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Poland's Quest for Regional Hegemony: The Multiple Hierarchy Model Perspective

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Located on the borderland of Western civilization, East-Central Europe as a whole and Poland, in particular, has been subject to a unique historical reality of being surrounded by powerful neighbors, aspiring to establish exclusive supremacy in an area perceived as an essential bulwark against each other. Existing at the outer fringes of great powers the Polish state with its various past embodiments had to adapt its behavior to the interests of powerful neighbors along the line of East-West dichotomy. However, unlike most other ECE countries, Poland represents a unique case in the sense that regardless of being included in one dominant power's sphere of influence or constituting an isthmus-like territory of great power contestation it has always aspired to form its own regional power center. This aspiration is rooted in the post-World War I idea of Intermarium as a federation of East-Central European countries, while the Three Seas Initiative, launched in 2015, serves as its modified extension. Furthermore, Poland's active role in formulating the EU's Eastern Partnership policy back in 2009 illustrates another important dimension of regional leadership ambition. The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to examine the historical roots, evolution, and contemporary manifestations of Poland's quest for regional hegemony, and (2) to apply the multiple hierarchy model, a revised variation of power transition theory within regional sub-systems, to assess Poland's potential and constraints in establishing regional leadership via policy initiatives designed to bring East-Central European countries together.