



# The Tensile Strength Of Poland-European Union Relations: A Realignment Or A Role Change?

## *Polonya Avrupa Birliđi İlişkilerinin Gerilme Mukavemeti: Yeniden Anlaşma Mi Rol Deđişikliği Mi?*

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### Abstract

In this study, we explain the changes in Poland's foreign policy after 2015, with the arguments of the role theory. From the end of the Cold War until the Law and Justice Party came to power, Poland followed a foreign policy in line with the role defined as a regional subsystem collaborator. However, authoritarian populist tendencies emerged in Poland's foreign policy in full compliance with the rising authoritarianism trend in the sociology of the country in the 2010s. This shift has sparked questions over whether the country should exit the European Union and another debate about differentiated integration in Europe. However, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, there are indications that Poland is striving to return to its role as a regional subsystem collaborator again. We concluded in the study that, as the case of Poland illustrates, external factors are more effective than internal factors in shaping state foreign policy changes.

**Keywords:** Poland, role theory, differentiated integration, Ukraine-Russia crisis, Polesit, the European Union.

### Öz

Bu çalışmada Polonya'nın 2015 sonrasında dış politikasında meydana gelen deđişimler rol teorisinin argümanları ile açıklanmaktadır. Polonya Soğuk Savaş'ın sonundan Hukuk ve Adalet Partisi'nin iktidara gelmesine kadar geçen sürede bölgesel alt sistem işbirlikçisi olarak tanımlanan role uygun bir dış politika izlemiştir. Ancak 2010'lu yıllarda ülke sosyolojisinde gelişen otoriterleşme eğilime ile tam uyumlu olarak dış politikada da otoriter popülist eğilimler ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu deđişim ülkenin Avrupa Birliđi'nden ayrılıp ayrılmayacağı tartışmalarını ve Avrupa bütünleşmesinde farklılaştırılmış entegrasyon tartışmalarını da beraberinde getirmiştir. Ancak Rusya'nın Ukrayna'yı işgal etmesi ile Polonya'nın dış politikasında bir deđişim meydana geldiđi ve tekrar alt sistem işbirlikçisi rolüne geri dönmekte olduđuna dair emareler mevcuttur. Bu çalışmada Polonya örneğinden hareketle, devletlerin dış politikadaki rol deđişimlerinde dışsal faktörlerin içkin faktörlere göre daha etkili olduđu sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Polonya, rol teorisi, farklılaştırılmış entegrasyon, Ukrayna - Rusya Krizi, Polesit, Avrupa Birliđi.

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## Introduction

This paper argues that the foreign policy preferences of the Law and Justice Party (PiS) that came to power in Poland in 2015 are the outcome of a shift in the state's role. Role theory contends that governments can modify state roles, but this modification could lead to foreign policy failures in certain circumstances. These circumstances include shifting speed in role conceptualization, the emergence of unique or unknown variables in the external environment, and a newly-chosen role in contradiction with the previous one. As a result, it is argued that a state's role conceptualization and its foreign policy success are inextricably linked.

The implementation of a role conception can be evident in foreign policy behavior. This conceptualization is expected to be compatible with typical decisions. States ascribe to the roles because they endeavor to act by them. We noticed that Poland, used to have economic and military security concerns at the end of the Cold War, similarly adopted foreign policy actions consistent with its "regional-subsystem collaborator" role. During the Cold War when clarifying this role, Holsti found out that any state's behavior was in full line with all the policies of the camp they were in and he also gave Belgium and Japan as examples of this kind of conceptualization. In the aftermath of the Cold War, Poland became a committed member of the Euro-Atlantic integration serving as a "regional-subsystem collaborator" until 2015.

It has been shown in many academic studies that the 2008 global financial crisis and the subsequent Syrian refugee crisis emerging in 2011 strengthened competitive authoritarian governments all over the world. Following these two important events, conservative reflexes increased in societies and nativist discourses began to gain strength. Polish politics has a conservative tradition in which the church is highly influential. Even in the last period of the Cold War when a Polish cardinal was elected as Pope (Pope John Paul II), some critics were claiming that there was a desire to organize conservative masses against socialism. However, a strong reform wave in Poland continued for a long time with a strong motivation for EU and NATO memberships by also keeping the fear of re-entering into a Russian influence alive

with the end of the socialist regime in the country. Nevertheless, Poland brought into restrictive regulations on the issues such as gender politics, independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press since 2015, which caused tensions between the EU and Poland. At this point, discussions like Polesxit regarding Poland that was subject to the sanctions by EU institutions started. In the European integration literature, these policies of Poland are explained with the concept of differentiated integration from time to time.

After Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022, we witnessed that Poland implemented policies in line with the interests of the Euro-Atlantic partnership and faithfully participated into the sanctions of the West. From this point on, it is seen that the country again exhibits foreign policy behaviors in line with its "regional-subsystem collaborator" role. This study seeks answers to the question of whether the states that entered a role change process due to sociological pressure can continue this process in a period when external and even systemic pressures are intense.

## The change in Poland's role conception

To begin with, roles are important for organisms because "roles bring status to life" (Karim, 2018:350). Wish (1980:533) suggested that decision-makers' perceptions of their state's role in the world influenced the state's foreign policy decisions. In 1986 Biddle (67-92) identified five different role theory perspectives. These are functional role theory, symbolic interactionist role theory, structural role theory, organizational role theory, and cognitive role theory. In the study of foreign policy analysis, role theory, which was previously used in the behavioral sciences and adapted to the IR discipline by Holsti, has had a sporadic presence.

Holsti contends that any state's foreign policy is influenced by its perception of its national role, and that perception reflects the general trend in foreign policy preferences. The notion of role has assisted in the integration of information from three levels of abstraction: culture, social structure, and personality (Backman, 1970:311). According to him, the cognitive processes of the decision-makers (for example, putting social psychology into consideration) were important in foreign policy

perceptions. In contrast, second-wave role theorists took a structural approach to roles rather than the cognitive approach commonly used by Holsti, reflecting a long-standing split with role theory (Backman, 1970: 312). Role theory's most significant contribution to the field of IR is that it provides a clear and accessible explanation of the agent-structure debate.

Based on a content analysis of leaders' speeches from 1965 to 1967, Holsti identified seventeen foreign policy role conceptions of the leaders in the era. These are a bastion of revolution-liberator, regional leader; regional protector, active independent, liberation supporter, anti-imperialist agent, defender of the faith, mediator-integrator, regional-subsystem collaborator, developer, bridge, and faithful ally, and independent. example, internal development, isolation, and protectee (Holsti, 1970:260-270). These roles were characterized by Holsti in the context of 1960s global politics; so, it might be claimed that many internal and external dynamics may result in the formation of new roles for states over the previous six decades. However, adhering to the classification of Holsti, we claim that Poland's role in global politics was close to a "regional-subsystem collaborator" before 2015. However, we can claim that there have been changes in this role since 2015. Similarly, during the PiS government, we witnessed that Poland established policies outside of the EU's main policies, and even have substantial disagreements with the EU occasionally. The roles of the state may arise from or change from social phenomena related to internal factors, or as a result of influences from the external environment. Sometimes both factors may have functions in determining the decision-making mechanism of the state. Holsti points to harmony between the state's role conceptualization and the success of the foreign policy. There are various reasons for the conflict between a state's foreign policy practices and its role. The first is a quick change in role conception, or being weak and ineffective; the second is new or uncertain conditions in the external environment; the third one is contradictory national roles (Holsti, 1970:235-236). We believe that these three factors are together effective in the role change crisis that Poland is going through today.

During the Cold War, Poland stayed away from

international policy problems as much as possible and acted in the same direction as its Iron Curtain allies. Moreover, Poland followed the policy of accession to the EU and NATO from the time it left the socialist regime until 2015, and then became a loyal ally of these organizations. Moreover, Poland has played a similar role in the Visegrád Group since the 1990s. Following the end of the Cold War, the global system's dynamics, Poland's sociology, and the country's decision-makers, all lent themselves to a swift integration into the Euro-Atlantic relationship. As a result, until 2004, when the country joined the EU, the country had a highly reformist identity.

As the example of Poland shows, the country worked in close cooperation with NATO and the EU for three decades, to leave socialism and protect itself from Russian military and political influence. These foreign policy decisions of the state were prompted by the changing structure of the post-Cold War global system, the attractiveness of the civic power of the EU, the need for US military assistance, and societal expectations. In the 1990s, Poland even seemed to be the champion of economic and democratic change among Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs). However, due to the EU's economic troubles, the EU's systemic transformative force on Poland diminished after the 2008 financial crisis. Furthermore, the shift of the Polish people's attitudes through populist authoritarianism, likely as observed in other CEECs and Balkan nations, was driven by PiS, which wished to use this altering sociology for an election opportunity, to hold on to its power. As a result, after 2015, the PiS leadership's top objective was not to adopt the western norms, but rather to bolster public support. We claim that all these factors created role ambiguity in the country. Morris, Steers, and Koch (1979: 68) showed that there is a direct relationship between role ambiguity and satisfaction. Likewise, Polish society was not satisfied with the reformist identity required by the role of regional-subsystem collaborator and began to demand a role change. For this reason, PiS, which adapted the social demand for a role change to a political program, has increased its political support over the years.

However, as the Ukraine crisis unfolded and the Russian threat resurfaced, Poland began to send strong signals in the military arena that it

was on the side of the western alliance. We also claim that this new situation may indicate a role overload situation shortly, which means Poland will play multiple roles simultaneously. Mulki, Lassk, and Jaramillo (2008: 293) underlined that in the absence of close supervision and guidance, role overload increases dissatisfaction. In this situation, for the sustainability of Poland's role as a loyal member of the Western camp, the EU should create new hopes for the welfare and security of the Polish people. Otherwise, conflicting roles may cause political crises in Poland.

The practical, legal, and EU integration aspects of the primary problems between the EU and Poland will be explored in the following sections of the study. Following this assessment, it is necessary to examine the situation that Poland had about the EU.

#### **The legal framework of Poland-EU friction**

To begin with, EU law has an impact on member states, individuals, or domestic legal entities established within the framework of the EU, both in and under the jurisdiction of the member states. This legal order consists of rules about the establishment, functioning, and the organs of the Union, and the rules regarding the relations of the Union with member states and third parties.

The founding treaties of the EU create a constitutional effect on member states. The member states are also deemed to have accepted this constitutional effect when they become full members. However, it is unclear how the states will incorporate EU law into domestic legal norms when they become full members. Article 19 of TEU stresses that "The Member States shall provide remedies sufficient to ensure effective legal protection in the fields covered by Union law." It's necessary by a legal regulation to clarify exactly what is meant by "effective legal protection". Otherwise, as seen in the case of Poland, this concept can be used to not apply the basic norms of EU law, by any member state. Florea and Gałę (2021:31) strongly emphasize that even no article in the TEU formally establishes the primacy of EU law over national law, but a statement to that effect (Declaration No 17) concerning advice of the Council's Legal Service, which reiterates the Court's established case law, has been attached

to the TEU.

The second important source of EU law is a secondary law, that is, the legal proceedings of the EU organs. With its jurisprudence, the CJEU accepts that EU law constitutes an autonomous legal order from both international law and the domestic laws of the member states and that the rules established through the mentioned sources directly bind both the member states and the EU organs, individuals, or domestic legal entities to which they are addressed. In addition, the agreements to which the EU is a party are directly binding for both the EU member states and the individuals or domestic legal entities when they are related. Since the EU has a full juridical personality with the TEU, it also enjoys the authority to establish and execute representative relations with third states and other international organizations in addition to its authority to make agreements.

Thus, following the reasoning set forth, there are three basic views on the relationship between member state law and EU law in this regard. The first is the supremacy of *acquis communautaire*, the second is the conditionally hierarchical model, and the third is the heterarchical model (Avelj, 2011:747). These models have emerged with the applications of the member states over the years. None of these views accepts that a member state will not apply EU law; they simply afford to determine which source of EU law will have what effect on domestic law. However, the Polish case is unique because of a clear violation of the "constitutional charter" directly revealed by the founding treaties. Despite all this theoretical discussion, on October 7, 2021, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal declared the Articles 1, 2, and 19 of the TEU to be partially unconstitutional. We claim that the decision of the Constitutional Tribunal discussed in this study can be characterized by the role change that we suggest Poland has undergone. However, due to the existence of opinions trying to explain the crisis between Poland and the EU with the concept of differentiated integration, we find it useful to analyze this concept.

#### **Discussions on "differentiated integration"**

Authors such as Cianciara (2014), Schweiger and

Magone (2014), Avbelj (2019), Kelemen (2021), Sitter (2021), and Mercan (2020:292) have examined the concept of differentiated integration in EU enlargement. Correspondingly, Schimmelfennig (2020:998) underlines the importance of the limited use of differentiated agreements. Differentiated integration literature has been conceptualized as variable geometry integration, two-speed and multi-gear integration, multi-layer integration, variable-speed integration, nested symmetrical rings, core-Europe, incremental integration, flexible integration, and so forth (Mercan, 2020:292). Intergovernmentalism, one of the two fundamental paradigms of European integration, argues that differentiated integration is the only way to achieve success. On the other hand, the other paradigm, supranationalism, contends that the number of common policies the member states accept is a determinant for the success of integration.

The concept of differentiated integration may also be defined as any form of integration or engagement that allows EU members or candidates to collaborate in “*non-homogeneous, flexible ways*” (Meissner & Tekin, 2021:1). This strategy began to be discussed amid the Maastricht Treaty debates and is currently being used in policy areas such as the Euro, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and the Schengen zone. Although they are not fully involved, this strategy provides member or candidate countries with “enhanced cooperation” and “opt-out” competencies in a variety of policy areas. States and people demand differentiated integration, particularly when it comes to matters surrounding national sovereignty.

Moreover, it must be borne in mind that there have been disturbances in the EU regarding the differentiated integration issue, particularly since the 2000s. It was a strategy devised to overcome the UK’s objections about common foreign policy or social policy, and also differentiated integration was designed as a solution during the period between the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. The supporters of supranationalism, which aims at a transition from an economic community to a political union by transferring some sovereignty rights of the state to the EU institutions, cooperated with the supporters of intergovernmentalism to overcome the UK’s objections such as creating a common foreign policy or

a single currency. They also planned to challenge the possible problems to come about as a result of the regime changes that would eventuate in Eastern Europe by funding the EU. Differentiated integration was the basis of such historical consensus.

When the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe and the Treaty of Lisbon that occupied the EU’s agenda for a long time in the early 2000s are carefully examined, the differentiated integration debate becomes clearer. One indication of the compromise is the declaration of compliance with the convergence criteria as a duty of all member states in the Treaty of Lisbon (European Union Law, 2007). More clearly each state has entered into an obligation to comply with the rules established by the Treaty of Lisbon. **Furthermore**, for example, on the energy issue, the EU shows this aim by setting the goal of transforming the energy community into an energy union (Cengiz & Arman, 2020:134). Thus, a supranationalist process has started even in an issue where national interest is very important like energy. Additionally, the Syrian refugee crisis continuing since the beginning of the Syrian civil war has also highlighted the need for the EU to establish a common migration and asylum policy (Arman, 2017). Therefore, it is obvious that the EU has an active attitude towards the compliance of all members with common policies. However, it should be remembered that substantial conversations about migration policy took place in the EP, but due to the emergence of right-wing populist groups, these discussions did not reach a solution.

The foregoing discussion has attempted to transform the structure of the EU within time. What we usually have in mind is that Maastricht Treaty partially transformed the intergovernmental integration strategy that began with the Luxembourg Compromise (1966). It is important to emphasize that differentiated integration was used as a method to ensure that such a transformation occurred without a perfect storm. Likewise, Wendt defined this hybrid method as “liberal intergovernmentalism”. The transformation of the current situation’s intergovernmental structure was swift in the 2000s, and the system evolved as much as possible into a supranational character. It is logical to argue that member countries’ differentiated integration demands are not in line with the zeit-

geist. Similarly, with the Ukraine-Russia situation, there has been a rise in the number of people who believe that European integration has begun to solidify.

These explanations show that even if we accept that there is a desire for a role change in Poland for sociological reasons, it is not possible to explain the demands of Poland with the concept of differential integration. Especially in a period when the Russian threat has increased so much, we can conclude that external pressures will reduce Poland's demand for a role change, which is produced by internal pressures. From this point on, the reasons behind the crisis between Poland and the EU will be explained.

### **Dynamics of tension between the parties**

Sata and Karolewski identify three major determinants of illiberal elements in Polish politics: patronalism, state capture, and exclusionary identity politics. Patronalism occurs when a leader assumes control of the entire state. In patronistic regimes, the leader creates a one-man regime by enacting policies that make him the sole master of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. State capture in Poland is defined by Sata and Karolewski (2020: 213) as "*where the ruling party seeks total re-monopolization of the political system in its favor*". As a result, after the PiS came to power solely as a result of the 2015 elections, the party was accused of offering public employment to its supporters. Finally, another claim is that PiS consolidated right-wing voters by using exclusionary identity politics. Sata and Karolewski refer to these three elements as the Caesarean politics.

Facing the Caesarean policies of Poland, the EU showed some responses as follows: First, during the first year of the PiS government, a legal regulation was enacted that limited the powers of the Constitutional Court. With the suspicion of a possible violation of the rule of law, the European Commission opened an investigation into the amendments to the laws made by PiS. Moreover, on December 20, 2019, the Polish Parliament voted to authorize the Polish Supreme Court's Disciplinary Board to dismiss judges who engage in political activity. In response, Dunja Mijatovic, Commissioner for Human Rights, issued an urgent call on 20 December 2019 for judges and

prosecutors to halt work on the bill further restricting their independence and freedom of expression, putting them at risk of punishment or dismissal (Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, 2019).

What is more, Poland and Hungary benefited from the EU funds and brought the issue of binding the European Union to the rule of law to the CJEU on March 15, 2021. The EU Parliament announced on June 10, 2021, that it was preparing to file a lawsuit against Poland and Hungary, which allegedly infringed the rule of law. On September 24, 2021, the EU Commission filed a complaint with the CJEU against Poland for violating judicial independence. On October 28, 2021, the CJEU hit Poland with fines of one million Euros a day (Barnes & Day, 2021). Julia Przylebska, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Poland, declared in a Warsaw courtroom on October 7, 2021, that the essential elements of the EU law were incompatible with the Polish constitution. Sebastian Kaleta, Poland's Deputy Minister of Justice, also stated that this decision is critical for preventing illegal EU interference in the Polish judicial system. The EU notified that Poland must pay a fine of approximately 70 million Euros for failing to reverse the European Commission's illegal disciplinary regime for judges. Johannes Hahn, the Commissioner for Budget and Administration, stated on January 25, 2022, that the European Commission may propose freezing the EU's structural funds to Hungary and Poland due to its concerns regarding the issue of the rule of law before the Hungarian parliamentary elections on April 3, 2022 (EURACTIV, 2022).

Furthermore, the Caesarean policies in Poland are not just related to jurisdiction. Similarly, freedom of the press is under threat owing to some PiS-enacted regulations. Since the early years of the PiS rule, opposition to these media restrictions has begun to grow. Protests against the measures restricting journalists' access to the Polish Parliament began on December 18, 2016. Despite the discussions, the Polish Parliament approved the media bill prohibiting foreign media outlets from operating in Poland on August 12, 2021. The European Commission criticized the Polish bill endorsed by the Polish Parliament that restricted foreign ownership of media companies

(Reuters, 2021).

In addition, similar to the practices of all authoritarian governments, the Caesarean policies in Poland aimed at gender politics. The EU has frequently criticized Poland for gender equality and abortion rights. This was where the problem started. Together with the rise of conservatism within the country, approximately 80 local governments in Poland issued proclamations demanding a ban on the tolerance for sexual and gender minorities. After these declarations, the aforementioned local governments declared so-called "LGBT+ free zones". As a reaction, the EU parliament issued a strong condemnation of Poland's decision, on December 18, 2019 (DW, 2019). In response to Poland's so-called LGBT+ free zones decision, the EU declared an 'LGBT freedom zone' on March 11, 2021. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, stated that Poland's so-called LGBT+ free zone decision had no place in the EU territory (Rankin, 2020).

These developments have sparked discussions regarding Polesxit making Poland the next country to quit the EU by taking the United Kingdom as an example. TEU has also introduced this right to the states that want to leave the European Union. (European Union Law, 2012). However, we think that the Polesxit debate will not be on the agenda any longer, especially at a time when tensions between Ukraine and Russia seem to be at boiling point and Poland requires EU support in the event of Russian aggression. These discussions emerged as a result of the above-mentioned desire for a role change. However, the predominance of external factors shows that this internal demand will not be satisfied easily.

### **Analyzing the Poland-EU friction**

The primary goal of role theory in foreign policy analysis is to explain states' foreign policy from the perspective of role conceptions considering both the international and national/domestic levels. It is possible to attribute the conflict between the EU and Poland to the link between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic partnership, the EU's normative effect, and the rise of right-wing populist leaders.

Despite following pro-EU policies at times depending on the direction of the systemic stim-

ulus that emerged in the post-Cold War era between NATO and Russia, Poland began to follow more independent policies after 2008 due to the EU's ineffectiveness as a result of the economic crisis. This situation eroded the country's positive perception of the EU, which had been at its highest point since the early 1990s. As a result of a change in perceptions, the image of leadership has shifted and a populist rightest leader such as Mateusz Morawiecki has begun to dominate the country's policies. Undoubtedly, the strategic culture of the country enjoying the most powerful Catholic Church in Eastern Europe together with the upward trend of religious sensitivities of the society established the basis for the leader's illiberal policies. These policies, which we call the Caesarean policies in this study, also influenced the decision-making processes and policy implementations in Poland. The limiting effect of the systemic stimulus, on the other hand, prevented Poland from entering into a Polesxit process.

Populism has a long history in Poland dating back to the early twentieth century. American agrarian populism in the nineteenth century had a profound impact on Polish peasants. Particularly "anti-elitism" was used as a rhetorical tool, which was a decisive factor in Polish politics. The Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) that ruled the Polish People's Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL) after WWII also continually used this rhetoric, has a societal counterpart. Ironically, Lech Wałęsa's Solidarity that was instrumental in overthrowing the socialist regime frequently benefited from the populist rhetoric when calling for public opposition to the PZPR and its nomenklatura (Stanley & Cześniak, 2019:69).

This sociology has had a significant impact on the PiS's rise to power and its ability to keep it. The Syrian refugee crisis as well as the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis have decreased public support for Euro-Atlantic integration and increased concerns that the EU would erode Poland's native and national values. The Church's influence and the rise of authoritarian populism in global politics played a role in the creation of this rhetoric. The EU's silent response was a reflection of its worries about losing an important ally like Poland against Russia's aggression bolstered PiS's position.

Thousands of Ukrainian economic migrants were welcomed into Poland during the 2014 tensions between Ukraine and Russia. Poland took a similar stance in the rising tensions of 2022 declaring that it would welcome Ukrainian migrants (Gera, 2022). In this context, the US government announced that it would provide military assistance to the Polish government in the event of a refugee crisis involving Poland. In the early stages of the crisis, the Polish government worked closely with EU leaders and the US administration on military issues. This scenario is open for discussion because Poland supports the Euro-Atlantic alliance's security policies even though there is a dispute within the EU on liberal values. This mindset is entirely consistent with Poland's post-2015 role conception.

### Conclusion

Consequentially, Poland was a critical player in the culmination of the Cold War. Thanks to the large strikes organized throughout the country, Lech Wałęsa's Solidarity created an example for other iron curtain countries to destroy the regimes. Conversely, as an unexpected incident in the Cold War context, the European Community's support for these strikes and aid for Poland made a significant contribution to the debate on developing a common foreign and security policy in Europe. In 1991 Poland together with Czechoslovakia and Hungary signed the European Agreement with the European Community (European Commission, 1991) hence starting CEECs' integration process with the Community. Poland became a NATO member in 1999 and an EU member in 2004 after undergoing significant democratic and economic transformations with the assistance of the EU during the 1990s.

It is rational to point out that Poland had a strong intention of being a member of the Euro-Atlantic community until 2015. Poland had served as a regional-subsystem collaborator in global politics from the end of the Cold War until 2015. In this regard, both its compliance with the EU policies and its contributions to European security against Russian aggression that had increased in the early 2000s enhanced this role. We can also support this claim with Poland's participation in NATO's Missile Defense Shield.

The global financial crisis of 2008 as well as the Syrian civil war that began in 2011 has resulted in the rise of populist right-wing groups in various regions of the world. Examples of these populist rightest leaders gaining power all over the world are Donald Trump in the US, Narendra Damodardas Modi in India, Alexander Vucic in Serbia, and Viktor Mihály Orbán in Hungary. The PiS administration and its leader Mateusz Morawiecki who came to office in 2015 is identical to the administrations listed above.

Some problems arose between the EU and Poland under Morawiecki's administration. The EU has shown reactions against the restrictions on the media, administrative meddling in the judiciary, sexist policies targeting gender equality, and numerous other regulations that violate EU environmental rules in Poland. Differentiated integration models have been proposed by some academics to explain how Poland would maintain its EU membership despite these policies. Poland's stance is not a rejection of its involvement in the EU common policies, but rather a blatant breach of the EU's founding rules. As a result, we assert that differentiated integration models, as defended by some scholars, cannot explain this situation. Similarly, Poland explicitly asserts that domestic law is superior to EU law, but we argue that this is a false claim in terms of EU law.

Furthermore, these preferences of Poland after 2015 were considered as a role change in its foreign policy in this study. Poland implemented policies that were comparable to its vision of the role in terms of value preservation rather than economic expansion or security concerns. By claiming that the EU values undermined the traditions of the nation, Polish decision-makers have weakened their ties with the EU by changing the country's role conception within the EU. We consider PiS's desire to change the role of the state as getting votes from increasingly conservative voters and extending the term of power. This collision between internal and external forces regarding the state's role in Poland provides insight into which aspect of role theory is more essential. Similarly, role theory claims that a successful foreign policy can be attained by selecting the best role for the state. When internal and external variables collide, Poland's example illustrates that the country prefers possibly the most rational role. This role



is often the one that was forced by external pressures. The government remains open to Western cooperation, particularly in defense policy, and continues to pursue measures that promote the Euro-Atlantic security system. The policy of Poland in the face of the Ukraine-Russia conflict is taken as evidence of this choice.

Finally, the potential that Poland's dispute with the EU Commission and the CJEU could lead to a Poxit has been discussed extensively in this study. However, as this research indicates, systemic interdependencies make it clear that the possibility of a Poxit is extremely low. The probability of a deterioration of relations between NATO and Russia and the start of a new Cold War urges Poland to progressively strengthen its Euro-Atlantic links. As the prospects for warmer US-Russia relations are not so bright and the ongoing friction is likely to give a fresh impetus to the looming Cold War, the position of Poland in the EU-Transatlantic line will become inevitably vital.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışmada Polonya'nın son yedi yıldır AB ile ilişkilerini Rol Teorisi isimi dış politika analizi yöntemi ile açıklamaktayız. Polonya Soğuk Savaş döneminde Doğu Bloğunun bir parçası haline gelmiştir, Soğuk Savaş'ın sonuna gelinmesinde de ülkenin oldukça önemli bir rolü olmuştur. Avrupa Topluluğu'nun Polonya'da düzenlenen grevlere desteği ve Polonya'ya yaptığı yardım, Avrupa'da ortak bir dış ve güvenlik politikası geliştirme çabalarında etkili olmuştur. Polonya'da rejimin değişmesi ile birlikte ülkenin dış politikasında Avro-Atlantik bütünleşme en önemli hedef olarak belirlenmiş; böylece ülke 1999'da NATO üyesi ve 2004'te AB üyesi olmuştur.

Polonya'da sağ popülizm daima güçlü bir ideoloji olmuştur. Ülkede oldukça etkin olan Katolik Kilisesi de sağ popülizmin en önemli destekçisi olarak siyasette etkilidir. Ancak Soğuk Savaş sonrasında hem Rusya nüfuzundan kurtulmak hem de ülkede refahı arttırmak için, toplum tarafından desteklenen reformcu yaklaşımlar sağ popülizmin gücünü sınırlamıştır. Bu dönemde AB'nin kurucu değerleri olan liberal demokratik ilkelerin kabulü, bu güçlü motivasyon nedeniyle ülkede büyük tartışmalar yaratmamıştır. Güvenlik ve refah kaygılarının NATO ve AB sayesinde çözülmesi bu motivasyonun temel dayanaklarıdır. Keza 1990'larda Polonya'nın milli geliri ve kişi başına düşen milli hasılası da önemli ölçüde artmıştır. Ülkeye gelen yabancı sermaye yatırımı da hem istihdam sorununu çözmüş hem de ülke kalkınmasına önemli katkı sunmuştur. Bu dönemde Polonya'nın dış politikada alt sistem işbirlikçisi rolünü oynadığını iddia etmek mümkündür.

Ancak 2008 yılında tüm dünyada etkili olan küresel mali kriz Polonya sosyolojisinde bazı değişimlere neden olmuştur. Kriz nedeniyle ülke ekonomisinde baş gösteren daralmaya karşı AB desteği yetersiz kalmıştır. Özellikle Yunanistan, İspanya ve İrlanda gibi Birlik üyelerinin çok daha ciddi ekonomik sorunlar yaşamaları üzerine, Polonya bir öncelik olarak görülmemiş ve Birlik desteği Polonya halkının beklentisinin altında kalmıştır. Bu büyük krizin etkileri devam ederken 2011 yılında başlayan Suriye İç Savaşı ise Avrupa'ya bir mülteci akımının başlamasına neden olmuştur. Mülteci akımının yarattığı istihdam daralması endişesi ve Avrupa ekonomilerinin bu maliyeti karşılamak konusundaki eksikliği Polonya'da Avrupa şüpheciliğinin artmasına neden olmuştur. Bu yeni durum sadece Polonya'da değil Birlik üyesi olan Hırvatistan, Macaristan ve Bulgaristan gibi ülkelerde de zenofobiyi körüklemiştir. Sağ popülizmin yükselişi ulusal parlamentolar kadar Avrupa Parlamentosu'nda da etkilerini göstermiş, 2009 ve 2014 seçimlerinde Avrupa şüphecisi partiler Avrupa Parlamentosu'nda gruplar kurmuşlardır. Bu süreç en önemli etkisini Birleşik Krallık'ta göstermiş ve yükselen sağ popülizm ülkenin 31 Ocak 2020'de AB'den ayrılması ile sonuçlanan Brexit sürecini hızlandırmıştır.

Sağ popülizm sadece AB ülkelerinde değil Hindistan, ABD ve Sırbistan gibi ülkelerde de etkili olmuş ve bu ülkelerde de demokrasi ve insan haklarında aşınmalar meydana gelmiştir. Bu değişen sosyoloji ve küresel dalga 2015 yılında Mateusz Morawiecki liderliğindeki Hukuk ve Adalet Partisi'nin (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość - PiS) iktidara gelmesine neden olmuştur. PiS iktidarı, göreve gelir gelmez AB ile birtakım sorunlar yaşamaya başlamıştır. Polonya'da medya üzerindeki kısıtlamalar, yargı bağımsızlığına ve hukukun üstünlüğüne müdahaleler, cinsiyet eşitliğine aykırı politikalar ve AB çevre kurallarını ihlal eden çok sayıda düzenleme 2015 sonrası AB ile sorunlar yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. Polonya iç hukukunun AB hukukuna üstün olduğuna dair Anayasa Mahkemesi kararı da bu krizin önemli aşamalarından biri olmuştur. En nihayet AB Adalet Divanı, hükümetin yargıya müdahaleleri nedeniyle Polonya'nın günlük 1 milyon Euro para cezası ödemesine hükmetmiştir. 2021 yılının Ekim ayında alınan bu kararla Polonya AB ilişkilerinde tarihteki en büyük gerilim yaşanmıştır. Çalışmada üye devletlerin AB'nin temel değerlerine ilişkin itirazlarının farklılaştırılmış bütünleşme teorileri ile açıklanabilip açıklanamayacağı da tali bir araştırma sorusu olarak tartışılmıştır. Bu noktada görüşümüz Lizbon Antlaşması ile ortak politikaların tüm üye devletler tarafından kabulü için daha güçlü bir tutum belirleyen AB'nin, kurucu değerlere ilişkin bir farklılaşmış bütünleşme konusunda istekli olmayacağıdır.

Polonya'nın 2015 sonrası uygulamaya başladığı bu politikalar, bu çalışmada ülkenin dış politikasında bir rol değişikliğinin meydana geldiği biçiminde değerlendirilmiştir. Polonya, 2015 yılından sonra ekonomik kalkınma veya güvenlik kaygılarından ziyade, değer odaklı politikalar uygulamaya başlamıştır. Polonyalı karar alıcılar, AB değerlerinin ulusun geleneklerine zarar verdiğini iddia ederek

ülkenin AB ile olan bağlarını zayıflatmıştır. PiS'in devletin rolünü değiştirme arzusunu, sağ popülizm nedeniyle giderek muhafazakârlaşan seçmenlerden oy almak ve iktidar süresini uzatmak kaygısı ile açıklıyoruz. Polonya'nın dış politikadaki rolüne ilişkin iç ve dış faktörler arasındaki bu çatışma, rol teorisinin hangi yönünün daha önemli olduğu konusunda bizlere fikir vermektedir. Keza 2015 ile 2021 arasında Polonya üzerinde önemli bir güvenlik kaygısı bulunmamaktaydı. Ülke NATO üyeliği sayesinde askeri güvenlik sorunlarını aşmış, AB üyeliği sayesinde de insan güvenliği endişelerinden kurtulmuştur. Ancak Rusya'nın Ukrayna'ya saldırması ile Polonya Avro-Atlantik güvenlik mimarisinin en sıkı destekçilerinden biri olduğunu gösterecek davranışlar sergilemeye başladı ve AB ile arasındaki sorunları arka plana attı. Rol teorisi, başarılı bir dış politikanın devlet için en iyi rolü seçerek elde edilebileceğini iddia eder. İç ve dış değişkenler arasında bir gerilim ortaya çıktığında, Polonya örneği, ülkenin muhtemel en rasyonel rolü tercih ettiğini göstermektedir. Bu rol genellikle dış baskılar tarafından zorlanan bir roldür. Hükümet, özellikle savunma politikasında Batı'nın iş birliğine açık ve Avrupa-Atlantik güvenlik sisteminin parçası olmayı teşvik eden tedbirler almaya devam etmektedir. Çalışmada Polonya'nın Ukrayna-Rusya çatışması karşısındaki politikası bu tercihin kanıtı olarak gösterilmektedir.

Son olarak, Polonya'nın AB Komisyonu ve ABAD ile olan anlaşmazlığının Pölexit'e yol açma potansiyeli bu çalışmada kapsamlı bir şekilde tartışılmıştır. Ancak, bu araştırmanın gösterdiği gibi, sistemik karşılıklı bağımlılıklar, Pölexit olasılığının son derece düşük olduğunu açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. NATO ile Rusya arasındaki ilişkilerin daha da gerginleşme olasılığı ve yeni bir Soğuk Savaş'ın başlaması, Polonya'yı Avrupa-Atlantik bağlantılarını kademeli olarak güçlendirmeye zorlayacaktır. Bu durum Polonya'nın AB-Transatlantik hattındaki konumunu kaçınılmaz olarak vazgeçilmez hale getirecektir.