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Concepts in Polish Political Science Relating to Conflictual Views of "the Political"

Abstract: The terms "politics" and "the political" have been conceptualised, used, and understood differently in modern Polish political science and theory over the past 50 years, having been featured in a long list of books and scholarly articles. In addition to an overview of major initiatives, conferences, and discussions around these terms, the article includes a discourse analysis prepared with qualitative research tools. The purpose of the discourse analysis is multifold. First, it aims to map the presence of these terms in the discourse of modern Polish political science and theory. Second, it aims to identify to what extent the Polish discourse has been influenced by authors such as Carl Schmitt or Chantal Mouffe, and to what extent the two terms were conceptualised in an original way, proper to the Polish social science discourse. Third, how often scientists have used the words that were associated with the conflict.

Keywords: politics, the political, theory of politics, conflict

Introduction

The political is a term that, like time (or power), is one of those so peculiar that everyone knows what it is unless they are asked for a definition (Kaczorowski, 1996, p. 69; Porębski, 1996, p. 145). Thus, it is not unusual to see unflagging

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attempts to conceptualise *the political* or (constituting the etymon for it) the *politics*, to recall different ways of understanding them or authorial systematisations (typologies or classifications) that take into account different criteria or at least look for characteristic or even constitutive features. The world and society are evolving, thus various academics are updating earlier theories, drawing inspiration from them, weeding out anachronisms, and coming up with new suggestions. The two terms mentioned above are crucial for defining the research object in political science, delimiting the research field proper to it and, above all, constructing the identity of the community of researchers who identify with the discipline. Papers devoted to the problem of the limits of politics or the dilemmas and pitfalls of the political have been placed on the agendas of five political science congresses; these issues have been addressed at many conferences on theory and methodology and are the topic of numerous seminars, articles and books. Their crucial importance does not require justification, although the analogies make one wonder – for example, do historians just as often debate what history is, lawyers what the law is (not what it should be), and does the discussion on the essence of society still capture the attention of sociologists? Another similar question concerns the adaptation of these themes and, in fact, the proportion in the Polish discourse of reviews and reprints to the original native proposals. There is no disputing the discussion's complexity, which reflects the diversity of scientific traditions, paradigms, theoretical currents, and social thought, as well as the variety of research goals implying acceptance of the usefulness of the aforementioned categories for the analysis of various artifacts, institutions, processes or phenomena of a syndromatic nature, such as politics. Debating the outcomes of the fifty years of Polish political theory creates an opportunity for a retrospective review of the research of Polish political scientists, recalling the initiatives of various scientific centres and assessing the reception of concepts and debates taking place around the phenomenon of the political. In the case of this article, it is also an attempt to verify the thesis of a particular kind of asymmetry (i.e., the over-representation of one kind of interpretation), one in which what is political is determined by conflict and the inevitability of conflict is treated axiomatically. In order to follow the chosen research procedure it was important to select books, multi-author monographs and articles, to create a corpus of statements on the basis of the keywords used by the authors, to prepare a code key taking into account the variables relating to the authors (centre, specialisation, subject matter undertaken), the central category which in this case is the political (criteria for its delimitation, boundaries, features, designators, definitions, relations with politics) or the notion of conflict, which is important for the research problem. The goal of the research was to reconstruct the debate on the political itself and the accentuation in it of the traditions of political thought and social or political theories that exposed the conflictual nature of the relations between the political actors. No correlation of the indicated variables was assumed or sought.

The political – heritage and achievements of Polish political theory

To start, there is a quick review of the literature. The bibliography of books and scientific articles, for which the keywords are the political and politics (the relationship of the concepts or exclusively the first), and the authors are representatives of the Polish social sciences interested in both the theory and adaptation of the aforementioned terms for the analysis of human activity variously oriented, certainly exceeds one hundred items. One of the reasons why the number of authors' contributions is so high is the fact that Polish political science centres have taken initiatives finalising with collective works strictly oriented towards explaining the phenomenon of the political (University of Wrocław, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań), dissertations devoted to the criteria of the political or the reception and criticism of Carl Schmitt's thought (University of Warsaw) and journals such as *Studia Politologiczne* (twice), *Politeja*, *Political Review*, *Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne* and *Athenaeum* provided the publishing opportunities for researchers presenting literature reviews, comparative studies, interpretations of social and political thought, and case studies. The material chosen for the analysis includes representations of political philosophy (see: Drałus, 2012, 2017; Żyro, 2015), studies and interpretations of political thought (Skarzyński, 2010; Morawski, 2012), but much more frequently scientific papers, also helpful in the teaching of political science (Jabłoński, 2012, 2017; Sobkowiak, 2012). Single texts or chapters can be found in studies on the methodology of politics, works and dissertations on contemporary political science integrating one or more research centres (Sulowski, 2018; Koziełło et al., 2014), in Festschrifts dedicated to masters and teachers (such as the book prepared by followers for Barbara Gola in Opole, Andrzej W. Jabłoński in Wrocław or Mirosław Karwat in Warsaw) and, of course, in monographs on political theory (Blok, 2009; Bäcker, 2011; Laska, 2017).

Publishing has had a peculiar dynamic, increasing in the second decade of the 21st century; it suffices to point out here that in the accompanying list of qualitatively analysed 76 articles or excerpts from monographs, only nine items were published before 2008. Given that in this group there are mainly articles from a single work, an item published under the editorship of Ryszard Skarzyński entitled *Carl Schmitt i współczesna myśl polityczna* [Carl Schmitt and Contemporary Political Thought], as well as an unused monograph by this author (Skarzyński, 1992), it can be seen that only the second decade of the 21st century brings an appropriate output . The reasons for this kind of escalation of interest among Polish academic community and in the Polish publishing market can be seen in the need to reevaluate concepts in connection with everything observable and characteristic of post-modernity or late modernity, or much more

trivially in the reissues of Carl Schmitt's dissertations that have enlivened reflection and discussion, the publication of works by Chantal Mouffe that are critical of the aforementioned (and with it of liberalism), and the presentation of debates involving other contemporary intellectuals. The expansion of liberal rhetoric and the opposing conservative backlash will also be significant ideological confluences.

The 20th anniversary of Poland's political transformation coincided with the proclamation of the "political turn" (Stokfiszewski, 2009), and before that, of great significance, was the publication of a small orange booklet entitled *Polityczność* [The Political] by the above-mentioned author (Mouffe, 2008) and sketches by another French philosopher devoted to the conceptualisation of politics, the political and political agency (Rancière, 2008), as well as an extensive dissertation by Polish philosophers on the boundaries of the political (Dybel, Wróbel, 2008). It is worth recalling, however, that the reception of Carl Schmitt's works in Polish scientific discourse was initiated many years earlier, as we can learn from the authors of texts dedicated to Polish political scientists, recalling the traditions of the discipline. The example of such could be a reminiscence of seminars in the 1980s:

> We discussed, and a kind of "spice" that added charm and opened minds became the threads of a non-classic search for the essence of the political, which Professor Ryszka brought to the seminar. [...] I remember the comeback of an already classic but now unjustly forgotten 1967 book about the search for the essence of a replicating, "mannered" state mechanism. I mean, of course, *Państwo stanu wyjątkowego* [State of Emergency] and the execution therein – namely the Third Reich, the legalistic (thus formally legal) coup d'état and the change of law into its negation, viz. the departure of law and lawyers from being the basis of the state and civil society towards stabilising the outbreak of the commander-in-chief's will and paroxysms of support for this transformation with the seriousness and competence of state institutions (Faliński, 2021, p. 25).

This quotation may confirm that reflection on the political is resumed triggered by the observations of the social changes taking place, the accompanying unrest, anomie or noted trauma, and the perceived political stagnation. The latter especially when it stimulates researchers' efforts to explain the phenomena of reconfiguration of components of political culture, disintegration of existing normative systems, the rise in popularity of nationalist thought, integrism and authoritarian populism in attempts to block the chances for alternation of power. It is also an indication of the inspiration behind the discussion of the legacy of Carl Schmitt's thought in law and political science in the 1990s. Certainly, Franciszek Ryszka's text on political semantics and what is political has not been forgotten (1988). Representatives of later generations of political theorists and

others have referred to this text (Blok, 2009, p. 40; Czajowski, 2011; Laska, 2017, p. 76; Kasza, 2018).

In presenting the publications that constitute the corpus for the presented research, it should be noted that book items that do not have a digital equivalent in the form of an e-book or a PDF file have been excluded from it.[2] Among them, there are those written by philosophers whose purpose was to specify *differentia specifica*, indicate objects or phenomena of the political, non-political or apolitical nature (Dybel, Wróbel, 2008). The similar situation happened in the case of books whose authors have very specifically tried to apply the distinctive categories of the political according to one concept to the research of political thought or the expression of programmatic content by political actors (Trembicka, 2013). Unfortunately, I had to omit some incredibly fascinating studies because of the reasons stated above. These studies examined how human creativity outcomes were being politicised under certain conditions, giving them the political character, leading to being interpreted or perceived as political (Minkner, 2012; Morawski 2019), or, else, how certain institutions' practices differed from their formal legal foundations (Gmurek, 2016a, 2016b). The latter items are not only an interesting indicator of the use of the category of the political in the analysis, but, as in the case of Magdalena Ozimek-Hanzlik, research conducted by young academics that resulted in a degree. The cited works serve as examples of how younger generations have used previous publications on the political for the theoretical development of their own ideas. These primarily refer to those outlining the methodological framework of the analysis, including the benefits and limitations of implementing the term *the political* into the designed research (Karwat, 1991, 1996, 2010, 2015; Blok, 2009; Czajowski, 2011; Jabłoński, 2012). An example of intergenerational relay is certainly also provided by such books as *W poszukiwaniu polityczności* [In Search of the Political] (Jurga-Wosik et al., 2014), and *Polityka/polityczność. Granice dyskursu* [Politics/The Political. Boundaries of Discourse] (Krzysztan et al., 2016) – these articles were included in the corpus of analysed publications. Although it is currently possible to state the contentious fact that academic departments of theory of politics have had their activities curtailed (by merging with others, closing down, or reducing their activity in studies conducted), it is also possible to show the existence of an intellectual formation that unites various generations of Polish political scientists and is centred on issues essential to the field. Discussions centred around the concept of the political have resulted in the last two decades with non-trivial projects, followed by the publications of more advanced research results. Certainly, a book on hostility or another on creativity versus leisure can be treated as such (Ziółkowski, 2013; Młyńczyk, 2015).

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[2]   The lexical analyses and word cloud were performed using the MAXQDA qualitative and mixed-methods research program.

The corpus did not include biographical publications on Carl Schmitt nor those works in which the issue of the political was one of many angles, perhaps even secondary to other important ones for the analysis of this figure. Since several authors specialise in the reception and reinterpretation of the German scholar's thought, a selection of their works has been made, assuming that the inclusion of all of them in the corpus will obscure the main topic, which is the conflictual account of the political.[3] Another omitted group of texts are those whose authors locate their interests outside the discipline of political science, even though the title, subject and narration might contain a reference to the analysed conceptual category. For example, understanding and explaining the political is of interest to legal scholars focusing attention on the problems of the genesis of state institutions, legality and legitimacy of subjects, disputes of historical significance reflecting the evolution of political-legal thought and doctrines, specifically the political character of adjudication. Similarly, the topic appears in the journals and publications of philosophers, cultural studies scholars and representatives of media sciences. All other correlations are expected and possible. In a sense, the title of the monograph *Humanistyka i polityka. Czy wszystko jest polityczne?* [Humanities and Politics. Is Everything Political?] (Brocki, Kleśta--Nawrocki, 2018), will be of some significance. Although the agenda included topics present in political science discourse – including extremely important ones like the political nature of science (humanities, historiography), public engagement, critical art and poetry and even (what is worth noting) the political nature of common sense and common knowledge – this item was also omitted (Brocki, Kleśta-Nawrocki, 2018). Among the exceptions, works from outside the discipline which were inclued in the analysis is an article by a sociologist – literally in its title amphasising an interest in a conflictual view of the political (Baranowski, 2014).

The concept of the political – between semantics, conceptualisation and problematisation

Examining the political as a keyword, occurring in a certain class of publications, it is not difficult to prove that the intentions, interests, research methods and ways of presenting the topic were different. The two most relevant for theory of politics themes concerned the political itself, understanding – interpreting

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[3]   Among authors with numerous interpretations of Carl Schmitt's legacy, his decisionism, concept of sovereignty, the state – its legality and legitimacy, law and political theology are Ryszard Skarzyński (1996), Zbigniew Stawrowski (1996), Adam Wielomski (2017a, 2017b), Anna Krzynówek-Arndt, followed by Łukasz Święcicki (2015), Filip Biały, Magdalena Pruszyńska and others.

– the impossibility of demarcating its boundaries, metaphorical coexistence with something antinomic or complementary – apolitical, non-political (also parapolitical), and agreements/dependencies in the relationship between politics and the political. In the first case, there are some interpretations of the concept – that it is ambiguous and vague, but also inspiring. It troubles researchers and is essential for understanding social reality with its political subsystem.

The reactivation of interest in the political is associated with a number of new philosophical concepts and a changing historical context (Blok, Kołodziejczak, 2015). It is, therefore, not surprising to refer to the texts and the understanding of the political by Carl Schmitt and Chantal Mouffe and then a series of publications by other thinkers, social theorists and commentators on political life. Numerical indicators of discussing concepts, citations and referencing the names mentioned undeniably confirm that it is rather an exception to ignore the definitions created by these researchers. It suffices to mention that within 76 articles included in the corpus Schmitt's name is mentioned (including footnotes) 1,033 times (51 documents), and Chantal Mouffe's name is mentioned 641 times (28 documents).

The majority of Polish authors, referring to Schmitt's works, recall the criteria triggering the existence of the political: relationality, the antagonistic nature of relations, its reference to collective actors and the existential dimension of antagonistic relations. Conflict, the existence of a sovereign who can decide whether or not the collective exists, and the divide brought about by designating friend and enemy roles serve as its catalysts. To put it another way, the presence of the indicated relationship, antagonism and antinomy, bipolarity (Drałus, 2017) is a condition constituting the political. Slightly less frequently indicated is the gradualness/blurriness of the political, its temporality, lability or temporal discontinuity (Pięta-Szawara, 2014). Even more rarely cited are those criteria indicated by Schmitt, which are related to the state of concentration (without specifying of whom? of what?) i.e., intensity or its opposite, association versus dispersion (Sepczyńska, 2010). The political can be treated amorphously as a feature, an area or a state of being; it is something that has no boundaries and is gradable (Rubisz, 2015). The interpretation of the relationship between politics and the political is determined by Chantal Mouffe's take proposing, with reference to Heidegger's terminology, to locate politics at the "ontic" level and the political at the "ontological" level (Baranowski, 2014; Biały, 2010; Gmurek, 2017; Kasza, 2018; Krzysztan, 2016; Młyńczyk, 2014; Rosicki, 2014a; Szewczak, 2014; Ścigaj, 2022; Zbrzeźniak, 2016).

The oldest Polish interpretation defines the political as "a feature of human collectivities, organised, constantly making a choice of enemy and ally"[4] (Ryszka,

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[4] It is worth noting that the translation used and the use of the enemy-ally opposition in the discourse replaced another: enemy – friend. These terms are not synonymous.

1988). The later takes often include a lexically new type of *definiens* that emphasises one of the mentioned features. For example, the political is: "an immanent feature of social life" (Jakubowski, 2014), "a set of approved ways of presenting proposals for organising social reality in the perspective of interpersonal relations" (Baranowski, 2014), "a feature of intergroup relations" (Błaszczykiewicz, 2012), "a mode of existence of a collective actor" (Kaczorowski, 1996). Undeniably, however, the ways in which the political is presented are more likely to emphasise the "antagonistic dimension of human relations" (Biały, 2010) necessary for its existence. It is "a sphere of power and antagonism" (Gmurek, 2017), "a space of power and conflict" (Pięta-Szawara, 2014), and "is the last phase of the intensification of conflict" (Jabłoński, 2017).

Another type of correlation ties the political to politics, it "is a mirror and continuation of politics" (Karwat, 2010). It constitutes "a prior concept to politics [...]" (Dziubka, 2017). "It lies not so much in the components themselves as in their interdependence" (Karwat, 2015b), and "is the symbolic sphere in which certain fundamental settlements are made that then have an overwhelming impact on everyday life and politics" (Karwat, 2015a). It can be an absolute and intrinsic characteristic or a relative and secondary, "elementary" or "configurational" property; its attributive or contextual nature is significant (Karwat, 2015b). The political, therefore, must be treated aspectually, multidimensionally and syndromatically (Minkner, 2015).

The characteristics mentioned above or constitutive features of the political do not form such a composition towards which there would be a full consensus within the community. What is contested, for example, is not so much the issue of relationships, but the limitation of their perception and attribution to collective actors. The political then is also "the reference of human actions to power, in the broadest sense, as a phenomenon mediating relations between people and resources" (Jabłoński, 2012). It can be "a sphere of first-person experience", as Kazimierz Dziubka – who is far from reductionism – argues, postulating in considering the concept of the political to take into account contemporary knowledge of man and social interactions of what is biological and social (normative and structural) (Dziubka, 2017, p. 63). Determinants of the politicisation of individual life and actions are related to the fact that a person is affected by political actions, participates in politics or even becomes a political actor (Czapnik, 2014). Also present is a combination of individual experience and intergroup relations (Błaszczykiewicz, 2012). Certainly, the perception of the political will be influenced by the theoretical context and the use of terminological grids inherent in source works, hence, for example, the assumption that "the political is an important element creating the habitus of the individual" (Łukowski, 2009). Additional variables constituting the political will be axiological (Blok, 2009, p. 40).

Associating the referenced approaches with alternative types of theory – critical political science, which seeks to expose the extent of social and economic

inequality, deprivation, and disadvantage of particular groups or social categories, and normative theory, which designs social order and the functionality of political systems in the face of complex human needs and interests associated with the collective as a whole – is an important implication of semantic considerations. Focusing attention no longer on the definitions or criteria of the political itself, differences in concepts – gradable as in the classification of approaches into essentialist, aspectual and anti-essentialist – are indicated. It also seems appropriate to attempt to highlight the differences between Polish theorists' relational, contextual or aspectual approaches and to distinguish between concepts that operate with the notion of fields and macrorelationships and those that refer to the syndromaticity of politics itself (Minkner, 2015).

At this point, the last thing worth noting is treating the political as complementary to other attributes of social labelling of phenomena and entities. A thorough and most reasoned systematisation of the various variants can be found in the works of Mirosław Karwat. Non-political, anti-political and apolitical can be associated with doctrines, where the relevant ones (with the annotation "source") are following– conservatism, socialism, liberalism (Rubisz, 2014). The apolitical nature of liberalism is contested by recalling Schmitt and Mouffe's critique, as well as by demonstrating contemporary mystifications related to technocrat rule or contemporary ludicrous examples of the attitude of denial (Czajowski, 2011). In another comment, non-political is a false alternative to the political, where metapolitical (metapolitics?) and apolitical become important categories (Gmurek, 2017). In the latter case, the attitudes so associated have been subtly specified (Karwat, 1991).

Another strand of considerations of the correlation of politics and the political is related to attempts to specify the factors influencing the identity of political science, the possibility of delimiting the proper fields of research for the discipline and the legitimacy of using different methods. Politics and the political are presented as an evolving object of research or simply cognition (Czajowski, 2011; Jabłoński, 2012; Biały, 2012), as "challenges to discipline, theory and political practice" (Blok, Kołodziejczak, 2015). Questions about the boundaries of political science correspond, therefore, with questions about "the criteria of the political allowing to distinguish this sphere" (Ulicka, 2015). The fundamental importance of these concepts is noted, but also the fact that their definitions must have a projective character. The fact that the key concepts are constructs should not cause concern because this is evident in the social sciences where one does not make claims of universality or uniformity of positions. Instead, multiparadigms and the ability to use various types of methodological instruments are advantages rather than drawbacks (Rosicki, 2014a, 2014b).

The political outside of political theory is seen as a determiner, referred to many fields of human activity, actions and their products. A valid question touches the degree of social experience, the political experienced personally, identified

at the level of micro and macro social structures, the discussion of these alternatives, the emergence of structures and lack of justification for using analogies to describe their political essence. The place where semantic analysis precedes research and illustration using a series of examples ties the research object to an aspectual view of the political or politicisation treated as a process or a one-time act. Mirosław Karwat links politicisation to interference in inherently non-political domains, political selection and procurement, and arbitrariness that destroys autonomy (Karwat, 2018). In the analysed corpus of statements, it is understood in relation to entities (institutions), social roles and activities, as well as areas of activity (domains of social life). In the first case, it is not the state and its organs, but organisations of other types whose politicisation or political involvement provide a pretext for using the conceptual category of interest. Examples of such interests include local government (Antkowiak, 2012), the Roman Catholic Church (Bielawska, 2014), the police, the CBA (Central Anticorruption Bureau), the prosecutor's office (Gmurek, 2016a) and institutionalised access to information (Jakubowski, 2014). The second type of interest focused researchers' attention on social action in general (Czajowski, 2012), the functioning of citizens in their relations with politicians (Młyńczyk, 2015) and the practice of journalism (Czajowski, 2015). In the third case, it is not at all debatable to look for the political in international relations (Bieleń, 2018), analysis of the globalisation process with its multidirectionality, contradictions, complementarity of integration and fragmentation (Bäcker, 2011), while in the liminal zone remains religion (Secler, 2014), literature (Biały, Jastrzębska, 2014), in the latter case all areas of art and creative human activities (Karwat, 2018). In the context of history, the politicisation of historiography comes into focus (Paczos, 2014; Rubisz, 2014) and when analysing biographical entries – the politically motivated process of choosing persons deserving of encyclopaedic mention becomes significant (Chrobaczyńska-Plucińska, 2013).

Apart from the fact that the analysed dozens of authors' statements on the issue of the political contain methodological proposals for the implementation or integration of the approaches of various sciences (Łukowski 2009, 2021; Kasza, 2018), it is also an exemplification of the use of various forms of qualitative research, the use of hermeneutics and comparative studies, semantic and semiotic analyses, content and discourse analyses. In several of them there is a direct encouragement to read into the source statements and treat the whole debate in an instrumental way. The goals, perhaps not fully articulated, involve recognising politics and the political as issues characteristic of the peculiarities of the social sciences, obtaining agreement on the meanings assigned to certain terms while pointing out the pluralism of existing solutions. No one is requesting a uniformed stance, but rather a continuous exercise in criticism, comprehension and explanation – particularly since the very discovery of the political, as Wiktor Szewczak writes, "requires a prior recognition of the surprisingly deep arbitrariness

of the social world and reflection on alternative possibilities for ordering the so-
cial world from the micro scale to entire civilizations" (Szewczak, 2014). While
political theorists note attempts to metaphorically escape from repeated funda-
mental questions, they themselves do not shy away from posing and answering
them – hence titles such as *O polityczności, polityce i politologii* [On the Politi-
cal, Politics and Political Science] (Blok, 2009), *Polityka i polityczność. Problemy
teoretyczne i metodologiczne* [Politics and the Political. Theoretical and Method-
ological Issues] (Czajowski, Sobkowiak, 2012), or *O polityce, polityczności i anty-
polityce* [On Politics, the Political and Anti-politics] (Mysona-Byrska, 2016).

Despite the humorously stated fact that "the political overpowers political
dissertations" (Młyńczyk, 2015b), the effort to systematise and explore the po-
litical is paying off with more original research projects and syntheses (Ozimek-
-Hanslik, 2020).

As mentioned, a relatively large amount of interest and space in the writings
of Polish political theorists has been taken up by references to philosophical and
social concepts, polemics or debates among intellectuals addressing the issues
raised by Carl Schmitt in *Pojęcie polityczności* [The Concept of the Political].
This author has set a kind of benchmark. In addition to the 1996 monograph de-
voted exclusively to his political thought, the research was carried on the essen-
tialism of the concept (Drałus, 2012), the issues of the state (Święcicki, 2015), the
comparison to the takes of Chantal Mouffe (Lewandowski, 2017), Zygmunt Bau-
man (Rubisz, 2015), John Rawls (Sepczyńska, 2010), Thomas Mann, Max We-
ber and Hannah Arendt (Skarzyński, 2010). The alternative concepts by Laclau
and Mouffe (Morawski, 2012) and, interestingly, the optics of the perception of
the political by sociologists Parsons, Giddens and Bourdieu were also presented
(Błaszczykiewicz, 2012).

Interesting is the frequency of cited authors, citations or bibliographic ref-
erences. Taking into account the number of indications and the number of pub-
lications, it is possible to present results on the most expected authors: Arendt
59/17, Aristotle 21/7, Beck 54/16, Butler 7/5, Collins 2/1, Coser 1/1, Dahrendorf
11/4, Foucault 55/16, Galtung 58/16, Giddens 96/15, Gramsci 112/12, Habermas
52/16, Hobbes 59/18, Laclau 288/20, Machiavelli 17/7, Marx 179/37, Rancière
41/10, Rawls 223/27, Rousseau 24/8, Simmel 2/2, Strauss 22/10, Weber 132/27,
Žižek 51/11. The array of names cited, but also those not cited, confirms that the
focus was not so much on deep studies in political philosophy (although such
a profile of interest could also be indicated), but on the modernisation of theo-
ry in its social aspect. Interesting are the updates (how modern concepts allow
verification of Schmitt's theses) and parallels (how Schmitt's theses on conflict
and inevitable hostility, triggering the potential of the political, affect the polari-
sation of society). Illustrative here are texts on sociologists, post-modernity and
the network society (Wichłacz, 2012; Czapnik, 2014; Rubisz, 2015). The sur-
prise is the minimal, limited to single indications, presence of the authors invited

to co-publish by Chantal Mouffe in *Carl Schmitt. Wyzwanie polityczności* [The Challenge of Carl Schmitt, 1999]. It can be added that the long-standing interest in the political, the dyad of politics and the political, mobilising a group of Polish political theorists to discuss, research and present their results bears fruit also with a collegial appreciation of the proposed typologies or interpretations. This is illustrated by the list of names: Blok 111/29, Karwat 267/35, Minkner 84/12, Jabłoński 70/118, Skarzyński 58/18.

However, it is intriguing to note the interest of Polish scholars in political doctrines, political philosophy, and political thought that typically emphasises a certain conglomeration and, at the same time, a component of values – as already demonstrated by the above list. The referenced threads are related to the recognition and presentation of two types of understanding of human nature, the social world and the mechanisms of change – interesting when linked to the research question which is about the adequacy of the conflictual understanding of the political to characterise social structures and politics, including the state as its main subject and mechanisms of change in the 21st century. Discussion of the texts critically oriented towards Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, as well as those suggesting its reconsideration or even promotion, allows to invoke both arguments associated with the liberal vision of human rationality, the construction of the social world based on deliberation and agreement and, on the other hand, to show the sharpened political and economic consequences of neoliberal hegemony or economics associated with the mainstream (Biały, 2010; Golinowski, 2015; Jabłoński, 2017). Although the "clash of ideologies" reveals itself most clearly where the positions of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau are referenced, one can identify a collective intention to show three important positions – conservative, liberal, progressive.

Literally only one article presents research on ideology, focusing attention on American neoconservatism and the evolution of the left from the 1970s to the first decade of the 21st century. Presenting philosophical, ideological and formative perspectives, it shows the points of focus in the narrative, the hierarchy of issues and the agenda of public life. Presented oppositions: culture versus economic interests, hegemony and oppression or the search for meaning and truth, more or less critical reception of capitalism, are an elaborate exemplification of the evolution and the changes taking place in social consciousness, and consequently political competition (Niebylski, 2011).

Conflictual takes on the political

Conflictual takes on the political are determined by such an understanding of society, which sees not only the sheer complexity of social structures, but their separation, polarisation and imbalance; asymmetry is also reflected in power

relations. The latter is clear, but the most fundamental presumptions relate to the inevitability of conflict or, as a consequence, the inevitability of politics (Drałus, 2017). The analyses of Polish researchers that interest us may be a reception and discussion embedded in social conflict theory and, what is more likely, present with some acceptance (and criticism) of the works of Carl Schmitt or Chantal Mouffe. Reissues of *Political Theology* have always been a stimulus for discussions on activating the political settlements, the role of the state and other actors, sovereignty, decisionism, and the similar discussions have been inspired by the works of the leftist philosopher constructing (at least in theory) strategies of action to resolve tensions. The frequency of names shown earlier demonstrates that the political and possibly conflict are incidentally associated with the achievements of sociologists, the theories of Dahrendorf, Coser, Collins, Lukes and Foucault. A peculiar exception is the article by Mariusz Baranowski (2014), a sociologist included in the corpus, because of his literally specifying essential in this article problem of the political. That kind of competence is rather displayed by the authors of books (not included in the corpus), with Jacek Ziółkowski's insightful study of hostility, with a thorough development of the thesis of hostility as a function of conflict and reference to, in addition to the aforementioned theorists, precursors of the conflict vision of society (including Hobbes), as well as the theories of Karl Marx or Max Weber, being an excellent example.

Invoking alternative, non-conflictual, functional approaches similarly refers us back to social theories or concepts, metaphorically speaking, that improve the effects of liberal policies. Democracy always remains in the background of the discourse, after all, taking place in the universities and journals of the Euro-Atlantic cultural area. Authors reconstructing conflictual accounts of the political often emphasise the existence of a sequence of actions that threaten it (including pointing to radicalisation and polarisation of discourses) or remind us that the democratic system serves to defuse existing conflicts (Baranowski, 2014; Biały, 2010).

The answer to the question of whether conflict is inevitable may be significantly different from the answer to another question – whether its existence is a necessary condition for the existence of the political. In the first case, there is virtually no controversy. It is confirmed by analyses referring to a certain type of tradition of political thought (Blok, 2009), statements about the endemicity of conflict in relation to any social structure (Drałus, 2017) and classifications of theoretical approaches (Jabłoński, 2017). Social groups, nations, states, specific social classes, social categories (e.g., related to gender, age, any majority or minority identification), are all examples of actors who can engage in conflict, participate in conflict or – via mere existence – trigger or sustain the conflict. Publications that are important for the conflictual view of the political are those that deal with psychological, observable consequences that affect individuals (Łukomski, 2013; Ziółkowski, 2015; Ścigaj, 2022).

Viewing society as a collectivity in which conflict is omnipresent, generated by the social structure itself, reconfiguring it but not disappearing, and the political as a consequence of asymmetry and polarisation (regardless of the author, intentionality and functionality of this division) implies the use of very particular terminology. Conflict will be associated with disagreement, controversy, contradictions, arguments and tensions. Its expression is linked with domination, hegemony, violence and oppression. However, compulsion does not have to translate into the political, it can even function in parallel with freedom (Ryszka, 1988; Blok, 2009). Parties compete, rival, argue and fight. The relevant concepts in the debate under review are antagonism and agonism. Conflict does not have to be articulated; it can be latent. It can involve a variety of actors; a special entity is the state. It can be seen as setting the perspective of how politics is viewed – conflicts take place within the state or between states. Uncontrolled conflict causes crisis. The latter then could mean the alternation of power in a democratic system or the collapse of non-democratic governments. Incorporating Schmitt's line of thinking, war is the greatest dimension of existential threat. In a social sense, the consequences of conflict are inequality, polarisation and bipolarity. In psychological – hostility, aggression and, again, violence. Following Slavoj Žižek's intuitions, if the political creates a space of dispute, existing divisions lead to exclusion, practices of resistance become natural. There is supremacy and hegemony, but also opposition. It should be noted that the authors of reconstructions and interpretations of conflictual concepts of the political incidentally addressed the topics of the origins of conflicts, their dynamics, functions, and means of resolution. The possible circumstances initiating the conflict are discussed along with the criticism of liberal policies, unequal distribution of resources and the deficit of compensatory state functions.

Before illustrating the presence of the terms mentioned above in the corpus of statements on the political, it is worth noting that the interest in the conflictual view of the political is not as great as one might expect. Most often, these are texts analysing the concepts of Schmitt, Mouffe and Laclau (Biały, 2010; Morawski, 2012; Lewandowski, 2017; Minkner, 2017), less often designed to review and confront positions. However, here an example is the argument of Dorota Drałus confronting the Marxist thesis of the disconnectedness of conflict and politics with Adrian Leftwich's concept of politics, where the latter position attributes the political not only to the state, but to all micro- and macro-structures (Drałus, 2017). A different goal has been pursued by authors presenting different model views of the political or conflict (Blok, 2009; Jabłoński, 2017). More specific interests deal with using the violence (Lewandowski, 2017; Rubisz, Slováček, 2016) and psychological observations of growing hostility in liberal democracies (Łukomski, 2013).

The lexical analyses are an illustration of the fact that political scientists presenting the concept of the political, when (and if) writing about the conflict, they

most often used categories also used by Carl Schmitt or Chantal Mouffe – antagonism, agonism, hegemony, also violence, fight and war. They, therefore, used the terminology of the source materials because what was of interest was not the concept itself or the theories that took it into account, but those approaches that emphasised the political as an implication of conflict.

Table 1. Frequency of conflict-related terms in the corpus of statements about the political

Code Tree	Frequency
conflict	695
disagreement	0
controversy	0
discussion, argument	0
confrontation	11
agonism	139
antagonism	277
contradiction	1
violence	179
fight	71
war	42
class conflict	4
competition	4
dispute	38
rivalry	17
crisis	42
state of emergency	11
compulsion	12
tensions	22
hegemony	60
oppression	0

Source: own elaboration.

Among the foreign authors often mentioned is also Ernesto Laclau, publishing with Chantal Mouffe. Among the Polish authors is Mirosław Karwat, whose analyses of the status of the concept of the political and the methodological pitfalls lurking for political scientists are often cited and quoted.

In reconstructing the conflicting view or even conflicting model of the political presented by the authors of the analysed statements, the starting point is

the criticism of liberalism found in the source materials, expanded by the authors' own comments. They show that in Schmitt's view, the consequence of the liberal vision and policy is individualisation, depoliticisation, neutralisation of conflict, which is, in the end, counterproductive because it does not remove conflict but reinforces it (Drałus, 2017; Lewandowski, 2012). The contemporary framework for this critique is formed by several recurrent arguments – among others the falsity of Fukuyama's thesis proclaiming the end of history and the dominance of the liberal democracy model (for example: Baranowski, 2014; Drałus, 2017; Morawski, 2012; Niebylski, 2011; Rubisz, 2014), the hegemony of the neoliberal discourse, but also its flaw and inability to correctly diagnose reality (especially: Golinowski, 2015; Lewandowski, 2012, 2017), the social consequences of the liberal state (inequality, exclusion) and the utopia of the consensual model of democracy, which *de facto*, by mystifying existing conflicts, prevents their resolution (Baranowski, 2014; Lewandowski, 2012). The problem with liberalism is that it depoliticises society (Minkner, 2017) or permits the resurgence of anti-democratic, populist, racist and xenophobic movements by removing conflict from the sphere of political rationality (Morawski, 2012).

Regardless of similar origins, conflict models of the political presented in Polish publications differ, thus their assessment will differ. In the Schmitt's thought presented what is most often contested is not so much the consequences of thinking about conflict as an immanent property of society, but the reduction (primitivisation) of the essence of the political to the opposition of ally-enemy and the excessive emphasis on the unity of the community and the blocking of the articulation of plural interests. A different proposal for agonistic (not antagonistic) treatment of the political process, subjected to detailed criticism, is presented as a viable alternative. The way of action proposed by the leftist intellectual has advantages in this view, both for the preparation of a diagnosis, the presentation of diversity (in spite of hegemony), the construction of ties, and politics understood as problem-solving. Mouffe's proposal is referenced in detail as, metaphorically speaking, combining water and fire. It is difficult to determine whether invoking the conflictual concept of the political with an agonistic solution is advocating for the renewal of democract and even if the publication's title asks about the conflict as a value (Biały, 2010), the authors of the analysed statements are unlikely to support the claims negating the existence of conflict.

Conclusion

At this point, perhaps unconventionally, I will refer the questions with which I proceeded with my research. Firstly, whether the political in Polish political science/theory of politics is more often defined in a conflictual or consensual

(functional) perspective and what, if any, is the reason for the attractiveness of conflictual depictions of the political. Secondly, whether the reception of past concepts or the one of contemporary polemics had a greater popularity (measured in frequency). Thirdly, whether takes on the political are axiologically neutral or, on the contrary, reveal the researcher's value system. Finally, whether in the analyses and presentations of Carl Schmitt's concept of the political there was not a presupposition of an ideological character, a persuasion in favour of a bipolar image of society; in other words, whether the accentuation of the friend-enemy dyad became performative, constituting a self-fulfilling prophecy. Of course, as I hope to have succeeded in doing, it is easier to demonstrate who and how interpreted the political in those few, one can say, golden decades of Polish political science. The dynamics of the discourse on the political resonated with debates in the social sciences outside Poland. The conceptualisations of the term itself turned out to be original, studies devoted to different concepts cognitively rich, interpreting or comparing alternative interpretations of the political. Recent works, including those on the escalation of hostility and tactics that dehumanise adversaries, are an example of an interdisciplinary approach to phenomena that considers biological, social, and cultural aspects of human behaviour. The craft differences between political scientists oriented to historical research and located in the philosophy of politics and those who, following Ryszka (in a sense), focus their efforts on disentangling plural meanings, systematisation and attempts to construct models, become apparent. It would be an excess to attribute non-scientific intentions to the authors of the texts; however, we are aware that the perspective of perception of either liberalism or, on the contrary, the doctrines based on a conflictual vision of the world is sometimes sharpened. Asserting performativity or consequences is, of course, beyond the possibility of scientific proof.

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the concept of the political, going beyond the colloquial understanding, has the power of intergenerational integration of the community of political theorists and others interested in the phenomenon. It represents a kind of code of exclusive identity. Of course, not in the sense that one of the authors had in mind, writing about the momentousness and, at the same time, the weight of the baggage binding science and scientists to the current political conjuncture (Ufel, 2016). Although there are also voices critical of the way the discipline is practiced, they are compensated by modernising intentions (Krzysztan, 2016) and identification with the ad hoc proclaimed school and, in essence, a revolutionary programme involving "undermining existing structures of research schools and even the broader social order" (Zieliński, 2016). The aforementioned identity is constituted rather by a common reading list, discussed terminology, openness (including to criticism) and intersubjective communicability.

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