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## MODELS OF INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE ROLE THEORY ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

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**Abstract:** *The article deals with the issue of the role theory as one of research methods concerning international leadership. It explains the concept of an international role and shows its influence on research devoted to international leadership: how it is defined, how specific models are constructed and how particular types are classified. It also indicates the interdependencies governing international roles and leaders and emphasizes the significance of the factors determining it: the conflict, quantitative and qualitative changes, significance and influence of the position and identity of other international actors on the nature of leadership. The aim of the article is to tie the role theory with the concept of leadership and to check how and to what extent this method remains effective today within the field of international relations. The article tries to verify what research questions the method answers and what questions it leaves unanswered. The theoretical research in this field will be backed up with some empirical examples referring to the case study of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). This actor constitutes a perfect exemplification of an international leader with a wide range of roles played and changed over the years. It is characterized not only by dynamics and reorientation of its foreign policy as a manifestation of the role it plays, but also by its range of adaptation skills conditioned, inter alia, by such processes as role-making, role-taking or role-learning.*

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**Keywords:** international leadership, role theory, Germany, international relations

### **Introduction**

This article attempts to look at the role theory as one of numerous methods of analyzing international leadership. Although leadership itself enjoys great popularity among scientists, there are not many theoretical models allowing its analysis, especially in the area of international relations. The few existing ones usually concentrate on such concepts as “hegemony”, “superpower” or “power”, and yet there are leaders who play other, significant roles, such as the role of “a negotiator”, “an advocate” or “a facilitator”.

We can also observe the growing role of non-state actors, such as the European Union (EU) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which are beginning to strongly shape and change the international environment. This phenomenon is so common that the entities primary to them: national states, seem to be pushed aside.

The aim of this analysis, thus, is, firstly to draw the readers' attention to state actors, both large and significant ones and medium-sized or smaller ones, and their role in the international environment. The second goal is to demonstrate to what extent and how the role theory remains an effective tool in research on leadership. The article also offers a contribution to the considerations over role of contemporary Germany in Europe and in the world, its power and identity, though, due to formal reasons, this issue shall remain only outlined in this paper. It may provide some impulse for further, in-depth research in this subject, even more so as the role of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRD) since the end of the World War Two, through the collapse of the Berlin wall, until the contemporary times, has always been not only significant but also dynamic.

The article is composed of two parallel parts and dimensions: theoretical and practical ones, whose reference to the structure of the paper determines further research methods adopted by the author. The first sphere of the analysis presents the role theory as a research approach concerning the issue of international leadership and to the role theory. It also constitutes an attempt at combining or indicating similarities (and differences) both within the roles played by states and the fact of being simultaneously a leader. Moreover, this article also attempts at explaining what the phenomenon of leadership in international relations is, what determines it and how it can be researched and analyzed in the contemporary times. The second part is a case study of the German model of leadership and exerting influence on other participants of international relations.

The research goal pursued in this article poses a few questions: How should we analyze international leadership? What types of international leaders can we distinguish and how can we classify them? What is the scope and detail of the role theory in research on leadership? Is the role theory a useful tool for forecasting the politics and activities of states? What research questions does it answer and what questions does it leave unanswered? In other words, what are its advantages and what are its drawbacks? And finally, is this the only and the best method of analyzing international leadership, influence, power and position of states?

### **International leadership as a role**

The concept of international leadership belongs to, inter alia, a category of international roles and dates back to the research on social behaviour. “A *social role* is a comprehensive pattern of behaviour and attitudes, constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of situations, which is socially identified - more or less - as an entity” (Turner, 1990, p. 87). Moreover, as observed by Ralph H. Turner, the social roles we play are perceived by other actors and are a source of the constitutive knowledge concerning people in a group, organization or society, as well as their identification and location. Roles can be also perceived as some existing set of rights and obligations or expected behaviours (Turner, 1990, p. 87).

In the context of international relations, leadership is “a periodical international social structure (...) which requires winning appropriate support. From the theoretical perspective, leadership roles contain a multitude of single roles. Every composition of the leadership role determines not only the formation of a set of roles which concern the leader, but also determines the chances that the complimentary role of a follower shall be adopted” (Harnisch, 2014, p. 31). Thus international roles played by participants are associated not only with I (*I as individual disposition*) and Me (*Me as perception of position vis-à-vis others*), but most of all with the process of reification respecting behaviour and expectations of others (Harnisch, 2011, p. 11).

Originally, in the 1970s, research on international roles appeared as an element of the analysis of foreign policy and a result of considerations on the cold war, bi-polar distribution of power in the world. In time, however, as Sebastian Harnisch notices, the interest in this issue has grown considerably, especially in the scope of such social roles as: “leader”, “mediator”, “initiator” or “aggressor” or “ally”. Initially, the role theory concentrated on the perception of one’s own role and position of particular international actors in relation to others (*Me as perception of position vis-à-vis others*), and totally neglected the significance of behaviours and expectations of other participants of international relations (*behaviour and expectation of others*). Only in time the significance of these factors also started to be noticed (Harnisch, 2011, pp. 7-12).

The role theories refer to the organization of social behaviours, both individual and collective ones. They are also one of key elements in understanding relations occurring both in the micro, macro and intermediate sphere. The role theory as such is connected with, inter alia, structuralism, which assumes that roles are a result of the status occupied by role holders, they

depend on the status and may be in form of both collective rights and obligations and the expected, obligatory, optional or even forbidden behaviour (Turner, 2002, p. 223).

The imperfections of the structural theory, especially in the aspect of the occurring relationships and relations between actors and the roles they play, have led to the creation of the interactive role theory. It reflected, more than previous approaches, social relations of individuals and their evolution (Zajac, 2015, p. 131). The interaction approach perceived roles in a more dynamic way, as a process consisting in creating and modifying roles, thus referring not only to role-taking and role-playing, but also to role-making (Turner, 2002, p.235). States as international actors and leaders may simultaneously not only want and perform the role of, for example, a “hegemony”, but also try their best to construct it and transform it (adjustment) depending on conditions. They also aim at gaining acceptance of the international environment of the role they adopted for themselves and they learn to play it (role learning) on the basis of gathered experience (their observation and interpretation), developing their beliefs, skills, strategies and mechanism of their actions (Harnisch, 2011, p. 10).

### **The classification of roles and leaders**

Ralph H. Turner distinguished four primary categories of the roles we play: basic (for example “child”, “male”, rooted rather in the society than in particular organizations), structural (for example “director”, “servant”, referring to the occupied position and enjoyed status), functional (for example “mediator”, “devil’s advocate”, which are informal, but well-recognized in the cultural context) and judgmental (for example “hero”, “traitor”, which acknowledge or negate some values or sets of values) (1990, p. 88). This typology is very useful also in the area of international relations, and its particular concepts have found their way to the glossary describing the leadership roles of international actors. One could mention here, inter alia, such concepts as “emerging power”, “mediator”, “stabilizer”, “hegemony” or those referring to preferred values or attitude to them, such as “conservative”, “revisionist” and many others.

Admittedly, there are many more the typologies of roles and types of leaders. Kalevi Holsti himself classified as many as 972 roles in the research he conducted, but he finally narrowed them down to 17 (Holsti, 1970, p. 280 and p. 290). Similar research was conducted by Margaret and Charles Hermann, who distinguished 10 variations of international roles (Pietraś, 1989, pp. 30-31). Also, Piotr Bartosiewicz, in one of his papers, quotes the literature concerning the systematic

of international leader roles and proposes his own typology of them. He quotes there, for example, the concepts describing the types of roles played by states, “forged” by students, but nevertheless very vivid ones, such as: “Harry Potter of nations”, “brain vacuum cleaner” or “lord of the rings” (Bartosiewicz, 2007, pp. 10-14).

Anna Antczak, on the other hand, classifies roles hierarchically and divides them into synthetic ones (superior and most important) and subordinated ones, namely complimentary, synthetic-particular and detailed (Antczak, 2012, p. 181). For example, FRG is currently playing a synthetic role of a regional leader, a complimentary role of a leader within the EU and the synthetic-particular role of a non-military (“Zivilmacht”) and economic superpower, in addition to a series of other, smaller, particular roles, such as cultural leader or liberal player as far as its policy towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT+) is concerned, earning it the title of one of the most tolerant states in EU in this area.

An expanded, but interesting and aptly describing international leadership classification of roles was developed by a Polish scientist, Ziemowit Pietraś. He divided them along various criteria, namely (Pietraś, 1989, pp. 25-26):

- a. subjective, showing direction in which, the role was built (imposed or expected by others, or chosen by the actor itself),
- b. objective, concerning the plain or sphere in which it is manifested (political, economic, cultural),
- c. connected with the area in which it appears (local, regional, global),
- d. time-related (short-, medium- and long-term roles),
- e. presenting attitude to the world and its order (revolutionary, innovative, conservative),
- f. hierarchical, depicting the strategy of the state policy (general and specific),
- g. effective, resulting from the degree of the activities performed by the leader or their negligence (declared and actual).

This division can also be used to describe and analyze international leadership. One could mention here, for example, such three types as “hegemony”, “satellite state”, “economic leader” (tiger), “regional superpower”, “bastion of conservatism”, “activist” and “neutral state”, etc.

It is worth mentioning that single international actors are particularly predisposed to perform significant, or even historical roles, thus becoming the favourite subject of research, but

also typologies constructed for them. One could quote here the example of FRG which had long been perceived as “aggressor” leader and then, influenced by the policies of particular chancellors, gained the opinion of either “late nation” (H. Kohl’s policy), “political dwarf” (G. Schröder’s rule) (Wolff-Powęska, 2004, p. 50), or a “schizophrenic helper” (Angela Merkel’s strategy (Henkel and Starbatty, 2016, pp. 17-18). Recently, Germany has been named “half hegemony” (Geppert, 2013), “contested Hegemony” (Siddi, 2018) or “leader without hegemony” (Harnisch, 2014).

### **Leadership versus expected, declared and played roles**

A specificity of the role is to show oneself, one’s imagined and arranged image to others, thus “playing before someone” some primarily imagined role. In order to play it, the actor needs someone who will perform the role of the audience. The performance thus requires certain relations, a system of ties and interdependencies. There are no roles without relations, therefore, as observed by R. Turner, most of them exist in pairs or function in specific sets. “There could be no teacher role without a student role, no leader role without a follower role” (Turner, 2002, p. 235). Moreover, as emphasized by Lisbeth Aggestam “roles have multiple sources and (...) are not exclusively generated by the international distribution of power” (1999/8). They depend (similarly to international leadership) on a series of factors resulting, inter alia, from the trends in which the international environment evolves, the position occupied by the actors, their identity, structure and scope of international ties and legal and international ties of the country (Zajac, 2013, p. 18). Along with internal stimuli, namely geographical location, population or economic potential, socio-political system, quality and efficiency of the elites, etc., (Antczak-Burzan, 2014) they create complex structures, interdependent with each other, as communicating tubes. “This means that the determinants of the international environment, internal environment, the position of an entity on the international stage and its ideological values constitute a “filter” which precedes the choice of particular international role/roles, which, in turn, shape the foreign policy of a given entity” (Antczak-Burzan, 2013, p. 34).

Noticing the complexity of the above-mentioned relations, K. J. Holsti divides the roles into three categories: declared (*role conception*), played (*role performance*) and expected (*role prescription*) (Holsti, 1970, p. 239) as those stemming from the behaviour of individuals and groups. This opinion is also confirmed by independent research conducted by E. Aggestam, who classifies roles in a very similar way (Aggestam 1999/8): as those declared (*role conception*),

played (*role performance*), and expected (*role expectation*). They both also notice the correlation and influence of roles on shaping the foreign policy of a state (Holsti, 1970, p. 245; Aggestam, 1999/8). Similar conclusions were reached by already mentioned Z. Pietraś. Thus, these are such kinds of roles which seem most repetitive and determining both our own behaviour and our behaviour towards others.

Returning to the division: declared roles “are first of all associated with public announcement of the intentions and goals of external policy by political units in form of official documents. In practice, we can see that declared roles do not have to be identical with the roles that are really chosen” (Milczarek, 2003, p. 35). Moreover, declared roles have greater significance than expected roles, due to the fact that the process of their implementation has already been activated (though this does not mean that it will be completed). Expected roles, on the other hand, are totally outside the decision-making process and their future is hard to predict. An example of Germany’s declared role is the FRG’s support for Ukraine membership in the European Union (EU), but simultaneously making its feasibility dependent on Russia’s decision. It often (though not always) happens that declared roles remain (for various reasons) only in the sphere of promises, thus showing that they are not feasible, that they can be even absurd. It happens that the lack of their implementation by an international leader, despite their declaration of being ready in this matter, becomes a form of putting the blame on others. “Ukraine needs a perspective of the EU membership” (Sarrazin, 2014, pp. 29-30), though this cannot take place without any talks with Russia: “We are open to dialogue. We want a peaceful solution taking into account the interests of everybody”, said Maik Beermann in German Bundestag, which, in the context of Ukraine-Russia war (Beermann, 2014, p. 31) seems practically impossible.

Declared roles may also have some moral and supportive overtone, though they may not necessarily become roles played. They may also be roles that are internally incoherent (Germany supports cooperation and partnership with Poland while negating imperial and non-democratic methods of operation used by Russia on one hand, and on the other hand, concluding and executing contracts with Russia concerning Nord Stream, aimed in fact against Poland).

The expected role is the one which international actors or certain groups ascribe to another actor, expecting them to play it (Aggestam, 1999/8) taking into account, inter alia, the needs of “world opinion”, the structure of the prevailing system, the valid values, principles and agreements (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). The expectations concerning the role differ, for example, depending on the



degree of their generality, scope or span, clarity or uncertainty, degree of consensus between actors or whether they are formal or informal positions (Thies, 2009, p. 9). If expectations towards the role are unclear or ambiguous, the behaviour is less predictable and conducive to conflicts (Thies, 2014, pp. 5-6). In the context of leadership this may lead to misunderstandings and splits among allies, who often do not know or understand or who cease to understand the policy of the leader.

Expected roles may also be connected with weaker or stronger pressure of the environment. Concerning Germany, we increasingly often hear that Germany should take up the leadership role in Europe, as called for by Radosław Sikorski in 2011: “(...) I urge Germany - for your benefit and for our benefit – to help the Euro zone survive and prosper. You know very well that nobody else is able to do it. (...) I am less afraid of the German power than of the German idleness. (...) You cannot afford to fail the leadership” (2011). A similar opinion was recently expressed by Lech Wałęsa, who spoke at the rally of the European People’s Party (EPP) in Munich: “I am asking you to take responsibility for Europe. Start proposing solutions” (En, Mnie, 2019).

The roles played seem to be the most significant roles, defined as decisions and actions of government and political decision-makers both referring to their own country (*I* and *Me* as declared role) and to the international environment (*Me* and *perception of behaviour and expectation of others* as manifestation of the expected role). Since they concern the state’s foreign policy, they are, according to K. J. Holsti, inseparably connected with the position of an international actor (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). An international leader Hus, taking into account their vision of the role they declare, reflecting one’s own position towards other international actors (and thus one’s possibilities and limitations as for the influence they can exert on others) and their expectations towards themselves, formulates their own strategy of action and foreign policy.

Moreover, as observed by K. J. Holsti, the basis for creating roles in the foreign policy of a state comprises such factors, as, inter alia: political ambitions, the country potential and its position, national values, public opinion, socio-economic needs or the adopted ideology. On the other hand, concerning the expected roles, the international environment takes into account such parameters as the structure of the system, a broadly understood system of values and adopted legal rules and norms, including agreements and treaties and informal agreements and the world opinion (Holsti, 1970, p. 245). Therefore, social structures (including roles and leadership) exist not only in the heads of actors or in their material possibilities, but constitute a process happening in reality.



They are real, objective and consist of knowledge, material resources and practices (Wendt, 1995, pp. 73-74).

Joseph Nye would add the so-called “smart power” or sensible strategy plays a key role in effective leadership (Nye, 2012, p. 15). In the behavioural context it is defined as an ability to influence others in some important area (field), using coercion, reward or attractiveness in order to achieve the desired results (Nye, 2012, p. 37). Thus, the role performed by an international actor and leader depends not only on their own imagination (*declared role*) confronted with expectations of others (*expected role*) and occupied position, but also on the power of the influence it exerts.

### **The influence of the role conflict on international leadership**

Contemporary international actors more and more often play many roles simultaneously, the roles which overlap. However, it happens that an actor, in order to gain greater effectiveness and efficiency of their activity, modifies the roles (adopting instruments and strategies), as a result of which role not only change, but some expire and are replaced by others. If the changes between declared roles and expected or played role are not synchronized, a conflict may arise between them. S. Harnisch divides roles into those conflicted internally (*intra-role conflicts*) and externally (*inter-role conflict*) (2011, p. 256).

The lack of internal cohesion of roles (between *I* and *Me*), or the deficit of its compatibility in creation stems from the appearance of different norms, rules and values preferred by the actor which, in turn, lead to the revision of the declared role. For the internally conflicted leader this may bring about two consequences: it may offer an opportunity to improve their own position (Harnisch, 2011, p. 256) or lead to their failure. A good example of *intra-role conflicts* and an internally conflicted leader is A. Merkel in the sphere of the migration policy. The policy of “open doors” promoted by her, welcoming immigrants regardless of any limits, opening a beneficial offer of social allowances for them resulted in massive inflow of refugees to the FRG. As a result, Germans work for the usually unemployed immigrants, who often cause social unrest or violate the public security rules. The objection of some political elites to “blind” help led in Germany to a debate on the limits of “openness” and to the redefinition of values concerning provided help and resulted in a conflict between “sister” parties Christlich Soziale Union (CSU) and Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU). It also accounted for the growth of support for anti-immigration Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). The effects of this conflict have and will have

their short-, medium- and long-term consequences in the area of various roles, both in the micro and the macro-scale.

*Inter-role conflict* on the other hand, has its source in misunderstandings appearing between the role player and other international actors (*Me* and *the others*). It originates in the differences in the declared role and the international order. What is more, it often negatively affects internal roles of the actor, frequently leading to *intra-role conflicts* (Harnisch, 2011, p. 256).

If the declared role differs from the expected one, the actor or the leader should verify or modify their behaviour. It happens, though, he the role conflict is ignored, which does not help to solve it (Thewes, 2001, p. 29). A perfect example of ignoring the source of the role conflict is the already mentioned policy of open doors implemented by A. Merkel. In spite of numerous acts of violence in Germany with participation of immigrants, the “mutiny” of Bavaria which puts immigrants to buses and sends them to Berlin, or the words of Horst Seehofer that “migration is the mother of all problems” (LIE, DPA, 2018) the German chancellor still insists that “We will manage” (“Wir schaffen das!”). Due to the internal conflict and the split in the decision process of German elites, it seems that the political career of A. Merkel as a national and European leader is coming to an end (Greven, 2018).

Writing about the conflict of roles played by Germany, Henning Thewes predicts that one of possible solutions will be to merge roles (*merger role*). The played and conflicting roles then become a compromise and lead to the change of behaviour and the shaping of a new, concentrated role. However, if this strategy does not work and the old role does not transform into a new one, structural changes appear then (Thewes, 2001, p. 29), which are deep, and which entail grater costs. For ex ample, if A. Merkel ignores or does not take effective political action in the national sphere, thus eliminating the role conflict in the “Willkommenspolitik”, this may mean the end of her tenure. Taking into account the position of Germany in the international environment and their leadership role in the region and in the EU, this may also lead to reorientation of the roles of other international leaders. It may also turn out that the conflict, finding attractive background among some European countries (mostly Poland and Hungary), will bring changes to the distribution of power in the EU, which will affect the European migration policy.

The conflict may also force the appearance of quite new international roles, not based on the concentration. Iver B. Neumann and Benjamin de Carvalho claim that weaker actors, who do not have anything but prestige, constitute perfect moral leaders, using their advantage in the field

of authority and prestige (Neumann and de Carvalho, 2015, p. 2). Strong leaders therefore Reed smaller powers, even as mediators. The FRG does not have any chances of playing such a role for numerous reasons. First of all, the international opinion still holds a vivid picture of Germany as an “aggressor”, secondly, due to its current power (mostly in Europe) it may arise justified fears concerning the coercion or instrumental activities forcing other actors to behave in a particular way or some political decisions.

The role conflict does not only change the roles or structures themselves. It may also result in their transformation, though it is a long-lasting process (Thewes, 2001, p. 30) and leads to the appearance of a new type of a leader: namely a transformation leader. As far as Germany is concerned, an example of such a role would be the strategy adopted by the FRG after the Unification, consisting in multi-layer adjustment of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) to the structures of West Germany. The German state (internal policy of Helmut Kohl) then played a role of a transformation leader. This role was not free from tensions and conflicts, nevertheless, as a leader, H. Kohl was able to use it to build and consolidate his own, strong position in the country and abroad.

### **The dynamics of international roles and international leadership**

International roles are dynamic and change over time, influenced by various factors. They can end and new ones can be created. One could quote here an example of Germany as an “advocate” of Poland in the process of its application for the membership in the European Union. This role appeared along with the declaration of the Polish government that it wanted to join the structures of the European Communities (EC) and ended with Poland’s accession. Roles are thus more or less durable. For example, since the end of the World War Two Germany adopted the role of the “peace promoter” - the role still performed and manifested by the country in many areas. One could refer here to the migration policy or non-military activity during the Russia-Ukraine war. This role is also revealed through “soft” leadership, which consciously resigns from using military power for the benefit of wide-reaching and developed networks of cultural influences. This is perfectly presented by the so-called “soft power” coefficients, which ranked the FRG third in Europe in 2018. It should also be noted that Germany is continuously moving upward the index (The Soft Power 30a).

According to S. Harnisch, changes within roles may occur in two ways: through the process of adaptation and through learning. Adaptation concerns changes within the strategy and instruments necessary to play the role (Harnisch, 2011, p. 10). These are also goals, norms and values (Zajac, 2015, p. 130). Both approaches referring to political systems were combined by Z. Pietraś (2000, p. 59).

Thus, adopting the criteria of activity of international actors and basing on the adaptation models created by Z. Pietraś, we can distinguish three types of leaders. The first type are passive (weak) actors, easily influenced by others. Such leaders easily yield to pressure of the external environment, changing the structure and the function of their system and tailoring their own internal and external policies to the pressure of other international actors with greater potential. They often see the priority of their activities in development (through development of science and absorption of foreign and new system elements), while ignoring or downgrading their own identity in the hierarchy of preferred values (Pietraś 2000, p. 59). Randall Schweller defined such type of leadership as passive “Sheep”, who become “easy prey” to other international actors as they are ready for concessions and eagerly join others, more powerful actors (*bandwagon*), they do not attempt any revisionism, but they are troubled with numerous deficits and internal conflicts (cultural, political, ethical, etc.) (Schweller, 1994, p. 102).

An active leader, on the other hand, in opposition to the first type, dominates over others, has great potential and established international position. It also imposes its values, interests and goals to others. Such a dominant leader forces other players to passively subordinate themselves and to receive the output impulses it generates. It is a type of an actor with “rigid” decision-making process and tight political system, closed to any input stimuli. This accounts for the fact that in the foreign policy it creates and implements, it values preservation of one’s identity rather than development (Pietraś 2000, p. 59). This is the type of a defensive “Lion”, determining rules of the game, norms and principles (Schweller, 1994, p. 102).

The most strategic leader in its international activity is the creative leader, combining the features of both previous models, but able to “filter” various impulses, seeking balance between the internal and the external environment (Pietraś, 2000, p. 59). This is a leader accepting significant risks, ready to pay a high price, but also ready to bear considerable costs in defending its values. If this actor is dissatisfied with the position it occupies, it uses every opportunity to

change it. It is a typical “Jackal”, joining one or another international leader, depending on the favourable circumstances (Schweller, 1994, p. 102).

Referring to the Dynamics of international roles, a “Lion” may become a “Sheep”, a “Jackal” or an aggressive, “Wolf” which desires power and risks its own life, putting everything on the line (Schweller, 1994, p. 102). An example of such dynamics of the role changing in the initial phase positions and potentials of other international actors was Germany during the World War Two and after it. From the model “Wolf” it became a “Sheep” and then, in the process of *role learning*, adapting to post-war international circumstances, determined by stronger international actors, totally change the role it played and to become the model “Lion” as far as setting the rules is concerned, combining the elements of a “Wolf”, expanding its influences, but in a sheep skin, declaring its peaceful attitude to others.

Being a leader thus does not consist only in accepting this task and its performance but is also associated with own contribution and involvement in its implementation. It is not only the role-making, but also the role learning. Taking the example of the FRG, we could venture to say that Germany does not only accept and modernize its roles, but also learns them continuously. A leader must analyze and verify its political decisions and activities, learns reactions of other international actors to them and the operating mechanisms in the ever-changing conditions of the international system (thus attempting to adapt to internal and external factors), choosing the most beneficial ones, and repeating them in its future decision-making process. A. Merkel, for example, has a custom of speaking on behalf of the European Union, but before she does so and starts the official decision-making procedure, she consults directly and informally important issues concerning the EU with its main leaders (Kwiatkowska-Drożdż, 2012, pp. 158-159). This is the result of the experience stemming from at least two facts: firstly, the need to justify the decision-making process (the fewer countries involved in it, the faster the procedure), and secondly, proposing initially developed and confirmed solutions eliminates the need for a long debate over them. Moreover, Germany has already “learnt” that it is expected, as the regional superpower, to take responsibility for others and to lead in key issues.

Taking into account the dynamics and the evaluation of international roles (*role-taking*, *role-playing*, and *role-making*), R. Turner emphasizes the significance of such features they demonstrate as: functionality, representativeness, permanence and resistance (2002, pp. 236-241). Functionality stems from the occupied position and, according to him, is tied to the possessed

potential (Turner, 2002, p. 237). Justyna Zając, on the other hand, points at the importance of effectiveness, by which she understands “the effectiveness in the accomplishment of the set goal, taking into account expenses (costs)” (2014, p. 50), which also affects the position of a leader and its potential. The more effective the leader is in its activity and in playing its roles, the greater approval it will enjoy among the international environment and other participants of international relations. The effectiveness also grows along with the compatibility of declared, real and expected roles. The lack of harmony in their implementation results in lower effectiveness (Zając, 2014, p. 51) and the loss of prestige, affecting then the whole structure of the roles played by the actor and its position and potential as an international leader. An example of the loss of the potential of Germany is the diesel scandal revealed in 2015. As a result of the falsification of the exhaust fume emissions in Volkswagen cars, in spite of the declared but not real activities of A. Merkel in this area, the political image of Germany, and especially its quality brand (“deutsche Qualität”) deteriorated significantly. Moreover, the chancellor was accused of the incoherence of the climate and environment protection policy promoted by her and the divergence of the roles she played - as a national and international leader: “As a physicist, she knows perfectly well, that there are alternative technologies and materials, thanks to which cars are more environment-friendly. On the other hand, as a politician, she has to fight for the votes” - stated Süddeutsche Zeitung (Gammelin, 2017).

Roles may also change in a quantitative way as a result of decreasing obligations or rights, but also due to developing or losing power and prestige (Turner 1990, p. 88). The greater power of influence an international leader has, the greater the range of roles played by it. Coming back to the example of Germany, Since the end of the World War Two, the number of roles played by Germany, along with its power, has been constantly changing. The country is today perceived as, inter alia, “civil superpower” (“Zivilmacht”) (H. Maull), “economic power drive” and “smart leader” (4<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of The Soft Power 30b), “arbitrator” (Russia-Ukraine war), advocate (Poland’s membership in the EU) and “promoter of the weak” (a wide humanitarian campaign, for example in Africa), “promoter of culture” (4<sup>th</sup> place in the ranking of The Soft Power 30b) and science (2<sup>nd</sup> place in the world according to The Soft Power 30b), “diplomatic strategist” and “efficient leader” (negotiations within the EU), “initiator of European integration processes” (the construction of the EU), “the Euro zone saviour (crisis), “the European sponsor” (the biggest payer to the EU budget), or recently “immigrants defender” (“Willkommenspolitik”).

International roles also evolve qualitatively through changes to their specific elements or components or through re-interpretation of their meaning. If one (or more) role the actor plays is transformed, the modification will affect the whole system of international roles (Turner, 1990, p. 88). Therefore the model of leadership is also subjected to transformation. If initially the migration policy of the German chancellor, A. Merkel, was perceived as a manifestation of solidarity with those in need and found supporters in France, Italy, Spain or Malta, the resistance of Hungary and Poland in this matter led to significant revision of the policy of “open doors” (“Willkommenspolitik”) and the leadership of Germany was redefined from the role of the European “helper” (Henkel and Starbatty, 2016, pp. 17-18) to that of “self-destructor” (Henkel and Starbatty, 2016, p. 19-20), and even “a suicide” (Sarrazin, 2010). Another spectacular example of the dynamics of the leadership role of Germany is the movement from the position of the “European superpower” through adopting the role of an “aggressor” (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> world war) until the status of the “fallen leader”. Thus, within the whole system of roles, including their ties and elements, the role of Germany changed along with the roles of other countries. Their positions were modified: from “victims” and “losers” they became “winners” (though they remained the victims of the Third Reich), except for Poland, which both during the war and after it performed the same role of a “victim”.

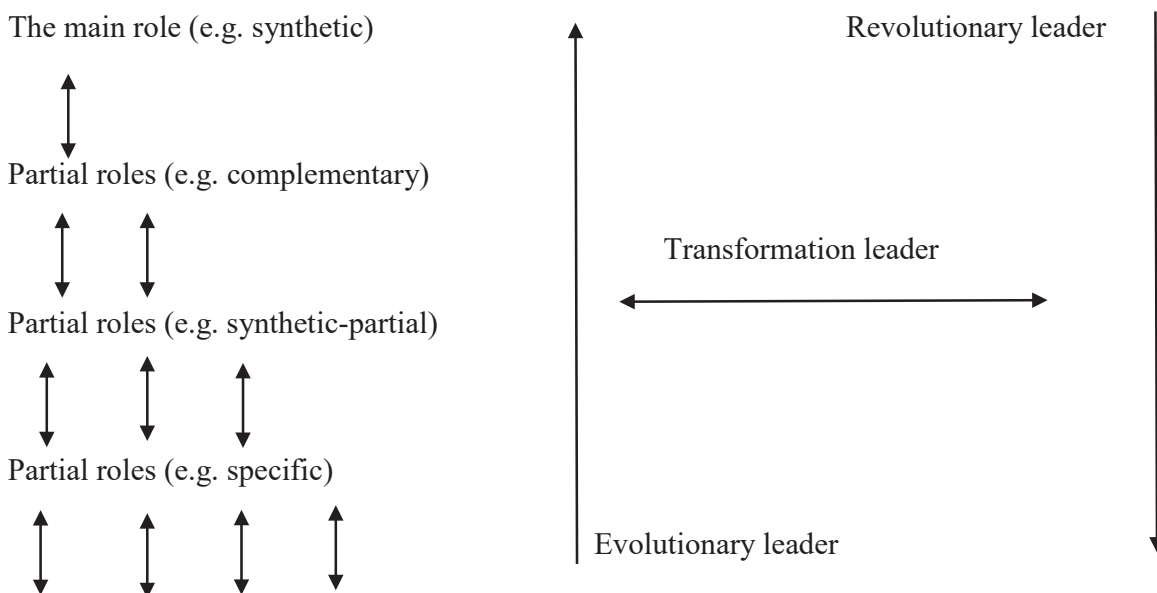
The quantitative and qualitative changes within particular roles bring about changes to leadership. This is well depicted by the hierarchical classification of roles. If an international leader modifies its main role, changes will also affect its partial roles. If partial roles change, this will affect its main role. In other words, the more important the roles (the higher they are in the hierarchy), the fewer of them, the change will occur more slowly, but it will be more visible. The lower the roles in the hierarchy, the more of them, they are easier to change, but their effects in the context of the main role are smaller.

Horizontal changes thus evoke vertical ones, and the other way round. For the leadership, the easiest and the most gentle procedure is that of bottom-up, vertical changes (evolution of leadership) and slightly more complicated procedure of horizontal changes (transformation of leadership). A more difficult and simultaneously “deeper” change is the top-bottom vertical change of role (revolution of leadership). On the other hand, both horizontal and vertical changes are considered the most violent and radical ones. Such revolutionary change of leadership occurred



after the World War Two, when the FRG role changed from that of an “aggressor” into “peace promoter”.

**Figure 1.** The hierarchy and number of performer roles and the direction of changes and the type of leadership



Source: *Own elaboration*

We should bear in mind that the type of leadership is not only influenced by the hierarchy of roles. They are also determined by a number of other factors. J. Zajac divides them into objective and subjective both in the internal and external dimensions (2010, p. 27), reflecting also the influence of the structure and scope of international and legal international ties between countries and trends in which the international environment evolves (2013, p. 18). The author observes, however, that in the sphere of international relations the most important elements are the position occupied by the state and its identity. The former is affected, in her opinion, by: geographic environment, population potential, economic and scientific and technical potential, military potential, socio-political system, quality of foreign service and the state diplomacy (Zajac, 2013, p. 18). The latter is determined by historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors. Taking into account the scale of today’s interdependencies, the international identity of other states is also important (Zajac, 2013, p. 18). Every leader thus shapes their own identity also in “feedback

with other participants of international life”, which is manifested in its degree and intensity (Bieleń, 2015, p. 155-157).

### **Final conclusions**

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the role theory is one of many, along with the narration analysis, system analysis or decision-making process analysis, methods of analyzing international leadership. Its unquestionable advantage is not only its interdisciplinary nature (combination of sociological, psychological, historical, legal and political science approaches), but also impressive practical “flexibility” concerning the connection of the research with time and space. It can be used both with reference to the past, the present and, on some conditions, to the future, as an attempt at diagnosing behaviours, positions or identities of international leaders. This is particularly visible in the context of Germany, which has evolved significantly, from the role of an “aggressor” to that of “promoter of peace solutions”.

It is possible to predict political decisions of a leader and their activities, taking into account the process of dynamics. Roles are never finite and are subject to constant redefinition (Turner, 2002, pp. 235-236, p. 253), though it is very difficult to change them (Nabers, 2012, p. 80). Germany is a perfect example of this, as it performs a number of roles on various levels, e.g. the role of the European integration engine or that of a technology innovator in the world. The coherence of the specific and synthetic-partial roles played by the leader allows us to outline its future place and role in the international political stage quite easily.

The role theory as a method of research on international leadership, looking through the prism of “images” of the analysis of international relations developed by Kenneth Waltz, refers to all three spheres he proposed. It takes into account the international system, understood as a structure composed of particular actors who are in mutual relations with each other, of the state (Waltz, 2001, p.12) and an individual. It is thus a holistic approach, though it could be equally well used only with reference to one or two spheres (as, for example, realists do).

The role theory allows us to examine leadership as a dynamic process connected with the analysis of its role-making, role-taking and role-learning. Moreover, it reflects not only qualitative changes (types of roles played) and quantitative ones (their number), but also covers their evolution, transformation and revolution, being the effect of both internal and external factors.

The type and typology of leadership is determined by circumstances, conditions, other leaders and the process of role dynamics. They overlap and never occur in “pure” form. The more roles played by an international actor, the better the actor is prepared for the requirements of the environment. Moreover, taking on a large number of roles is beneficial, since it combines and synchronizes it with other leaders in various areas of the society and closely integrates it with various social norms. As observed by Cameron Thies, the “trained” and experienced leader stands a greater chance of performing effective activities than a “rookie”, who adopts a few new roles (2009, p. 5). These often, due to the lack of experience, may be conflicting or incoherent on the specific level, which accounts for the fact that the complementary (main) role of a leader becomes diluted.

The role theory takes into consideration a series of analytical factors, namely social structures, the system of values, goals and norms preferred by the leader, including international agreements and treaties, formal and informal agreements, political ambitions or socio-economic needs. The application of the role theory to the research on international leadership allows us quite freely (depending on the needs) to examine the analyzed content through entering into or combining micro and macro spheres in the research, and also the transnational sphere, examples of which are the emigration or climate policies of Germany, which shape the actions of the EU.

What is equally important, the role theory (contrary to, for example, the assumptions of the realism theory) does not neglect small and medium-sized international actors, regarding all entities of international relations as important and making their individual contributions. Therefore it is possible to conduct analyses of both strong leaders of “dominant” type, average ones, such as “bridges” or small “negotiators”.

Thanks to the role theory researchers may explain not only the type and dynamics of leadership, but also its permanence and coherence. The analysis of “faithfulness” and compatibility in selected and played roles and the resulting assumptions of foreign policy allows us to state how much and to what extent it is a stable and credible (coherent) leader and to what extent it is not. The unquestionable proof of the implementation of this role is Germany, which has built its superpower status since the end of the WW2. Initially it aimed at regaining its international credibility and position in international structures (Konrad Adenauer), then it focused on internal uniformity (Helmut Kohl), to finally speak as the voice of the EU (Angela Merkel).

Moreover, the role theory gives a broad range of typologies of leadership and allows us to construct various, even individual models. Within it the researcher may concentrate on the interesting aspects they have selected, which, in cognitive terms or due to the assumed research goals, remain central to their research, for example, analyzing the leadership of Germany in the context of bilateral relations with Poland or building Germany-France decision-making tandem in Europe.

The role theory as a method of analyzing international leadership obviously has some disadvantages, for example we cannot exclude, as rightly pointed out by J. Zajac, that some leaders play their roles totally unaware of them or in the way which is not fully defined (2013, p. 17). The lack of transparency in this matter makes such a leader a difficult object of analysis and sometimes it is simply impossible to examine due to the lack of predictability of its roles. Also due to the number of internal and external conditions that international roles are subjected to, conducting research may turn out not only difficult, but also incomplete and separated from reality.

Roles are usually examined through the analysis of the foreign policy of international actors (*I, Me and the others*) and through the prism of its reception by others (*behaviour and expectation of the others*). It is often known only fragmentarily due to the strategy adopted by some leaders, consisting in hiding or disguising their actual political goals or even by applying the policy of intentional disinformation. Moreover, leaders who are “recipients” of roles usually have no access to the decision process of leaders who are “creators” of roles. This means that some roles are “played” based on speculations or predictions, which may additionally mislead and result in turbulences in the international sphere and deform the expected role (*role expectation*), introducing the element of conflict between it and the declared role (*role conception*) of the leader.

In spite of its numerous advantages and unquestionable drawbacks, the role theory as a research method is very rich and offers great contribution to the research on international leadership. Its flexibility and openness both to a series of various, interdisciplinary dependable and independent variables, taking into account statistical and dynamic categories in the micro, macro and supranational dimensions, as well as vertical and horizontal spheres, provides researchers with a lot of space and opportunities for conducting research. It also constitutes a huge intellectual challenge and a fascinating adventure with the phenomenon of international leadership. This is evidence by the amount of research in this area. On one portal where scientists upload their publications, we can find over half a million articles on “Germany’s political role”.

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