

# *Polish Journal of Political Science*

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Volume 7 Issue 1 (2021)



# *Polish Journal of Political Science*

Volume 7 Issue 1

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eISSN 2391-3991

Original version: e-book

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**Social conflicts during the operation of state structures  
in crisis situations in Poland.**

**The securolological and legal approach**

**Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to analyse the internal security system of Poland. The author pays attention to the aspects of crisis management and indicates the factors that currently affect the concept of Poland's internal security. In addition, the author analyses legal documents in the area of national security, as well as scientific works in that field. He also characterizes the key state authorities responsible for non-military security.

**Keywords:** social conflicts, crisis management, security

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## Introduction

With the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, life as we know it rapidly gathered pace due to the ongoing globalization and advancement of civilization. The inhabitants of those countries that are termed as the First World regions function in haste, are absorbed in families, focused on work and usually restrict their focus to their immediate surroundings. This rushed lifestyle can cause accumulation of responsibilities – causing issues due to the lack of time and incoming new tasks that add to the workload. As a consequence, individuals encounter higher levels of stress, which compromises their capability for making decisions. Having in mind that higher levels of stress are a common companion of the contemporary society, it seems inevitable for it to escalate into a large-scale conflict in a certain territory. This conflict will, in turn, affect not only individuals but, most importantly, the organizational structures of a state. The main role of these institutions is to maintain order and assure continuity of government. Social unrest provides additional occupation for the structures that are obliged to interfere in order to neutralize the threat.

As the role of the individual is a fundamental element of the social construct, the subject of this work is considered important as a study project. That said, if the individual cannot handle stress and arising tension, the probability of issues appearing within the circle or group that the aforementioned individual is attending, rises exponentially.

The author of this work aims to define the role and the structure of social conflicts that hinder the functionality of national institutions in a crisis.

The author shall use analysis, deduction and aid of legal acts as well as academic texts dealing with national security,

social security, and crisis management. Their goal is to define properly a situation of crisis, crisis management methods and what departments are involved in the elimination of threat in the aforementioned situations. Moreover, the author shall analyse the problem of social conflicts, their types, and shall describe the work of public administration, as well as countermeasures for future occurrences.

### Definition and nature of a crisis situation

The term 'crisis' defines an occurrence, internal or external, that comes as an direct or indirect threat to the society, its interests and organizations. A crisis has a culmination phase, in which unrest arises, creating threat to uninterrupted development and survival.<sup>1</sup> It is connected with a long-term disruption of labour, the realization goals, the stability of structures and organizations. This further develops into a threat to survivability. The main features that can help define a crisis include: the element of surprise, loss of control, lack of immediate reaction, pressure of time, missing or incomplete information, high tension, and threat to essential tasks.

In some sources, a *crisis* is equal to a *crisis situation*, even though they differ from each other in that a *crisis* is one of the elements of a *crisis situation*. The signs of the former may, though not necessarily, develop and lead to changes in an organization's structure. It can create a feeling of discomfort or disrupt continuity. Every *crisis* will be considered part of a *crisis situation*, but the statement cannot be applied in reverse.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gryz , W. Kitler , *System reagowania kryzysowego*, publ. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2007, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> B. Kosowski, *Sprawne i elastyczne zarządzanie w kryzysie*, publ. Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 24.

Even so, both are characterised by the same criteria, listed in the previous paragraph, as they affect the functionality of important structures.

If a government, as the power structure, is unable to respond quickly in order to suppress a crisis, this may lead to the loss of control, either for a shorter or longer period of time. In consequence, this leads to a *crisis situation* defined as “the sum total of internal and external occurrences that have touched over a system in ways that can shape it, prompting a set of changes”.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, as: “a situation that has a negative impact on the safety level of people, property, or environment, creating restrictions on administrative operations due to the lack of necessary forces and resources”.<sup>4</sup> An important factor in dealing with a *crisis situation* is time. A swift response to the observed symptoms prompts action from public administration that is aimed at preventing further escalation. At this stage, it is necessary to implement the procedures and proceed with a crisis management plan, as provided for by legislation. This may include proclaiming a state of emergency (after a natural disaster<sup>5</sup> or a national threat<sup>67</sup>). It is essential to act in compliance with the established regulations – they define the scope of available resources

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<sup>3</sup> R. Wróblewski, *Zarys teorii kryzysu. Zagadnienia prewencji i zarządzania kryzysami*, publ. Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 1996, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Act of 26 April 2007 *on crisis management*, Journal of Laws 2007, no. 89, item 590, Art. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Act of 18 April 2002 *on the state of natural disaster*, Journal of Laws 2002, no. 62, item 558, Art. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Poland* of 2 April 1997, Journal of Laws 1997, no. 78, item 483, Chapter XI, Art. 228–234.

<sup>7</sup> Ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland of 16 March 1928 *on the state of emergency*, Journal of Laws 1928, no. 78, item 443.

according to law. Such an approach will restrict the occurrence of undesirable effects.

Taking into consideration a *crisis situation* with respect to the society and social safety – satisfaction takes on different properties and factors. In a social context, it becomes a turning point, an emotional situation that carries significance and affects various social groups that may feel threatened by an unexpected change. Usually it is a natural occurrence – one that arises everywhere, in every society and nation. A result of these changes might be a modification in the structure and function of an entity.

Every *crisis situation* may, though not necessarily, turn repeatedly into a *crisis* and its dynamics, that is its time of occurrence and intensity, may change. It is caused by the possible lack of or significantly restricted restoration of the original state. Because of this the length of time elapsing between the first symptom of a crisis and the first countermeasures is a priority.

### A crisis situation and its management in a nation

Due to its special character, a crisis situation affects public security, including the local community directly impacted by the crisis. The situation can occur anywhere, thus posing a threat not only to inhabitants, but also infrastructure and environment.

In order to deal effectively with a *crisis situation*, public administration departments cooperate within an established crisis management system. A system like this functions to protect lives, workplaces and a broadly understood social environment. It is also used to provide aid to victims of war and eliminate consequences of natural disasters.

The system includes different levels of administration, such as: crisis management teams, consulting teams, and centres focused on crisis management that operate 24/7.<sup>8</sup> There is also a prepared collection of rules and regulations as well as instructions for institutions in time of crisis.

According to Art. 2 of the *Crisis Management Act* crisis management means “all necessary actions taken by public administration as a part of national security management, the main task of which is crisis prevention, preparation for taking control them through planned activities, response in the event of a crisis situations, removal of the effects and recovery of resources as well as reconstruction of critical infrastructure.”<sup>9</sup> Basing on the cited definition, four phases of crisis management implemented by state authorities and institutions can be distinguished, namely: prevention, preparation, response, and recovery. An important correlation between individual phases is their overlapping which allows for free transition from an earlier to a later stage of crisis management.

In the prevention phase, actions are taken with the main goal of anticipating as well as reducing and limiting the possibility of a crisis situation or its complete elimination.<sup>10</sup> These include, first of all, the analysis of possible threats and assessment of sensitivity to specific factors, conducting and supporting applied research and technology transfers, raising public awareness of possible dangers, as well as running the educational system in terms of counteracting them. It is also necessary

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<sup>8</sup> Crisis Management System in Poland <https://www.gov.pl/web/rcb/zarzadzanie-kryzysowe2> (access 20 June 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Act of 26 April 2007 *on crisis management...*, op. cit., Art. 2.

<sup>10</sup> The article also provides for an obligation to extend adequate support to the Polish Armed Forces, which are participating in preventing and reducing the effects of a threat under crisis management.

Act of 26 April 2007 *on crisis management...*, op. cit., Art. 3.

to establish an appropriate system of financial restrictions and adequate resources to guarantee efficient coordination.

The preparation phase is based on the planning sphere and development of a crisis management plans which includes information on when and what actions will be taken given the human and material resources available. An important element is to update the legal regulations so that the activities performed are carried out in an effective manner by means of a unified command post, a crisis communication system and a system for alerting the cooperating entities about the changes taking place. Preparation also includes provision of specialized equipment and adequate training of people to engage effectively in the removal of a crisis situation.

The next stage of crisis management is the phase of response, which takes place after the actual effects of the incident occur. Its task is to launch appropriate actions to minimize or limit any possible damage and start rescue operations to support and help the injured people and prevent secondary losses and damages. During that phase the authorities competent in matters of data collection and processing further analyse the complications of the crisis situation and possible implications of legal decisions.

The final but no less important phase of crisis management cycle is the phase of recovery. Reconstruction continues until all systems guaranteeing the safety of the unit and property return to their original state or a better one. Due to the multiplicity of complications and the extent of damage, this phase can be divided into short-term and long-term.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> J. Piwowski, M. Rozwadowski, *System zarządzania kryzysowego jako element bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, pub. Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu i Przedsiębiorczości w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim, research paper ASO.A.7(1)/2016, pp. 348–351.

The short-term consists in restoring operability of the systems necessary to function in terms of basic operational standards (ability to operate). It also involves reconstructing objects in terms of technical, organizational, psychosocial and sociological aspects.<sup>12</sup>

The different phases of the crisis management cycle overlap, so it is difficult to define the boundaries between them. Importantly, crisis management is a continuous process that requires uninterrupted activity (within the security chain).<sup>13</sup> In order for these phases to run smoothly, it is necessary to establish and develop the principles and competences of persons and bodies obliged to take specific actions at specific stages in advance.

These crisis management principles that govern coordination, risk categorization and accountability include:

- primacy of the territorial system – recognizes the territorial system of the state as the basic structure of this model and reduces the sectoral system to an auxiliary function;
- one-man management – decisions are made by one-man, with full acceptance of responsibility;
- responsibility of public authorities – they assume competence and responsibility to make decisions in a crisis situation;

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<sup>12</sup> Long-term reconstruction may take many years until the effects are completely resolved, thus restoring the entire crisis area to the normal state.

<sup>13</sup> A sequence of cause-and-effect activities, thanks to which the smooth operation of public administration bodies and their subordinate entities is maintained in the event of a crisis. As a result of these undertakings, the authorities have a clear vision and specific procedures for cooperation and counteracting their effects.

- unification – granting administrative authorities general competences guaranteeing fulfilment of the responsibilities they have been charged with;
- categorization of threats – consists in the classification of threats into separate groups according to the type and spectrum of impact, as well as assigning them to specific legal solutions;
- universality – crisis management is organized by public authorities in cooperation with the specialized institutions and organizations operating in the public space.<sup>14</sup>

The activities included in crisis management are a more or less effective response to the multitude of non-military (natural and anthropogenic) and military (political and military crises) threats. Moreover, as many experts believe, they are an integral part of the national security and defence system. Their purpose is to reduce the likelihood of a crisis situation at the time of their taking control over them, as a result of which it is possible to restore the original functionality of the state.

### The phenomenon of social conflicts and their variants

One of the concepts most frequently analysed by social scientists is the definition of conflicts that occur in society, in the workplace and within various organizations. This term is difficult to standardize due to its broad spectrum as well as the accompanying generalizations that do not reflect the intensity of the dispute or its possible course.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Piwowarski, M. Rozwadowski, *System zarządzania kryzysowego jako...*, op. cit., p. 351.

The concepts of conflict presented above make it possible to consider its constructive and functional aspects in terms of its effects on society.

The etymology of the word conflict is derived from the Latin *conflictus*, meaning a collision, which is often defined as a clash, contradiction of aspirations, dispute, incompatibility of interests or views. In sociology, this term is “usually associated with dissimilarity or contradiction of individual or group interests resulting from a limited access to goods, which creates the basis of a conflict”.<sup>15</sup> So it is a situation involving at least two sides, as a result of which there is a clash of opposing views, values or interests at a specific place and time, preventing peaceful coexistence.

According to researchers, a conflict is a “situation of emotional and intellectual involvement arising from social contact, which leads to the distortion of ties connecting people and is the cause of difficulties in establishing and maintaining interpersonal contacts.”<sup>16</sup> In conclusion, the previously mentioned *conflictus* is not only the struggle of entities for specific goods or values, but it is also a situation in which relationships are damaged and sometimes even completely destroyed. Disagreement between people or social groups takes place when opposing views are confronted, the aim of which is to implement previously established assumptions. Additionally, considering the essence and nature of man, about therefore

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<sup>15</sup> Encyklopedia Państwowego Wydawnictwa Naukowego <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/konflikt-spoeczny;3924927.html> (access 31 July 2020).

<sup>16</sup> J. Borkowski, M. Dyrda, L. Kanarski, B. Rokicki, *O konfliktach i negocjacjach*, publ. Wyższa Szkoła Informatyki Stosowanej i Zarządzania, Warszawa 2000, p. 11.

T. Hobbes<sup>17</sup> wrote that among others, a worldview conflict is an unavoidable situation.

Another definition is included in the *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego* (Glossary of National Security Terms), where conflict is presented as “a peculiar kind of a relationship between social groups (or their parts) that arises when their members are convinced that there is a conflict of interest between them and that the vital needs and interests of one group are prevented from being satisfied by the other.”<sup>18</sup> This perception of conflict indicates it as a zero-sum game,<sup>19</sup> where one party meets its needs, while the other is left with nothing. In the above period, the cause of the dispute is not only the opposition of interests in themselves, but man himself as an individual, opting for a specific interest and its subjective view. A similar situation occurs within social groups, thus also putting a group's interests ahead of the rest of society. This contradiction also occurs in groups with similar goals, but incompatible due to the existence of discrepancies in the presented political, cultural, and religious postulates or traditions.

Basing on the abovementioned definitions it can be assumed that a conflict is a dispute between at least two social entities with specific goals that perceive the other party as a barrier or obstacle to achieving their goals. The concept

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<sup>17</sup> T. Hobbes (1588–1679) – an English thinker and philosopher who in his work entitled “Leviathan” described the relations of the state of nature occurring between people according to the principle “man is wolf to man”, according to which man is the greatest threat to himself – *bellum omnium contra omnes* – the war of all against all.

<sup>18</sup> *Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, publ. Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2008, p. 64.

<sup>19</sup> J. Stewart, *Bridges Not Walls. A Book about Interpersonal Communication*, publ. McGraw-Hill, Ontario 1995 p. 490.

of *conflictus* implies that there are various possibilities of creating tensions in society caused by social discontent, unfavourable geopolitical situation, collapse of the economic market and its fluctuations, any discriminations on grounds of income, worldview or cultural and social reasons. Thus given the numerous reasons for the occurrence of unrest, it is impossible to predict which of events or situations will cause a sudden increase in social discontent.

By analysing the terms of the phenomenon of a social conflict, it can be observed that for a conflict to occur certain conditions must exist as a result of which it may develop: the existence of at least two or more parties affected by the conflict; actions taken by each party must be opposed to each other; it takes place when there is a shortage of certain goods for all entities; the aspect of power is a key element in the dispute; the behaviour assumed during a conflict is destructive towards the opponent; there is a clear line in the social relations of the warring parties.

Based on the circumstances of the conflicts, S. Chełpa and T. Witkowski<sup>20</sup> divided conflicts into five individual phases, with the following distinctions: escalation, settlement and resolution of the dispute, and compromise reached by the parties. The first phase is characterized by the occurrence of a small tension between the parties, which is the beginning of the appearance of conflict detectors, which proves an exacerbation of the dispute. The second phase, called by researchers the phase of mutual hostility,<sup>21</sup> is the stage

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<sup>20</sup> The phases of conflicts are presented differently by various authors. More in: W. Skrzyński, M. Dyrda, *Wykłady z psychologii społecznej*, pub. Naukowe Medium, Warszawa 2003, p. 202.

<sup>21</sup> S. Chełpa, T. Witkowski, *Psychologia konfliktów*, pub. Oficyna Wydawnicza UNUS, Wałbrzych 1999, p.151.

of increasing negative assessment of the opposing party and the manifestation of hostile behaviour towards it by members of the other group. The third stage is the situation of the so-called climax of the subsequent conflict. During it, the current tension between the parties is released because of a disagreement, whereby rational arguments usually are not recognised. The fourth phase takes the form of internal contemplation (quiet phase), when each of the parties to the dispute is ready to enter a peaceful dialogue and separate the existing emotions from the presented arguments. Equally important, if not the most important, is the last phase of the conflict, as a result of which the groups of stakeholders establish an understanding and work out their positions and the interests they present, enabling their coexistence with the rest of the society.

An important element on the basis of which a conflict and its causes are analysed is to identify the hotspot and subject it to a detailed investigation, breaking it down into key factors. This approach makes it possible to draw the right conclusions, as well as accurately trace the attitudes of entities towards each other, their positions and the goal they were trying to achieve. Frequently, getting into conflict may indicate a low level of emotional intelligence<sup>22</sup> or a lack of soft skills, the competences that determine how an individual or

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<sup>22</sup> According to D. Goleman, one of the main elements creating the structure of human personality is emotional intelligence, which is part of self-awareness, independent of the intellect possessed. Simply put, it is the ability to show empathy and the ability to behave in society by influencing one's own emotions. It consists of: knowing one's emotions; managing emotions; the ability to motivate oneself; recognizing and maintaining relationships with others. More: D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, publ. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing, New York 1996. pp. 446–457.

a social group behaves, how they communicate with other people or how they organize their work and activity. According to David. J. Deming's<sup>23</sup> research there is a steady increase in the need for people with soft skills.

Due to the extensive and imprecise conceptual definition of a conflict as well as the different perception and interpretation by researchers in the field of psychology and sociology, it is possible to distinguish several types of conflicts. Given its nature researchers are able to select the most common ones, including interpersonal conflicts, internal conflicts, intra-group conflicts, inter-group conflicts, as well as international and global conflicts. From the point of view of this article, the author will focus on the first four types.

An interpersonal conflict arises when two or more people experience a clash of conflicting views, different interests or goals that are followed by individuals.<sup>24</sup> In such a conflict there is not only an unhealthy competition between the disputing parties, but also a struggle for privileges and position in the group to which they belong begins. This situation is so dangerous that it may lead to a division within a given community and contribute to the evolution of the conflict on a larger scale.

A conflict of an internal nature can be considered when for a given individual there are at least two incompatible values that are equally attractive. An additional difficulty in deciding may be the contradictory pieces of information reaching the recipient or the influence of third parties in their close proximity. When an individual is under the long-term effect of that contradiction, this state may change the functioning

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<sup>23</sup> D.J. Deming, *The growing importance of social skills in the labor market*, National Bureau of Economic Research, May 2017.

<sup>24</sup> J. Stewart, *Bridges Not Walls. A Book about...*, op. cit., p. 53.

of that individual in the society or their total exclusion from participating in public life.

An intra-group conflict affects groups operating in the society as well as some of their representatives who do not support the values and norms, question their position in the hierarchy, as well as do not agree with the rules prevailing in the community. As it happens the beginning of this type of conflict is deliberate opposition and breaking the set rules for selfish reasons.<sup>25</sup> Such actions lead to a change in the functioning of the group through its disintegration and destabilization, emergence of divisions that may affect the group – working out new, better solutions or be destructive by leading to a group split.

The fourth type of conflict is an inter-group conflict that occurs as a result of a collision of several groups whose aspirations lead to conflicting activities or interests with positive effects for one group and negative for other groups.<sup>26</sup> This is the least predictable conflict, due to the size of a given group, the forces and resources at their disposal needed to achieve the goal set in advance. It happens that the competing sides try to destroy or disintegrate the opponent's internal structure.

Those types of conflicts describe the sphere of relations that take place between individual entities participating in social life. An important aspect in conflict analysis is to find out what exactly the dispute is about, what is its original nature (value). Over time, it becomes blurred due to the surrender to one's emotional instincts, and as a result people turn reluctant towards the other side rather than display genuine will to reach a compromise.

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<sup>25</sup> J. Borkowski, M. Dyrda, *O konflikcie i negocjacjach...*, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, p. 32–33.

An American mediator, C. W. Moore, who created the model (Moore's Circle<sup>27</sup>), focused on the specific nature of conflict, where he distinguished the following types of disputes: conflicts of values, interests dispute, data conflicts, structural conflicts and conflicts in relationships. According to the mediator, a single conflict may have several causes at the same time.

A conflict of values is the difference in the professed traditions and ideological attitudes that determine the way a person perceives the world around them. Depending on the type of attitude of a given person, he or she may share the *us-them*<sup>28</sup> environment and to a greater or lesser extent accept tolerance for religious or cultural differences.

A relationship conflict comprises several factors, as well as the nature of those involved. These are: poor communication resulting from the disruption of the message at the sender-recipient level leading to an incorrect or disturbed verbal communication; misperception is closely related to poor communication (intentional or unintentional), as a result of which the parties attribute to themselves a wrong set of character traits for their behaviour; being guided by strong emotions that make it impossible to perceive rational solutions to the existing situation.

A data conflict occurs when the presented data is misunderstood or when the data is misinterpreted, often combined with a lack of information.<sup>29</sup> The cause of this conflict is:

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<sup>27</sup> C.W. Moore, *The mediation Process. Practical Strategies for Resolving Conflicts*, pub. Jossey Bass, San Francisco 2003.

<sup>28</sup> In the case of this conflict, the subjectivism of a given individual or a group of stakeholders is of great importance, e.g. through social comparison, i.e. the cognitive process of oneself in relation to the beliefs of people around us.

<sup>29</sup> M. Koter, *Konflikt interpersonalny*, [in:] L. Kanarski, M. Koter, K. Loranty, I. Urych, *Spółeczne uwarunkowania bezpieczeństwa*.

misunderstanding the data –drawing incorrect conclusions; a wrong way of receiving information due to one's status, e.g. social status; lack of or insufficient amount of received information resulting in tension caused by inability to relate to the data, making the individual feel threats to their goals and perceive the situation as an attempt to manipulate them.

A structural conflict is a manifestation of insufficient resources, e.g. the number of personnel, time, or the lack of definition of social roles. This dispute is conditioned by uneven distribution of human resources, leading to a division into a more and less elite social groups. Time plays an important role, affecting the efficiency of entities and disproportionate control over the resources held within the group, e.g. when deciding on the allocation of the social fund the opinion of the CEO of a company is considered to be more important.

In his 2015 publication, M. Kotler<sup>30</sup> points out that a conflict of interest is a phenomenon of a competition between individuals or social groups for non-constitutional goods, where the so-called zero-sum game is played. It consists in satisfying one's needs at the expense of the others in the following areas: psychological needs<sup>31</sup> (for example justice), material goods, or matters relating to specific procedures. The parties involved in the dispute are primarily concerned with the fulfilment and satisfaction of their needs or the needs of the group they belong to. They are related to satisfaction

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*Wybrane zagadnienia psychologii i socjologii*, pub. Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2015, pp. 223–247.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 231.

<sup>31</sup> The participants in the dispute about the nature of psychological needs are not focused on obtaining material benefits from a given conflict, but changes in the functioning of a given group as well as satisfying important mental or moral needs, e.g. a sense of equality or compensations for unequal treatment.

with the achieved results of their activities and the previously mentioned intangible benefits. Additionally, in order to establish cooperation with the other party, they must be treated with due respect, fairness and equality. The key condition in the process of constructing solutions and durability of the agreements reached is to define the preferences of each of the parties involved in the conflict.

### The role of conflicts in society

Both in human mentality and consciousness, there are convictions, attitudes and views relating to the issue of coping with the existing social conflicts as well as preventing these events. Researcher D. Litwin-Lewandowska, in her book entitled “Zmiana kultury konfliktów społecznych”,<sup>32</sup> distinguished three perceptions regarding interpersonal disputes: first they occur during crisis situations in which the most effective way to resolve them is to fight them; disputes are present as one of the elements of human life; the third perception is that an individual has no influence on conflict prevention.

When analysing the individual perceptions mentioned by the author, it can be noticed that they lead to accepting the statement that conflicts are widely accepted as an inevitable and important part of human existence<sup>33</sup> and treated as an effective method of eliminating differences in social life. Such thinking may lead to the conclusion that their character must be negative – constituting a significant obstacle

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<sup>32</sup> D. Litwin-Lewandowska, *Zmiana kultury konfliktów społecznych*, [in:] TEKA Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych, no. IV, publ. Państwowa Akademia Nauk, Lublin 2009.

<sup>33</sup> W. Ury, *Getting to Peace: Transforming Conflict at Home, at Work, and in the World*, publ. Viking, Michigan 1999, p. 22.

on the path of mankind, or positively leading to changes, as an outcome of which *homo sapiens* developed better and more durable models of social behaviour.

The distinction between constructive and destructive conflicts was rightly interpreted by J. Stewart, who distinguished them during the analysis of interactions between people. The main difference that separates them from each other is that “constructive conflicts are realistic, meaning that they focus on real problems that can potentially be resolved by the parties involved. While destructive conflicts are unrealistic, meaning they are measured by a manifestation of aggression aimed at overcoming or hurting the other side.”<sup>34</sup> Regarding the first interaction described by the author, it can be noticed that both the attitudes and behaviours of individuals are flexible. While during the occurrence of a destructive interaction, they are characterized by the lack of this variability. Moreover, the method of a constructive dispute resolution is assumed to be based on the possibility of implementing smaller or larger parts, determined by the opposing parties. It takes place when the conflicting parties show a willingness to cooperate over and above their differences. On the other hand, a destructive conflict is reduced to a zero-sum game, leading to the total victory of one side over the other.

With the occurrence of the phenomenon of social conflicts in everyday public life as well as the multitude of social entities that it affects, there is a justified fear that those conflicts will turn into a situation where large areas of dispute arise. The scope of a potential conflict should be perceived from the viewpoint of a narrower or wider spectrum of its occurrence – and what is related to it, its intensity and its leading

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<sup>34</sup> J. Stewart, *Bridges Not Walls. A Book about...*, op. cit., p.490.

to a social crisis. Due to the possible nature of a potential conflict, the number of people participating in it and its potential scope (local, regional or national) it may take the form of mass demonstrations, through which it is possible to present the views of one's group to a large audience.

### Social conflicts during crisis situations

The fact that conflict is an inseparable element occurring in various spheres of human life (at work, at school, in the circle of friends, trade union or society in general). Along with the changes taking place in the technological, cultural, economic, and demographic areas, there is a growing number of people actively participating in social life.<sup>35</sup> Thus, there is a larger number of people who may be potentially involved in the conflict.

The event of social conflicts is not assigned to a given situation that currently prevails in a country. In the absence of threats, in which the functioning of the state is not disturbed, the allocation of appropriate resources necessary for monitoring and exercising control over the safe course of this conflict is small. However, this is not always a situation of "peaceful" threats. The occurrence of social tensions presents itself differently when there is a simultaneous threat to security. The moment the crisis occurs, public administration structures<sup>36</sup> and their subordinate security services (the police<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> W. Skrzypczak, *Geografia społeczno-ekonomiczna*, publ. Efekt, Warszawa 1998, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Act of 4 September 1997 *on the activities of government administration*, Journal of Laws, no. 141, item 943, Art. 38.

<sup>37</sup> Act of 6 April 1990 *on the police*, Journal of Laws, no. 30, item 179, Art. 1.3.

or municipal police<sup>38</sup>) have reduced human and material resources at their disposal. This allows allocation of some forces and resources necessary to act on site of the event. In addition, the authorities at the appropriate level of administration implement crisis management plans in order to enable the entities participating in rescue operation take more efficient actions.

When carrying out projects envisaged for individual services in the response phase, these units are under time pressure on which the health and life of many people depends, but also on the scale of effects resulting from this situation. The difficulties in carrying out a precise rescue operation are: the prevailing weather conditions, difficulties caused by the panic of the population, lack of specialist equipment, as well as insufficient number of qualified personnel. The occurrence of a conflict of a social nature would constitute an additional burden on law enforcement entities and force them to redirect some of the units to secure the situation. In the case of a peaceful dispute, e.g. in the form of a demonstration, there is no serious threat to the gathered participants and the bodies actively participating in crisis operations. Each side of the conflict is able to present their arguments or expectations towards the opposing side and establish a social dialogue, which is often a creative factor as an outcome on which a compromise is achieved. However, the situation is different at the time of a dysfunctional conflict. Its elements are strengthened in presenting aggressive social attitudes, such as anger, dissatisfaction, willingness to change – often without considering the long-term consequences resulting

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<sup>38</sup> Act of 29 August 1997 on *municipal police*, Journal of Laws, no. 123, item 779, Art. 1.9.5 and 1.9.11.

from the decisions made. It also should be remembered that the ringleaders of this type of behaviour deliberately take actions during critical situations in order to use them to their advantage and achieve the articulated postulates. Due to the dynamic nature of social dissonance, this event is usually difficult to predict and requires constant monitoring of the environment by specific law enforcement institutions. The dysfunction of this type of conflict consists in taking the form of a strike, blockades of traffic or public institutions, e.g. hospitals or law enforcement facilities<sup>39</sup> that are the key factors due to the occurrence of a crisis situation.

In the event of a road blockade that took place in the key areas of Poland in 2019 due to the farmers' strike,<sup>40</sup> the access of emergency services, whose main task is to quickly reach the scene and provide immediate assistance to the injured, was impossible. As a result of this situation, the management centres responsible for coordinating and supervising the services were obliged to designate a substitute route and redirect the necessary forces. Any extra tasks generate delays that extend time of response, cause disorder and increase the degree of threat to human life and health. In addition, detours contribute to greater consumption of resources, e.g. fuel, excessive use of vehicles or specialized equipment.

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<sup>39</sup> In November 2020, there was a strike organized by the National Trade Union of Nurses and Midwives, the purpose of which was to force the government to make necessary changes to the regulations. Those changes were to improve the conditions and quality of work and wages of nurses and midwives. The conflict that arose was caused by the excessive hours that medical personnel had to work during the designated shifts due to the shortage of staff and the possibility of proper rotations between night and day shifts. Article by Adrianna Rozwadowska published on 11 December 2020 in *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

<sup>40</sup> *Protest rolników w Warszawie. Centrum stolicy zablokowane na kilka godzin*, Newsweek 3 April 2019.

An equally important element of crisis management is the allocation of such forces and resources to the areas of the where they will be able to secure the demonstrations and, if necessary, will proceed to end them in case of a threat to public order.<sup>41</sup> The location of the units constituting the peripheral reserve in a region other than the area affected by the crisis makes it impossible to redirect them quickly enough to support the services that carry out tasks at the scene of the event.

### Conclusions

When symptoms of a social conflict are detected by the competent authorities during a crisis situation, it is necessary to take immediate preventive measures in order to limit the number of potential victims due to the prevailing threat. It is important that the authorities have adequate human resources and equipment, the use of which will not raise doubts as to the actions taken to protect human life, health or property. Additional burdens for the management system in the field of crisis management and entities participating in preventive and rescue activities in the risk area constitute a challenge for these authorities. The need to monitor two separate events, as well as the involvement of services from the administrative area, strains the available resources and weakens the effective functioning of the authorities. A significant issue that affects the assurance of safety, public order and sense of satisfaction and belonging of individuals and stakeholders' groups to society is an appropriate social

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<sup>41</sup> Act of 24 July 2015 *on assemblies*, Journal of Laws, item 1485, Art. 20.1.

policy. By ensuring the possibility of undisturbed existence, professional and intellectual development, education, as well as building social awareness and emotional intelligence, a high level of social order is effected. Thanks to such activities, state entities minimize the possibility of a situation in which there may be a rapid increase in dissatisfaction among the population. The extreme manifestation of this is the occurrence of a dysfunctional social conflict hindering the efficient functioning and operation of public administration structures in non-threatening and crisis situations.

Social conflicts taking the form of a large gatherings, such as demonstrations or blockades of critical infrastructure not only hamper the work of public administration bodies and their subordinate bodies. Frequently, demonstrators think only of their own goals and benefits from organizing such a gathering, but they often forget about the possible, even violent, effect on bystanders. The negative aspects of social conflicts that hinder normal functioning pose a direct threat to the life and health of the population. Demonstrators who block the access routes to areas affected by the crisis because they want to force the authorities to accept their demands also make it impossible to move to an area that is not under direct threat.

This article deals with the presentation of crisis management as a specific form of managing the activities of state entities that implement projects in the field of prevention, preparation, response in the event of danger and reconstruction of the damaged areas by restoring the original state. The most important legal acts have been distinguished, containing a list of authorities involved in crisis situations, which have been assigned specific tasks for this period. The author has also taken up the subject of the phenomenon of conflict,

its occurrence between individuals, groups of interest or one that affects a significant part of society. Possible types of these disputes, individual phases of their course, methods of their possible resolution and their negative or positive character have been indicated.

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