrates that FMP has a complex impact on local communities in Poland, shaped largely by local context. Residents perceive benefits – primarily economic and cultural – but simultaneously express concerns regarding environmental and security issues, reflecting the patterns consistent with the NIMBY concept.

4. Results

The title of this dissertation – “*The Impact of Allied Military Presence on Local Communities*” – reflects its main objective: to determine how the presence of foreign troops in Poland affects local societies. Despite the broad analytical scope, the scale and dynamics of the described phenomenon raise further research questions, making it difficult to clearly define its overall impact. Before the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, conducting research on this topic was already a significant challenge. The period of increased protection and heightened security measures in areas connected to FMP since February 2022 further complicated research activities. Respondents’ distrust increased, and movement near strategically important areas often aroused suspicion. From a researcher’s perspective, the situational context of this study can be described using the acronym VUCA: *volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity* – a term introduced by the U.S. Army in the 1990s to describe key characteristics of the post-Cold War world.

The analyzed areas have been strongly linked to the presence of the military for decades. Most of these areas can be classified as peripheral, making them convenient locations for military bases whose functioning often requires isolation from main settlement structures. Despite the long-standing militarization and entrenched cultural code associated with military presence, contemporary FMP generates new phenomena and processes that are the subject of this dissertation.

A review of the existing research revealed a limited number of studies on this issue in Poland. Valuable support during the initial phase of research came from studies addressing the impact of Polish military units on their surroundings (Sirko, 2013; Sirko, Kozubal & Piotrowska

–Trybull, 2019). The few available case studies related to specific FMB locations highlighted their particular significance both practically – as entities influencing local socio-economic life – and theoretically, by emphasizing their unique nature compared to other infrastructural facilities. Analyses of the controversial U.S. infrastructure in Redzikowo (Materka, 2012; Lipińska, 2021) and studies concerning Powidz’s development strategy (Kołsut, 2018) demonstrated that FMBs not only serve as instruments of international policy but also exert a diverse range of local effects. However, this dissertation constitutes the first comprehensive attempt to examine the contemporary presence of foreign armed forces in Poland from local, national, and global perspectives.

Through this literature review, I identified a clear research gap. Consequently, I began constructing a database of information, analyzing press reports, international agreements, and content published on social media. At the same time, I established contact with local leaders and foreign experts specializing in FMP. These efforts revealed both the complexity of the studied phenomenon and its distinctive international dimension.

Even in the early stages of literature analysis, a lack of coherent terminology referring to troops stationed abroad became apparent. In most cases, authors define military units deployed outside their home country as “bases,” “presences,” or “facilities.” However, the number of terms describing the spatial, functional, or organizational characteristics of such entities is considerably larger, making it difficult to clearly define the boundaries of the research subject. Furthermore, some terms, such as *sovereign base area*, emphasize that FMBs are perceived as separate territories distinctly detached from their surroundings. Considering the dominant trends in the literature, I decided to distinguish between the terms FMB and FMP in my analysis – the former referring to a spatial object, and the latter to the activities of the military personnel stationed there.

A detailed review of the literature also revealed a dominance of studies analyzing the global network of U.S. military bases, accompanied by a scarcity of analyses focusing on the former Warsaw Pact states. This suggests limited academic interest in the region and a stronger focus on the Pacific, the Middle East, and Western Europe. The main narratives identified in FMB-related literature concern anti-base movements (ABMs), base policy, national and international politics, and geopolitical issues. This reflects greater interest in how bases influence international relations than in the local consequences of their functioning. Only nine of the reviewed publications referred to the NIMBY phenomenon, indicating limited attention

to the immediate impact of FMBs on local communities. However, the literature suggests that FMBs can shape diverse social attitudes, with spatial militarization (Enloe, 2000; Gerson, 2009) emerging as one of the key related processes. The strong penetration of military cultural patterns can foster the formation of protests and resistance movements (ABMs), often justified by negative environmental effects, perceived loss of sovereignty among residents, or acts of violence committed by foreign military personnel.

From an economic perspective, scholars note that FMBs, much like in social contexts, perform diverse spatial functions. They can act as economic catalysts by stimulating service development, increasing entrepreneurs' income, or enhancing regional attractiveness (Alexander, 2016; Allen et al., 2020; Simon, 2008). Conversely, researchers point to risks such as economic dependency on the military, weakening of local businesses, and gentrification (Sharp, 1990; Alexander, 2013; Davis, 2007), as well as the long-term burden of public spending associated with maintaining bases (Lostumbo et al., 2013). Nonetheless, there remains a lack of detailed studies combining comprehensive analyses of both secondary and primary data (interviews, surveys) to determine which economic sectors gain or lose the most due to FMB activities.

Environmental research on FMBs also pays particular attention to forms of social opposition to militarization. Academic literature discusses issues such as climate change, chemical and biological contamination of areas adjacent to bases, and other negative effects on ecosystems (Colgan, 2018; Wright, 2015; Savabieasfahani et al., 2019), while topics such as spatial restructuring and landscape transformation remain less explored.

Few studies draw on theories from socio-economic geography or regional development. The dominant research trend focuses on negative aspects – particularly ABMs – while positive outcomes of FMB operations are treated marginally. There is also a lack of studies addressing the long-term adaptation of local communities to FMBs or proposing mechanisms to mitigate negative social attitudes. Despite the significant impact of FMBs on local identity and sense of place, knowledge in this field remains limited, making it difficult to clearly identify spatial contexts influencing social attitudes and base-related outcomes.

It is therefore essential to account for **local conditions**, including cultural diversity and prevailing social norms – both within military personnel stationed at FMBs (internal social dimension) and among the surrounding civilian population (external social dimension). Another

crucial yet overlooked factor is the **spatial context** of base location, encompassing the spatial structure that may inhibit, direct, or stimulate FMB effects (horizontal dimension). At the same time, the structure of relationships across different spatial scales – including civil–military relations at various administrative levels – can shape the dynamics and scope of FMB influence (vertical dimension). Additionally, knowledge of the type of deployed forces and the specifics of their functioning (military dimension) can provide valuable insights into how social attitudes toward FMP are shaped. Considering the length and mode of foreign troop stationing (temporal dimension) allows for a deeper understanding of the processes shaping the spaces and societies surrounding FMBs.

The analysis of data from the **Local Data Bank of Statistics Poland (GUS)** showed no significant changes in municipalities hosting FMBs or in neighboring ones – neither over time nor relative to control areas. These findings suggest that FMBs do not serve as regional growth drivers; their effects are primarily local and limited to a few aspects of residents’ lives.

Starting with the identification of social attitudes (**Research Question 1**), it was difficult to characterize the perception of FMP on a national scale. Each studied location exhibits a unique history, spatial setting, and residents’ experiences with the military. The level of interaction and community engagement with allied forces also varies widely, primarily due to the **rotational nature** of the units and the command-defined regulations governing soldiers’ contact with civilians. The scope of these interactions ranges from complete absence, through sporadic or limited encounters, to frequent and intensive relations. In the most developed cases, they include not only participation of foreign soldiers in official community events and ceremonies but also the formation of lasting social bonds, such as friendships and partnerships.

Such interactions occur both individually and institutionally – through local governments, schools, and charitable initiatives. Nevertheless, personal contact remains crucial, as it mitigates negative perceptions of FMB operations and fosters greater acceptance of increased FMP or new installations. At the same time, the presence of Western and global cultural patterns affects local socio-cultural landscapes, reflected in the emergence of American-style restaurants, cultural events promoting allied nations, and new services inspired by such trends, like barber shops and tattoo studios.

In Poland, one of the main factors influencing social attitudes toward FMP is the **rotational model** of troop deployment. Unlike the effects observed in permanent bases, rotational presence poses unique challenges for social adaptation, relationship building, and long-term cooperation. It shapes both the intensity and quality of interactions between base personnel and residents, leading to diverse attitudes and experiences even within a single location. The rotational system also impacts local economies in complex ways. The absence of soldiers' families limits the development of some service sectors, such as education, healthcare, and long-term housing. Although the presence of foreign troops is continuous, its temporary nature can generate investment uncertainty among local entrepreneurs and policymakers, as noted in interviews with local government representatives.

Each new rotation introduces a new social group unfamiliar with the local environment, often showing interest in tourism, local culture, and attractions. With each rotation, knowledge and experiences are transferred – for example, through the sharing of purchased equipment (e.g., electronics) or information about preferred local services. This can lead to reduced use of local businesses or a shift in consumption toward larger urban centers. For instance, respondents from Orzysz reported that soldiers increasingly preferred to go to Elk (1h by car from the NATO base) for shopping and leisure, reducing the direct economic and social benefits for their own town.

Beyond identifying social impacts, it was possible to distinguish **four main types of local perception** of allied troops. Based on the **ABC model of attitudes**, I identified four attitude types:

1. **Neutral**, recognizing both positive and negative effects of FMBs but showing limited engagement with foreign personnel;
2. **Positive (YIMBY-type)**, typical among residents experiencing economic or social benefits from FMP;
3. **Negative (NIMBY-type)**, characterized by perceiving mainly negative impacts of FMBs;
4. **Ambivalent**, found among individuals who support the presence of allied troops in Poland but hold negative opinions about their immediate local activities.

These attitudes are thus mixed, shaped by a complex and context-dependent set of factors, reflecting the multifaceted nature of allied troop stationing in Poland.

An additional observation concerns the tendency of **local leaders** to express more positive views of military presence, whereas residents more frequently highlight direct negative effects. Furthermore, both rotational deployment and international developments – such as the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine – can cause shifts in social attitudes within the same locality over time. Such variation is largely determined by residents’ personal experiences and linguistic or cultural competencies. However, to thoroughly assess the FMBs’ influence on culture, education, and other social dimensions, research should be conducted throughout multiple rotational cycles to obtain a more balanced and representative picture.

In the case of **U.S. forces**, residents’ perceptions may also be influenced by the composition of certain units, often consisting of very young soldiers aged 18–20, many of whom are abroad for the first time. Respondents noted that some soldiers are deployed temporarily from bases such as Ramstein (Germany), or previously served in Korea or Italy – experiences that shape their interactions and local perception. These insights, based on local leaders’ testimonies, illustrate how the varied backgrounds of military personnel influence both interpersonal relations and community attitudes toward FMP.

Quantitative research and detailed analysis of data from four case-study areas enabled broader identification of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of FMP impact (**Research Question 2**). Socially, many residents recognized cultural enrichment and enhanced local cultural offerings, perceiving foreign soldiers as friendly. FMP was also associated with increased feelings of safety and, to a lesser extent, positive educational effects. Negative opinions most often related to traffic disruptions, while healthcare and personal development were seen as unaffected.

Positive social impacts were most frequently reported in **Powidz** and **Orzysz**, particularly among working-age individuals, women, and civilians. The highest willingness to engage with soldiers was recorded in **Redzikowo**, though this decreased with age and lower education levels. Openness to cultural exchange was higher among working respondents, women, those with higher education, and those fluent in English. Conversely, women and older people more often expressed fears of becoming targets in case of conflict due to living near FMBs, while men tended to downplay this risk. Despite frequent contact with troops, residents of Powidz most often opposed further base expansion. Support for expansion declined with age and education, and increased among people employed in the military sector.

Economically, respondents most often identified positive effects of FMP in gastronomy, employment, and infrastructure. New services emerged near bases, while public transport was evaluated negatively or as unchanged. Financial benefits were more often reported by employed individuals and women, while negative opinions prevailed among those with weaker language skills. Growth in gastronomy was especially significant for the self-employed, and local leaders confirmed employment growth in service sectors such as catering and laundry.

Population influx and tourism were considered marginal, and informal services – including erotic ones – were noted. Residents perceiving greater economic benefits expressed more positive views of FMP, though this did not translate into support for expansion. In Powidz, for instance, respondents recognized the base’s economic importance but opposed increasing troop numbers – likely due to fears of conflict or marginalization of the Polish military unit, a major local employer. Local entrepreneurs, however, reported difficulties competing with large NATO contractors.

Due to limited data availability, FMP’s economic impact remains approximate, based on both respondents’ opinions and exploratory findings. Nevertheless, FMBs can be viewed as temporary “**windows of opportunity**”, enabling new development pathways and international business connections – especially in small towns like Powidz, where the military base serves as a key economic anchor (Kołsut, 2018). This case represents development oriented around an external strategic institution. In terms of **new economic geography** (Krugman, 2007), bases may trigger agglomeration effects through increased demand for goods and services. A base acts as a development catalyst when it mobilizes local resources and social capital; otherwise, it functions according to **dependency theory**, relying on external contractors and limiting local integration.

Environmentally, FMP was most often rated negatively – residents cited noise, littering, restricted green space access, and ecological concerns. Most could not assess water, soil, or air quality impacts. Critical voices were strongest in Powidz, likely due to base proximity to housing areas. Some avoided direct answers, possibly fearing repercussions. Local leaders addressed environmental issues less frequently, often describing them as neutral, though both positive (e.g., forest cleaning) and negative (e.g., noise, pollution, fire risk) effects were mentioned.

A detailed analysis of the four locations and broader spatial research revealed the complexity

and heterogeneity of influencing factors. Despite this complexity, the most affected spheres correspond to the key needs and activities of military units. Thus, FMP's main local beneficiaries are the gastronomy, transportation, and leisure sectors, while the most pressing issues are traffic intensity and environmental degradation – factors directly affecting residents' quality of life.

Finally, addressing **Research Question 3**, I examined the role of FMBs as spatial entities. Their local functioning may resemble the metaphor of a “**cathedral in the desert**” (Grabher, 1994; Hardy, 1998) – a powerful, modern infrastructure weakly connected to local social and economic systems, resulting in limited or disproportionate impact. Alternatively, an FMB may resemble the “**upas tree**” metaphor (Henderson & Ho, 2014), suggesting the dominance of one institution that suppresses other sectors, fostering economic dependency. Both metaphors illustrate the potential risks of unsustainable local development.

When FMBs drive service-sector growth and spatial transformation, this can be termed **military urbanization** (Spanu, 2023). The primary economic risk arises if foreign troops withdraw or defense policy shifts, potentially leading to economic stagnation or social decline. This could produce polarization in public attitudes and local tensions, depending on how residents perceive the benefits or costs of FMB presence.

At this point, I can indicate the factors that both limit and stimulate the spatial impact of FMBs. Among the constraining elements, the most significant are the legal conditions regulating the FMP, including regulations and decisions of commanding officers concerning soldiers' daily service in a given unit. On the social level, a key limitation may be the resistance of residents and a lack of willingness to integrate, which leads to a low level of cooperation between local communities and allied forces. Infrastructure issues should also be considered, as well as the topography of the area, which determines the potential development of FMBs. For example, forest cover or a limited road network may hinder transportation and the integration of such units with the local environment. However, topography can not only impede but also facilitate the development of FMBs and associated services, as well as influence the diffusion of cultural patterns and residents' perceptions of the activities of allied forces. A distinct factor is also the settlement pattern and proximity to urban centers. These determine the degree of service utilization, the level of social integration, cultural activity, and the extent to which both the positive and negative effects of FMB operations spread. The scale and range of these effects, as well as social attitudes, are largely determined

by economic factors such as the adaptability of local entrepreneurs and the potential for economic cooperation. Local development strategies and civil–military cooperation plans are also important, as are the attitudes of local leaders and self-government authorities.

Within a single location, the perception of allied military presence may change over time, depending on the level of social integration with successive rotational units. Nevertheless, I made an overall assessment of the key and dominant effects of allied forces' presence in the individual locations. In the research area of the Orzysz–Bemowo Piskie FMB, the development of service facilities – mainly in gastronomy – and an increase in trade were noted, while negative consequences included road infrastructure degradation and restricted access to forested areas. In Powidz, positive effects were also associated with the growth of the service sector, whereas issues related to the sense of security and the potential expansion of military areas were evaluated negatively. In turn, the FMB in Redzikowo was characterized by the least distinct positive impacts, while exhibiting a significant influence on rising real estate prices, investment restrictions, and respondents' limited willingness to establish contact with foreign soldiers. In Żagań, although the overall impact of the FMB was most often assessed as neutral, clearly negative effects were observed in the area of infrastructure and road traffic, with a high number of accidents involving American soldiers.

In addition to answering the research questions, I also attempted to assess the potential use of FMP in local government activities. Municipal authorities could benefit primarily through (1) increased municipal budget revenues, (2) enhanced economic attractiveness of the region, and (3) potential investments, particularly in infrastructure. However, as the results show, at the initial stage of FMP in Poland, local governments had no real influence on decisions regarding the operation of FMBs. The rotational nature of military deployment can further hinder the development of coherent and long-term cooperation strategies. One should also be aware of the potential emergence of new threats and conflicts, as well as the progressive decline in residents' quality of life, which may lead to growing opposition toward local authorities if effective measures are not implemented to mitigate the negative effects of FMB operations – especially in the context of increased hybrid actions and external cyberattacks. This is particularly important given the growing intensity of hybrid warfare activities.

When identifying the greatest opportunities that residents may take advantage of in connection with the FMP, the following should be highlighted: (1) improvement of language skills and reduction of negative social phenomena and attitudes; (2) creation of new jobs

and businesses; and (3) infrastructure development. At the same time, potential threats should be considered, including: (1) rising living costs; (2) worsening environmental problems (e.g., increased pollution); (3) infrastructure degradation; (4) the erosion of local identity and culture; (5) growing economic dependence – including in the event of a change in defense policy or a reduction of FMP; and (6) difficulties in adapting former military areas should the FMB change location.

It is worth emphasizing that since the arrival of foreign troops in Poland in January 2017 – resulting from decisions made at the NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016 – more than eight years have passed by the time this doctoral research was completed. During this period, allied soldiers changed their preferences and places of service use, gradually expanding their impact beyond the local level. In response to unmet needs, they increasingly turned to larger urban centers, thus influencing the regional and even national scale. At the regional level, the identified positive effects included growing demand for transportation services, benefits for companies and service providers from neighboring municipalities and cities, as well as labor market development resulting from increased demand for specialists. One of the key negative consequences has been the degradation of road infrastructure caused by the movement of heavy military equipment. On the national scale, this impact is primarily political. Internationally, NATO troop deployments in Poland fit into defense strategies and policies, shape foreign policy, and strengthen Poland's position on the international stage. Other consequences of allied presence include changes in the national budget arising from the costs of maintaining and supporting these forces on Polish territory.

The range and dynamics of FMB impacts can thus be regarded as multi-level – from local to national, and in some aspects even global. Although the largest number of effects was identified at the local level, the factors mentioned above indicate that geographic proximity is not a straightforward determinant of the intensity of these effects. The research shows that in each of the analyzed locations, the impact of FMBs varies, particularly in the areas of services, infrastructure, and employment.

Each of the presented publications analyzes the functioning of FMBs from a different perspective, creating a complementary picture of the consequences of allied troop stationing in Poland while leaving room for further research. The chronological approach and implementation of the research plan made it possible to progressively develop the analysis. The scientific papers prepared as part of this dissertation form a coherent and logical analytical

cycle, presenting a broad and multifaceted image of the effects of allied military presence in Poland. The first studies focused on identifying the research gap and defining the theoretical framework. Beginning with the first publication, the concepts regarding the influence of FMBs on local communities were developed, considering the dimensions determining the dynamics, scale, and scope of their impact – factors that had previously been marginalized in international scholarship. Subsequent stages allowed for the presentation of the contemporary image of FMP and its local effects in this part of the world, highlighting the social, political, and historical context. Collaboration with American experts made it possible to analyze social attitudes on a supra-regional scale. The final publication precisely identified social attitudes and the effects of FMB impact in social, economic, and environmental spheres at the local level, while also considering spatial determinism in the analyzed areas. The use of diverse research methods minimized error and enabled a multidimensional analysis of the complex and varied processes associated with FMB operations. Comparing different locations where FMBs exhibit distinct characteristics revealed a wide range of aspects of local life influenced by FMP.

This dissertation constitutes the first comprehensive analysis in Poland of the impact of FMP on the socio-economic and environmental context, contributing significantly to the international discussion on the consequences of foreign military base operations. Previous research had not conducted comparative analyses of multiple locations in the context of local development nor attempted to outline a broader picture of FMP in Poland or in Central and Eastern European countries. Nationwide studies in Poland focused solely on the influence of domestic military units on local communities, while research conducted elsewhere rarely accounted for the specifics of rotationally operated bases. Beyond its cognitive contribution, the dissertation also contains original recommendations aimed at improving the management of allied military presence, minimizing negative impacts, and maximizing benefits for local governments and residents. The series of publications developed presents new mechanisms through which foreign militaries influence urbanized areas and natural environments, emphasizing the emergence of unique spaces.

This work expands both the theoretical and empirical scope of studies on FMBs and their effects on the surrounding environment. In contrast to most existing works, which focus mainly on national or international scales, this dissertation addresses the functioning of FMBs at the local level, revealing the distinct perception of globally driven phenomena. An interdisciplinary approach was adopted, combining perspectives from social and political geography, sociology

of civil–military relations, security studies, political science, and environmental science. Such a broad framework enabled a comprehensive analysis of contemporary civil–military relations in both local and supra-local contexts. The integration of various perspectives and research tools made it possible to further develop the concept of local sovereignty and to design a model of FMB impacts operating under a rotational framework. Moreover, the concept of militarization was expanded by identifying key mechanisms and trends associated with this phenomenon. The research demonstrated the temporal variability of social attitudes toward the studied phenomenon and their sensitivity to diverse stimuli.

Thus, the dissertation possesses both significant theoretical and practical dimensions. Despite its limitations, it indicates directions for future research. Future studies should focus on: (a) identifying the long-term consequences of the rotational FMP model; (b) international comparisons of NATO bases in post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries; (c) extensive nationwide analyses; and (d) in-depth investigations into the economic impact of FMP on local economies, including multiplier effects. This work may serve as a knowledge base for developing strategies for local governments and military institutions – both Polish and foreign – helping to shape more effective local policies and improve the management of FMB impacts.

In the past, many foreign forces stationed in Poland established their own bases, leaving lasting consequences still felt today. However, the contemporary presence of NATO troops in Poland is of a different nature and is perceived differently by residents of the studied locations. The phenomenon is global in scope – residents of Orzysz, Żagań, Redzikowo, or Powidz would likely find much in common with the inhabitants of Okinawa, Vicenza, or Ramstein. Although this dissertation contributes to expanding knowledge about FMBs, many issues remain to be explored, especially in the context of dynamic geopolitical changes. Events such as the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States and the early months of his administration may have significant implications for NATO’s defense strategy and the future of Allied presence in Poland.

In summarizing the impact of FMBs on their surroundings, I sought to identify facilities or areas with similar characteristics. For this purpose, I analyzed literature concerning the effects of infrastructures such as prisons (Farkas, 1999), waste dumps (Rahardyan et al., 2004), wind turbines (Coleby et al., 2009), and national parks (Mika & Zawalińska, 2015). After several years of research, I find the greatest analogy with tourist resorts.

Particularly in peripheral regions, these play an important role in revitalizing local economies by generating employment, attracting investment, and fostering service sector growth, especially in gastronomy. Crucially, the positive effects tend to concentrate within the resorts themselves – similar to FMBs, where most of soldiers’ needs are met inside the base. Consequently, neighboring areas participate only marginally in the generated benefits (Kauppila, 2010; Kulusjärvi, 2016).

Residents of tourist areas show an ability to distinguish between the benefits and costs of tourism development. They point to positive outcomes such as job creation, income growth, and heritage revitalization – which, in the case of FMBs, can be compared to infrastructure modernization. At the same time, negative consequences are noted, such as rising real estate and service prices, overuse of public spaces, and socio-cultural transformations, including lifestyle commercialization. It is worth noting that a positive evaluation of tourism, much like FMP, strongly correlates with personal economic benefits, for example, employment in tourism or income from tourist services (Korça, 1998).

Tourist resorts, like military bases, periodically attract large numbers of people – often on a rotational or seasonal basis. In both cases, they function as “socio-economic islands,” weakly connected to their regional surroundings (Kauppila, 2010; Kulusjärvi, 2016). The stronger the ties between a resort and local resources – such as businesses, infrastructure, or networks of cooperation – the greater the potential for sustainable, broadly defined development benefits. In the “enclave” model, however, there is a risk of deepening inequalities, dependency on external actors, and growing social tensions.

The cited studies also emphasize the key role of local cooperation networks (e.g., among entrepreneurs, local governments, and public institutions) in ensuring an even distribution of tourism-related benefits. Isolation of the resort’s core from its surroundings limits the regional spillover of development effects. These conclusions offer valuable guidance for areas neighboring FMBs – pointing to the need for joint planning and the creation of integrated development strategies. The comparison of FMBs with tourist resorts also yields interesting analogies. From the local perspective, American soldiers serving rotational deployments in Poland may be perceived similarly to foreign tourists visiting popular resorts – at least in terms of their impact on the local market, space, and social structure. However, it must be noted that FMBs are established for overarching reasons by state authorities. They belong to organizational structures of a non-democratic and often confidential nature, trained for armed

conflict – clearly distinguishing them from facilities with recreational functions such as tourist resorts.

Future research on the “tourists from Washington” and other states deploying their armed forces abroad could include comparative analyses with the experiences of tourist resorts located in peripheral regions. It is possible, however, that subsequent scholarly studies will reveal new phenomena associated with FMB operations or confirm their uniqueness as facilities belonging to the categories of noxious facilities, YIMBY, or NIMBY. It is not inconceivable that academic literature should devote more attention to the specificity of FMP impacts on their surroundings, eventually leading to the creation of a distinct terminology to describe extraterritorial military facilities.

Perhaps in the future a new, precise term will emerge to reflect the complexity of this phenomenon – acknowledging that its impact is neither wholly positive nor negative but instead constitutes a unique category of socio-spatial interaction. This phenomenon could be termed “Base On My Backyard” (BOMBY), highlighting the fact that the presence of the military and military infrastructure has become an integral and everyday element of local community life.

This dissertation thus provides a solid foundation for the detailed identification of risks, opportunities, and potential development scenarios for areas hosting allied forces. Given the relatively short period of these units’ stationing in Poland, it is crucial to consider the experiences of other locations worldwide that have long operated under conditions of sustained FMP. The dissertation also emphasizes that socio-economic geography should play an important role in studying contemporary civil–military relations, serving as a foundation for analyzing their consequences for local and regional development.

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6. Publications Included in the Doctoral Dissertation