“The Promotion of Ressentiment Ideologies to affect International Relations Outcomes”

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Abstract

Ressentiment, as alluded to by Nietzsche, Scheler and Brown has influenced international politics and many state vis-à-vis state relationships. State-elites employ ressentiment ideologies to promote internal cohesion and manipulate opinion to affect favourable foreign policy outcomes. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role that state elites have played in promoting ressentiment ideologies in order to affect a desired outcome. Research will cover contemporary events and incidents, through which it will be shown that ressentiment is endemic in the modern political landscape. The case study utilised in this thesis encompasses the United States and its ongoing war on terrorism. The existence of ressentiment ideologies in international relations will be demonstrated through archival and statistical research, highlighting the need for a broader study of its effects and impacts on the socio-political landscape by students of international relations. Further investigation is required for three reasons: first, to provide a definitive conception of ressentiment ideologies; second, to document instances of the engagement of ressentiment and its ramifications; and third, to establish ressentiment as a theory worthy of study by the wider IR fraternity.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. (Nietzsche, 1989, III: 12)

Friedrick Nietzsche (1989) articulated that it is through a plurality of perspectives that we can begin to objectively understand the nature of phenomena. It is for this reason that a new conceptualisation of ressentiment ideologies is proposed; one that interprets the evocative theory as influencing international politics and state vis-à-vis relationships. This contention is radical when considered in respect to the dominant paradigm of IR (neorealism), which characterises states as rational, self-interested actors (Waltz, 1979). However, neorealism's failure to account for the rise in prominence of non-state actors and asymmetric conflict since its Golden Age during the Cold War calls for new interpretations of international politics (Der Derian, 2004; Guzzini, 1998). This work shall consider the reflections of a number of scholars including Nietzsche, Max Scheler and David Brown in the advancement of this new perspective of ressentiment. It is argued that state-elites employ ressentiment ideologies to promote internal cohesion and manipulate opinion to affect favourable foreign policy outcomes. In advancing this debate, a case study encompassing the United States (US) ‘War on Terrorism’ shall be utilised, with a specific focus on statistical and archival data. The arguments presented in this work will illuminate the influence of ressentiment ideologies on international relations (IR) and highlight the requirement for a broader study of its potential effects and impacts by students of IR. Further study is necessary for three reasons: first, to provide a definitive conception of ressentiment ideologies; second, to document instances of ressentiment engagement and
its ramifications; and third, to incorporate ressentiment as a theory worthy of study by the wider IR fraternity.

The focus of the current debate surrounds the US ‘War on Terrorism’ which was declared shortly after September 11, 2001 (9/11) and endures today. Sparked by coordinated terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centres (WTCs), Pentagon and a failed assault on the White House, the War on Terrorism resulted in the invasion of two nation-states and the downfall of two regimes (Cornish, 2006). Afghanistan and its ruling Taliban regime were the first to crumble, enveloped by the military might of the US and its allies for harbouring Al Qaida, the perpetrators of 9/11 (Cornish, 2006). Justifications for the invasion of Afghanistan were numerous and persuasive and it is at this time that the first shrouds of ressentiment were injected into the US national psyche. A ressentiment narrative was embraced by former President George W. Bush, who utilised it to ‘settle the score’ with the Ba’ath party of Iraq, headed by Saddam Hussein and with whom the US had exchanged salvos with only 10 years prior (McGoldrick, 2004). Thus a goal of this paper is to demonstrate how state elites, and specifically former President Bush, employed ressentiment ideologies to mislead, manipulate and mobilise the American public to commit to a misrepresented, short-sighted and unjust war in Iraq (Zehfuss, 2003).

The potential for state-elites to harness ressentiment ideologies in order to affect a desired foreign policy outcome is a fundamental point of contention. The language of ressentiment characterises exaggerated stereotypes of the ‘virtuous Us’ and the ‘evil Other’ (Brown, 2008). Simplistic stereotypes such as these may promote internal cohesion amongst the ‘virtuous’ group within a state; however they often generate conflict and violence targeting minorities that in some way resemble the ‘evil Other’ (Brown, 2008). Furthermore, characterisations of this manner work to dehumanise the Other, making human rights abuses and the debasing of international institutions far easier to defend.
internally (at the individual and societal level) (Brown, 2008). Violations of this manner are serious issues that require addressing by international society, especially as language (and ressentiment ideologies) employed by state-elites is a major contributing factor to their occurrence.

Compounding the ugly nature of the ramifications of ressentiment are the political motivations that lie behind its employment. In the case of the US, the promotion of simplistic stereotypes acted as a tool to mislead, manipulate and mobilize the population (Brown, 2008). The political elite mislead the people regarding the true nature of the target group; they manipulate their opinion with political rhetoric, sparking an outcry of public support for unjust policies. This signals to the elite their readiness to mobilize for the cause. All of this is done in order to further the subjective interests and agenda of the elites, which can be many and varied. It is for this reason that a definitive conception of ressentiment ideologies must be established, in turn making it possible to document instances of ressentiment engagement and its ramifications for IR.

Through considering the full extent of the research puzzle, a gap in the literature becomes evident. While Nietzsche (1989) applied his notion of ressentiment to psychology and philosophy via his “master-slave” moralities, he failed to advance the theory past this point. In contrast, Scheler (1994) adopts a sociological approach and challenges Nietzsche's idea of a master-slave morality. Max Weber introduces ressentiment in his work on power, politics and his exegesis of religion (Turner, 2011), while Brown (2008) adopts a concise notion of ressentiment and takes it a step further by applying it to his work on nationalism and ethnic conflict; the collective works of these scholars and others are the launching pad for this thesis.

Therefore it is hypothesised that a) ressentiment is a force influencing international relations and state vis-à-vis relationships; b) former President Bush was as
much a victim of the ressentiment mentality as his constituents, and; c) Bush harnessed ressentiment ideologies to mislead, manipulate and mobilise the American public to commit to an unjust war. The sheer volume of literature dealing with past and present interpretations of the phenomena under analysis (anomie, ressentiment, war, terrorism and IR) calls for a narrowing of the scope. Firstly, this study should be viewed as an interpretation of the events following 9/11, and how they culminated into a ‘perfect storm’ scenario where ressentiment matured and the political elite harnessed it. Moreover, the period of 2001 to 2006 will be under direct analysis because statistical and archival data suggests a spike in engagements with ressentiment during this time. In qualifying these hypotheses, four principles of ressentiment will be established and then applied to the case study. Through their application it will be interpreted that ressentiment can be utilised to affect international politics, and specifically, mobilise support for one type of war, inter-state conflict. Implicit to inter-state conflicts are their effects on state vis-à-vis relations and their impact destabilising international society. Other case studies may interpret ressentiment as effecting IR in different ways, but due to the inherent constraints on this thesis only inter-state conflict will be explored in depth. However, these other interpretations and their effects will be mentioned to begin a dialogue with the scholarship.

**Literature Review**

In order to successfully enter into a debate surrounding the reading of ressentiment in respect to IR, one must first consider its origins; the first step in this process is the formulation of a literature review. The purpose of this literature review is threefold: first, to review and form an understanding of all the intellectual interpretations surrounding the core elements of ressentiment; second, to identify points of convergence and divergence amongst the scholarship, and; third, to begin a dialogue with other scholars interested in this literature. The first hurdle evident from a cursory viewing of the research
puzzle is the contested nature of ressentiment ideologies; thus, this literature review provides an avenue through which a definitive conception of ressentiment may be established. Another hurdle lies in the lack of existing scholarship surrounding applications of ressentiment to IR theory. This could be considered problematic as there is little material with which to gauge the core arguments of this paper. However, the absence of IR theory which deals with ressentiment ideologies is in itself an opportunity to push the existing literature in a new direction. Four scholars (Nietzsche, Scheler, Weber and Brown) will be juxtaposed in order to convey past and present intellectual interpretations of ressentiment ideologies.

Freidrick Nietzsche

While many Anglo-American scholars discard the works of Nietzsche, this self-proclaimed immoralist has a great deal to offer modern political thought (Schacht, 1994). His works dealt with morality, value, humanity, knowledge and how we, as individuals, best understand each of these phenomena (Schacht, 1994). In the second and most productive decade of his scholarly career he produced some of the most insightful and thought provoking works of the time (Schacht, 1994). He challenged conservative notions of morality and induced the development of ressentiment through his musings on the immorality of morality (Schacht, 1994).

Nietzsche (1989) began his literary march towards ressentiment with his crusade against morality. This began with Daybreak: Reflections on Moral Prejudices (1997), and was followed by Beyond Good and Evil (1973), and finally his seminal work, The Genealogy of Morals (1989). Central to Nietzsche’s (1989) conception of ressentiment is the master-slave morality he developed in his latter two texts (as cited in Schacht, 1994). He presents the master-morality as the primordial system of morality, epitomised by ancient Rome and
Greece (Nietzsche, 1989). In those ancient societies, value was assigned based on a contrast between good and bad, or ‘life-affirming’ and ‘life-denying.’ Thus, life-affirming ideals such as wealth, strength, power and health are seen as good (the master-morality), while life-denying traits like poverty, weakness and sickness are seen as bad (and generally associated with slaves) (Nietzsche, 1989).

Nietzsche (1989) postulates that a slave revolt in morals developed as a reaction to the master-morality. Specifically, he posits Judaism and Christianity as slave-moralities, where value arose from the contrast between good and evil (Nietzsche, 1989). Good was associated with spirituality, charity, piety, restraint, humility, and obedience, while evil was seen as worldly, cruel, selfish, wealthy, and aggressive (1989).

The revolt of the slave in morals begins in the very principle of ressentiment becoming creative and giving birth to values—a ressentiment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge. (Nietzsche, 1989, I: 10)

Nietzsche (1989) contended that slaves’ sense of inferiority and anxiety in the face of their superior masters nurtured ressentiment, and formed the basis upon which slave morality was born. Ressentiment gifted them the ability to overcome their sense of inferiority via an inversion of values or, trans-valuation (slave weakness became meekness, and poverty became modesty) (Nietzsche, 1989). The trans-valuation that occurred was bidirectional, essentially working to devalue the master-morality in the eyes of the slaves so that wealth became greed, power became belligerent exploitation and liberty became egotistical individualism. “The vanity of others offends our taste only when it offends our vanity” (Nietzsche, 1973, p. 106). This circular statement characterises the basis of trans-
valuation, that is, greatness offends those with excessive pride in their meekness. It is this devaluation of the master-morality and elevation of the slave-morality that allowed the slaves to find relief from their feelings of inferiority and disillusionment (Nietzsche 1989). Due to their weak and fragile social position other avenues of relief (such as revolt) were closed to them, it is therefore an imaginary, ‘passive’ revenge (Nietzsche, 1989).

Nietzsche developed his notion of ressentiment via a narrative, detailing the rise of Christianity and Judaism during Roman rule with expressions such as ‘the meek shall inherit the earth,’ and ‘turn the other cheek’ epitomising slave-morality (as cited in Meltzer & Musolf, 2002). Throughout the classical period, Jews and Christians alike occupied the bottom of the social strata; Nietzsche (1989) argued that that Jewish and Christian morality evolved as a result of the shame and indignation they experienced at the hands of their Roman overlords. This is especially true of the Jewish priestly caste, who felt the most shame as they were the guardians of their culture. All around them they saw the symbols and vestiges of their once proud society being eroded by the decadence of the Romans. Since it was the elite who experienced ressentiment most profoundly, they became cunning haters and initiated an inversion of values (Nietzsche, 1989).

To summarise, we can take three key points from Nietzschean ressentiment: first, all people are either members of the dominant master group or the subservient slave group. The members of the slave group perceive themselves as being the victim(s) of some wrongdoing (whether real or imagined) (Nietzsche, 1989). Additionally, their social mobility is restricted and their ability to seek revenge is therefore muted. Second, the ‘victimised’ slave group’s moral code undergoes a trans-valuation, denigrating the values of the master group while encouraging a re-imagining of their own value system (Nietzsche, 1989). This trans-valuation is the slave group’s only avenue of relief as other avenues are closed to them, suggesting that ressentiment is a passive force (Niezsche, 1989). Third, the elites of
the slave group feel marginalisation and frustration at their lack of prestige more poignantly and are therefore more likely to envisage a trans-valuation (Nietzsche, 1989).

**Max Scheler**

Max Scheler’s analysis and application of ressentiment is somewhat distinct from the Nietzschean variety already discussed. Scheler (1994) formulated his ideas in his text, *Ressentiment*, where he adopted a sociological approach. In contrast to Nietzsche, Scheler (1994) posited ressentiment as emanating socially from the growing bourgeoisie, specifically the lower middle class, comprising small business owners and low level public officials (not lower socio-economic groups which might typically be likened to Nietzsche’s slave group). Central to Scheler’s approach is the importance of ‘social stratification’ as a source of ressentiment. In contrast to societies with clearly defined class boundaries, those with relatively unrestricted levels of social mobility tend to foster ressentiment because individuals are more likely to compare their fortune (wealth, social standing and assets) with those from higher strata (Scheler, 1994). Scheler (1994) also hypothesized an increased likelihood of the presence of ressentiment within specific sections of society, namely unmarried women, the elderly, priests and others who experience persistent events which evoke negative emotional reactions requiring suppression. He also included racial and ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups that are vulnerable to ongoing abuse (Scheler, 1994).

Scheler (1994) concluded succinctly that ressentiment is a “self-poisoning of the mind which has quite definite causes and consequences” (p. 45). He claimed that it is a persistent psychological attitude, caused by the systematic repression of human nature which leads to a relentless tendency of indulgence in certain kinds of “value delusions and corresponding value judgements” (Scheler, 1994, p. 45). The emotions primarily involved include “revenge, hatred, malice, envy, the impulse to detract and spite” (Scheler, 1994, p.
In essence the process of ressentiment described by Scheler (1994) is not so dissimilar from the Nietzschean variety; he described the same trans-valuation process, and maintained that it can occur at an individual or group level. Both Nietzsche (1989) and Scheler (1994) viewed ressentiment as “embodying an intense desire for revenge” (as cited in Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, p. 248), and also stressed the inability of the afflicted to seek relief from their ressentiment. However, an imaginary or symbolic revenge takes the place of actual retaliation, and it is therefore a passive phenomenon (Scheler, 1994).

The most significant insight provided by Scheler (1994) is his claim that ressentiment is prevalent amongst certain groups within the social strata. This contrasts Nietzsche (1989), who suggested that only members of the slave group will experience ressentiment. This is a useful distinction because it allows one to break from the Nietzschean tradition and apply ressentiment along class lines or to different groups, not just the ‘slave group.’ Another point of divergence is Scheler’s (1994) attempt to reunite Nietzsche’s master-slave morality and ressentiment with the Christian ideals of love and humility. Rather than being a product of ressentiment, Scheler (1994) claimed that Christian notions of love and humility should be thought of as a manifestation of strength and nobility as they exemplify the ideals sought after in Christian saints. While this may be a major point of divergence in discussions of Christian ethics and philosophy, it is a minor deviation in the context of the arguments pursued here.

Thus, a number of conclusions can be drawn from a cursory viewing of Scheler’s work. First, ressentiment is an omnipotent force influencing individuals and groups alike; it is a force that is more likely to affect the bourgeoisie, minority groups (ethnic and racial), and societies where class mobility is fluid (Scheler, 1994). Second, an affected individual or group will seek an imagined revenge via a trans-valuation, where a new attainable set of values substitutes a previously unattainable set (Scheler, 1994). Furthermore, implicit to
this imagined revenge is its passive nature, as the downtrodden have no other means of retaliation (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, p. 248). The passivity expounded by Nietzschean and Schelerian notions of ressentiment is a defining point of convergence, as it will be argued later that whilst its consequences are frequently ‘passive,’ it is not an immutable component of ressentiment.

Max Weber

Max Weber (2009) employed many Nietzschean themes throughout his analysis of power and politics in his lecture, ‘Politics as Vocation’ (as cited in Turner, 2011). Weber (2009) emphasised the idea of endless struggle at an individual and societal level much like Nietzsche (1989), albeit with a nationalist twist. He highlighted the collapse of ‘manly virtues’ (Nietzsche’s master morality), and rejected utilitarian notions of the greatest happiness for the greatest number (Weber, 2009). In fact, of all the Nietzschean themes present in the lecture, only its overt nationalistic side was in opposition to the ideas of Nietzsche (1989), who rejected Prussian values and his German identity (as cited in Turner, 2011). It is argued by many scholars of sociology that Weber (2009) was deeply influenced by the works of Nietzsche; however, he contradicted him in one key area (as cited in Turner, 2011). Weber (1978) dismissed Nietzsche’s cultural critique of Christianity in The Genealogy of Morals, but paradoxically interpreted ressentiment as a cause of the Jews’ ‘pariah status’ (as cited in Turner, 2011).

Weber (1952; 1966) discussed ressentiment in his exegesis of religion in Ancient Judaism and The Sociology of Religion. Here, he argued that ressentiment was a consequence of the conflict between the non-privileged and the privileged, which is exemplified by the claim that the uneven distribution of resources is caused by “the sinfulness and illegality of the privileged” (Weber, 1966, p. 111). Weber (1978) also employed ressentiment in his comparison of the Hindu castes and Judaism in Economy and
Society, where he made the assumption that privileged groups require legitimacy and subordinate groups require compensation. Intrinsic to this assumption is the privileged groups thirst for legitimacy, especially during crises, which if not obtained gives rise to ressentiment. For the subordinate group, the continual longing for compensation which never arrives initiates their ressentiment. It is this assumption that framed Weber’s analyses of Judaism. One of his more contentious observations was his regard for Judaism and Jewish society during the Old Testament epoch as a ‘pariah community’ (as cited in Turner, 2011). Weber (1952) claimed that because the Jews were an exiled community in Egypt, they constructed a variety of barriers to prevent their assimilation and the dilution of their religion and culture. Ressentiment ideologies were one of the key elements influencing the creation of these barriers (Turner, 2011).

Weber (1952) highlighted ressentiment as emerging in conjunction with “the theodicy of the disprivileged” (as cited in Turner, 2011, p. 79). He theorised that this theodicy induced ressentiment because it stipulated an absence of legitimacy or ‘deservedness’ among the privileged (Weber, 1952). Central to Weber’s (1952) notion of theodicy is ressentiment; since the pariah group is strengthened by its theodicy, it is in essence strengthened by ressentiment. Additionally, the Psalms are filled with references mandating the need for revenge against “worldly and arrogant powers” (Turner, 2011, p. 83). Critically, he noted that this was not simply a quality of religious groups but also secular groups like the proletariat (which may be associated with the Nietzschean slave group) (Weber, 1952). Thus, much like Scheler (1994), Weber (1952) could appreciate the potential of ressentiment to appear in a variety of individuals and social groups. However, the primary justification behind his rejection of ressentiment as an influence on the development of Christianity lay in the content of the Gospels, which were primarily indifferent to the issues of this world, instead promising salvation in the next (Weber, 1966).
David Brown

Brown (2008) offered a different application of ressentiment ideologies. Rather than the philosophical, psychological and sociological interpretations already discussed, Brown (2008) applied ressentiment ideologies to nationalism and ethnic conflict. He contended that democracy, particularly shallow democracies (those where electoral practices and state administration are characterised by endemic patronage and clientelism), foster disillusionment and marginalisation (Brown, 2008). As the mandate of the patron is based on fostering the rights and expectations of his clients, the patron’s power is derived from the lack of fulfilment of such rights (Brown, 2008). Brown (2008) argued that shallow democracies predominantly impact the ethnic majority of a society, paradoxically raising the majority’s expectations (regarding access to resources) while also promoting disillusionment (when access to those resources doesn’t eventuate). This, Brown (2008, pp. 775-778) argued, generated an ‘anomic dissonance’ amongst the population which served to nurture ressentiment ideologies. While reactions to marginalisation can vary based on the type of resources and ideologies available, one possible reaction is ‘ressentiment nationalism’ (Brown, 2008, p. 778).

Brown’s notion of ressentiment greatly resembles the Nietzschean variety. He stated that marginalised peoples who cannot resolve their feelings of helplessness or anomie attempt to escape their pain by initiating an imaginary revenge (Brown, 2008). They find relief in collectivist stereotypes, characterising an ‘evil Other’ opposed to the ‘virtuous Us’ (Brown, 2008). Brown (2008) argued that simplistic characterisations such as these are an irrational defence which only serve to obscure the true causes of marginalisation, and crude referrals to the Other as evil restricts impartial analyses of their true behaviour. Thus, this form of stereotyping produced a political discourse which is fixated on “morally absolutist collective stereotyping” (Brown, 2008, p. 778). Brown (2008) then diverged from
Nietzschean ressentiment, recognising its passive tendencies but also elaborating upon a more dynamic side. He posited that the moral denunciation of the ‘evil Other’ spawns ideological confrontation between the groups (Brown, 2008). This confrontation develops its own dynamics, as even a minor incident of social unrest between individuals identified with the dominant group and those identified with a subordinate group are likely to be illustrated as an example of the ‘moral gulf’ between the two groups (Brown, 2008, p. 778). From this point, the deepening of tensions is likely and attempts at compromise and reconciliation become more difficult (Brown, 2008). Consequently a spiral into violence and conflict can occur, which gives birth to a deep seeded conflict narrative.

Brown (2008) also alludes to the unstable nature of the phenomenon in his case study of Thai ressentiment and the removal of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra by military coup d’état. The ressentiment narrative he articulated collapsed when the Central Thais no longer believed him to be the “defender of the ‘nation under threat’” (Brown, 2008, p. 784). Ironically, it was the sale of his telecommunications business which proved to be the catalyst undermining the ressentiment nationalism which had thus far clouded other more striking issues like corruption and state brutality (Brown, 2008). In essence, it was seen as a betrayal of the national interest because it was sold to a foreign corporation, thus it was the hypocrisy of the decision in respect to his rhetoric which served to undermine his position.

Brown (2008) highlights four critical points which deviate from the conceptions of ressentiment already discussed. Firstly, he elucidates the importance of anomie as a factor influencing the prevalence of ressentiment (Brown, 2008); this is an important supposition which will be advanced further in the following chapter. Secondly, he establishes the pervasiveness of ressentiment in ethnic majorities as well as minorities (Brown, 2008). Brown (2008) explained that individuals suffering an anomic dislocation will often seek
relief by means of closer identification with any ethnic community they have access to (be it minority or majority). Consequently, a steeling of the individuals’ ethnic consciousness occurs which in turn dominates their sense of identity (Brown, 2008). Thirdly, Brown (2008) rejected the view that ressentiment is purely a passive force; while he did recognise that it can play out in a passive way he also stipulated that it can spiral into conflict which develops its own dynamic (Brown, 2008). Finally, he highlights the vulnerability of ressentiment and the potential for its collapse under the weight of everyday experience (Brown, 2008).

Conclusion

This thesis is split into four chapters; the above introductory chapter highlighted the research problem, hypotheses and literature review. The second chapter will enter into the theoretical debate, elucidating four principles of ressentiment which will allow for the identification of the phenomenon and its effects on IR. Thus, the sole focus of the theoretical debate will be the development of a principled, hybrid ressentiment, employing elements taken from a variety of scholars. The third chapter will begin the case study and demonstrate the effects of ressentiment via an analysis of statistical and archival evidence. The primary objective of the statistical analysis will be to demonstrate the anomic dislocation of the American people, a necessary precursor to the development of ressentiment. Conversely, the archival analysis will demonstrate the widespread employment of the language of ressentiment, specifically by the US administration from 2001 to 2006. This period has been chosen for two reasons; firstly it encapsulates the height of the war on terrorism, and secondly there is a discernable increase in the use of simplistic collectivist stereotyping by political elites between 2000 and 2001. The preeminent source (among others) for this section of the case study is the annual State of the Union (SoU) address, where the presence of ressentiment is as obvious as it is
persuasive. Also, it will be demonstrated that through this employment of ressentiment, the US administration was able to advance certain subjective foreign policy goals, including the invasion of Iraq and the removal of its dictator, Saddam Hussein. Finally, the fourth chapter will provide a discussion of the findings of this paper and some concluding remarks regarding where ressentiment might prove to be an interesting explanatory tool.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Analysis

To provide an adequate response to the questions raised by the research puzzle, a new hybrid theory of ressentiment must be developed. Given that theories are “collections or sets of laws pertaining to a particular behaviour or phenomenon” (Waltz, 1979, p. 2) four principles of ressentiment will be established. These four principles will provide a clear and concise guideline for understanding ressentiment in the IR context and provide insights for considering certain state interactions and international politics.

Anomie Principle

From the review of the existing literature, it is clear that many different individuals or groups might be ressentiment prone; identifying those prone individuals is the objective of the ‘anomie principle’ of ressentiment. For Nietzsche (1989), the slave group was prone to the phenomenon (or slave moralities); contrastingly Scheler (1994) believed it mainly affected low level bourgeoisie. Weber (1952) argued that it affected secular and religious groups alike, while Brown (2008) reasoned that ethnic minorities and majorities both have the potential to suffer intense feelings of ressentiment. The variety of sentiment amongst equally insightful scholars paints a broad spectrum of people susceptible to ressentiment, which is inherently problematic. Quite simply, a more succinct method of identifying those at risk of experiencing ressentiment must be tabled. Clearly those most susceptible may be a part of a majority or minority group, they may be affiliated by religion, ethnicity or class and they can occupy any position in the social strata (Brown, 2008; Scheler, 1994; Weber, 1952). Brown (2008) provides the key to unlocking this puzzle with his illumination of anomie as a precursor to ressentiment. At first, the connection between anomie and ressentiment may not be self-evident, yet there are a number of links between the two phenomena.
Before the links between anomie and ressentiment can be drawn, let us first consider Durkheim’s (1951) definition of the phenomenon. Anomie is characterised as the pathological mental state of individuals who are inadequately regulated by society and suffer from the “malady of infinite aspirations;” their “unregulated emotions are adjusted neither to one another nor to the conditions they are supposed to meet” (Durkheim, 1951, p. 285), making conflict and unrest inevitable. This leads to feelings of anxiety, disillusionment, anger and an irrational disgust of life (Durkheim, 1951). Durkheim (1951) stipulates that anomie could be inflamed or heightened by sudden crises such as economic disasters and the rapid growth or decline of power and wealth (basically rapid social change). In essence, anomic individuals suffer complete normlessness or lack typical societal and ethical standards. Durkheim (1951) highlights ‘anomic suicide’ as one type of suicide, in his appropriately named work *Suicide*. Similarly, Robert Merton (1938) characterises anomie as resulting from a gap between cultural goals and the legitimate means available for achieving them; thus he considers anomie to be a major cause of crime. In fact, Greenfeld (2005) stated that “anomie may occur in all types of societies, but in modern society it is a built-in feature. One cannot have modernity – one cannot have nationalism – without anomie” (p. 332).

Given the above definitions, two primary links between anomie and ressentiment can be drawn. The first surrounds the psychological state of an anomic individual, and specifically the anxiety, disillusionment and anger they feel due to the absence of a moral framework. These emotions are the typical by-product of a marginalised individual who lacks any tangible avenue of social or moral achievement. This leaves the anomic individual with three potential options to relieve their anxiety: suicide, crime or ressentiment. Given that both suicide and crime require varying degrees of fortitude (or despair) from the sufferer, it is postulated that should a simplistic narrative arise, placing the blame for societies problems (and those of the anomic) on an external ‘enemy,’ this narrative is likely
to resonate with the individual. Hence, the emotional disconnect that occurs from anomie often serves to push people towards ressentiment and is a clear connection between the phenomena. This is further illustrated by the similarity of emotions resulting from anomie, and causing ressentiment. Brown (2008) highlights a number of causes, namely marginalisation, anxiety, pain and shame which are remarkably similar to those illuminated by Durkheim (1951).

The second connection between anomie and ressentiment exists in their treatment of norms and morality. For Durkheim (1951), an anomic individual is someone suffering an acute case of normlessness. In his functionalist theory of society, Durkheim (1951) sees society not simply as the sum of its parts, but an entity in its own right (as cited in Slattery, 2003). It functions as any natural organism would, held together by a collection of social norms (Slattery, 2003). Durkheim (1951) posited that these norms are based on a fundamental consensus of morality (as cited in Slattery, 2003). Consequently, an individual experiencing normlessness may be likened to a ressentiment-prone one, as it is precisely their lack of self-esteem and impotence that initiates the creation of a new value system. This suggests that they were formally lacking in values or at the very least, possessing a very weak moral fabric. Given this, the structural similarity of anomie and ressentiment is undeniable (Greenfeld, 1990).

Durkheim (1951) specifically considered capitalist and industrialised societies as a hotbed for anomic dissonance, as well as those where social stratification is fluid. A number of structural factors are said to aid in the inducement of anomie, including the political and economic systems of a state. Merton (1938) postulated that anomie is a by-product of the disparity between ‘cultural structure’ and ‘social structure.’ His characterisation of ‘cultural structure’ is somewhat ambiguous, but it is interpreted here as representing political structure, as in essence the process Merton (1938) describes (the removal of barriers to
upward mobility) relates more to the constitutional systems of state. It is true that a cultural emphasis on plurality and civil society may dominate, but it is only through legislation in a constitution that the removal of barriers to social mobility occurs in the sense he is referring to. Conversely, the social structure Merton (1938) highlights should be considered economic structure, as he states the only barrier for upward mobility is poverty (alike to free-market capitalism) (as cited in Zhao & Cao, 2010, p. 1211). As a result, structural factors such as the political and economic systems of a state may also highlight the potential for anomic dissonance.

As it is invariably difficult to identify those at risk of ressentiment via their social identity, a number of socio-economic indicators can instead be used to identify anomic persons (and therefore ressentiment prone individuals as well). These indicators include unemployment figures, income disparity index, poverty in relation to median household income and percentage expenditure on social welfare. For Merton (1938), the idealised ‘American dream,’ which emphasises the goal of monetary success but lacks a corresponding emphasis on the legitimate means of achieving this goal, is a generator of anomie. Hence, each of the above socio-economic indicators helps to paint a picture of how far (or close) the American public are to realising the American dream. The distance they are from realising their dreams can therefore be considered an indication of the severity of their anomic dislocation. However, it must be remembered that it isn’t the socio-economic indicators themselves that produce anomie, but the instability they introduce (Durkheim, 1951). As it has been argued that anomie is not only connected to ressentiment, but also induces the phenomenon, these indicators will be used to demonstrate the susceptibility of the American public to ressentiment.
Trans-valuation Principle

The trans-valuation principle will establish the psychosomatic process of ressentiment prone subjects. Ressentiment begins with the anomic dissonance of an individual or group, coupled with an acute sense of injustice (Brown, 2008). The injustice felt by the subject(s) may be real, or it may be imagined, however the result of these two stimuli is generally anxiety, disillusionment and marginalisation (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990; Nietzsche, 1989; Scheler, 1994). Paradoxically, the subject develops a hatred of those they see as the origin of their marginalisation as well as admiration and envy of their superior culture (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990; Nietzsche, 1989). If they are subjected to these internally inconsistent emotions for a prolonged period without proper means of respite, they will attempt to resolve their shame through an imaginary revenge (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990; Nietzsche, 1989; Scheler, 1994). The imaginary revenge takes the form of a trans-valuation (or inversion of values) (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990; Nietzsche, 1989; Scheler, 1994). For Nietzsche (1989), this process brought about the rise of Jewish and Christian morality; for Brown (2008), this imaginary revenge takes the form of politics dominated by collectivist stereotyping characterising a ‘virtuous Us’ opposed to an ‘evil Other’.

In essence, the end result of the trans-valuation process Nietzsche (1989) describes will always be the simplistic stereotyping that Brown hypothesises (2008). Consider the trans-valuation process Nietzsche (1989) alluded to where admiration of Roman civilization by Christians and Jews turned to contempt; Roman wealth was seen as greed and materialism; their power as belligerent exploitation; their liberty as egotistical individualism. Conversely, the indignity and shame felt as a result of the suppression of Jewish and Christian culture was recreated as virtuous humility; poverty was re-imagined as modesty and ghettoization as communal solidarity. Clearly, the trans-valuation process is
inherently simplistic, as its characterisation of all members of Roman society as greedy, belligerent egotists does not reflect reality. Furthermore, not all members of the Christian and Jewish sects were humble and modest (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). A narrative such as this paints a dichromatic portrait, ignoring the subtlety and diversity which should gleam from any societal mosaic. However, this illusory response enabled Christianity to flourish when it could construct another community as the evil enemy (Nietzsche, 1989). The simplistic narrative painted by ressentiment therefore serves as a valuable tool in the mobilisation of people against real and abstract or illusory threats (Brown, 2008).

Given that political discourse dominated by simplistic stereotyping is the likely result of ressentiment ideologies, it becomes possible to identify instances of its occurrence (Brown, 2008). Included within the lexicon of ressentiment are obvious characterisations such as ‘good versus bad’ and ‘virtuous opposed to evil,’ but there are also some more obscure examples (Brown, 2008). Often a ressentiment discourse is dominated by a specific theme which attempts to link the narrative to dynamic real world events. For example, a religiously focused narrative would construct a stereotype of the enlightened, just, righteous and faithful versus the intolerant, unjust, false and extremist. Often a religious narrative will place the ‘virtuous’ group on the side of their Deity, acting in its name and with its blessing. Language which utilises phrases like “it is Gods will,” or “in God’s name” and “Allah Akbar” is typical of a religious discourse.

On the other hand, a nationalist themed ressentiment would include characterisations like strong, prosperous, and loyal opposed to desperate, weak, and cowardly. Or it may attempt to emphasise political variances, such as democratic, liberal and free versus tyrannical, authoritarian and oppressive. Additionally, a ressentiment discourse might also be framed in terms of class or race, where the bourgeoisie or another racial group are demonised by one of their subordinates (or vice versa). It is also true that a
strong ressentiment ideology could assume elements of all these themes, all in an effort to
demonise those they see as the object of their misfortune. Having established some of the
core language of ressentiment ideologies, it is now possible to establish how elites harness
the phenomenon.

**Elite Principle**

The third principle of ressentiment will highlight the influence of elites on the
dissemination of ressentiment ideologies ('elite principle'). For Nietzsche (1989), it is the
Jewish priestly caste that experiences ressentiment most intensely, for they are the
guardians of their culture. When Jewish society is conquered by the Roman Empire (which
begins the export of its proud culture based upon the master morality), the priestly caste
experiences a shame and powerlessness so intense that they initiate an inversion of values
(Nietzsche, 1989). It is only through the expression of ressentiment that they can find relief
from their shame (Nietzsche, 1989). However, when ressentiment turns their unbearable
pain to illusory pride, the priestly caste become cunning haters, capable of developing
elaborate ideological narratives designed to mobilise popular support (Nietzsche, 1989). It
is through these ideological narratives that the slave revolt in morals and the decline of the
master morality begins (Nietzsche, 1989). Brown (2008) also notes the key role that elites
play in inducing ressentiment. When interpreting this narrative it is important to recognise
who the priestly caste represents in contemporary society.

The Jewish Sanhedrin (derived from the Greek word sunedrion, meaning council)
exist in some form or another for many centuries (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). The
purpose of the Sanhedrin was the execution of judicial interpretation and legislation,
although there was little distinction between the two in ancient times (Langbert &
Friedman, 2003). The execution of its duties evolved over many years, however they almost
exclusively involved matters of politics and religion (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). The Great
Sanhedrin consisted of 71 members and was overseen by a Pharisaic scholar, or Nasi (president) (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). The identities of the Nasi are disputed by both Theologians and Historians; however, according to the Gospels, the trial of Jesus of Nazareth occurred before the Sanhedrin and was presided over by a high priest (in addition to Pontius Pilate) (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). The prominent role the Sanhedrin played in Jewish society during ancient times demonstrates that the boundaries between politics and religion were indeed blurred (Langbert & Friedman, 2003), so much so that it is not extreme to say that they were one and the same. Translating this to the present day, the role of the Sanhedrin (as executors of legislative and judicial power) in western liberal democracies is now occupied by government and the political elite which dominate it. Consequently, the focus of this study will be on the political elite as purveyors of ressentiment ideologies.

During crises of legitimacy and wavering popular support, the political elite experience anxiety and shame (Nietzsche, 1989). It is also the case that their sense of worth is predicated upon the esteem in which they are held by others. Thus, the ressentiment they experience acts as a defence mechanism shielding them from their shame (Nietzsche, 1989). Just as the priestly caste did, the political elite’s ressentiment turns unbearable pain to illusory pride and they begin the development of elaborate ideological narratives designed to mobilise popular support against a demonised enemy (Brown, 2008). Consequently, the role of the political elite involves raising awareness of unjust treatment (even when it may not exist and especially when awareness of said treatment is absent), inducing ressentiment, and organising resistance against marginalisation (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, p. 249).

Furthermore, the political elite may articulate their ideological narrative with a specific agenda, or goal in mind. Suffice it to say their goals should not be thought of as objective self-interest, as they arise from anxiety, fear and pain (responses born out of such
emotions cannot claim rationality; Aledjam, 2008). Instead these elites subjectively think of themselves as rational and it is from this (ir)rationality that they deduce an agenda and interests. Yet this remains a fundamentally irrational response to their emotional pain resulting from their crises of legitimacy. In addition, the success of these ideological narratives at mobilising the population is dependent on them being prone to ressentiment in the first place. Accordingly, this suggests the presence of an intrinsic link between the first, second and third principles and can be interpreted as \( P1 + P2 + P3 = \text{Ressentiment} \). As a result, a true rampant ressentiment ideology cannot exist without evidence to suggest that the anomie, trans-valuation, and elite principles all prove true (i.e. that the people are prone to ressentiment, and the elite are capable of inducing it).

**Conflict Narrative Principle**

The fourth principle of ressentiment will illuminate its potential to create dynamic conflict narratives. The passivity of ressentiment was intrinsic to the analyses provided by Nietzsche (1989) and Scheler (1994); however, a number of scholars have commented on its dynamic nature, particularly in relation to revolution and social upheaval. For instance, Jameson (1976) illuminated the work of Hippolyte Taine, a French historian who argued that underpinning any revolution was widespread ressentiment (as cited in Meltzer & Musolf, 2002). Moreover, Jameson (1976) postulated that ressentiment was the “very content of revolutions” (as cited in Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, p. 249) Merton (1957) theorised that an organised revolution could draw upon the “vast reservoir of the resentful and discontented” (p. 155). Consistent with this theme are the suppositions of Vaneigem (1979) and Solomon (1995), who declared in their individual works that revolutionaries are men and women of ressentiment. Finally, Meltzor and Musolf (2002) argued that ressentiment can occasionally become a “lengthy, dynamic, transitional stage between treatment defined as wrongful and retaliation or rectification” (pp. 250-251). They conclude
that conflict can result if ressentiment prone individuals (or groups) realise the ‘inducing agent’ is no longer as powerful as previously thought, or their marginalisation becomes intolerable (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, pp. 250-251). Hence, the prone individual or group will begin to initiate acts of retaliation or rebellion (Meltzer & Musolf, 2002, pp. 250-251).

Brown (2008) also argued that passivity was not a persistent feature of the phenomenon. He contended that the “moral condemnation of those who are stereotyped as enemies generates a politics of ideological confrontation” (Brown, 2008, pp. 778-779). The confrontation develops its own dynamics when incidents of social disorder occur involving peoples identified with majority and minority groups (Brown, 2008). Brown (2008) deduced that these incidents are likely to be portrayed as “manifestations of the moral gulf” (p. 778) between the groups. As with most conflicts, tensions quickly escalate and the groups become resistant to compromise and reconciliation (Brown, 2008), thus giving birth to a dynamic conflict narrative. Furthermore, should a dynamic conflict narrative develop, it can be considered a sustaining force strengthening the ressentiment of the involved groups as each blow they land becomes a further illustration of the moral gulf between them. Finally, it must be remembered that the conflict narratives which sustain ressentiment are an unstable social construct with the potential to breakdown if ressentiment’s stereotypes are shown to be false by everyday experiences. Evidencing this was the hypocrisy of Shinawatra in selling his telecommunications company to a foreign competitor whilst sprouting nationalist rhetoric claiming to be the defender of the nation (Brown, 2008). It will be argued that this occurred in the case study, and resulted in a rapid decline of support for Bush in the later years of his second term.

Greenfeld (1990) is another scholar of nationalism who highlights the dynamic and aggressive nature of nations experiencing ressentiment, also postulating that ressentiment represents an “unusually powerful stimulant of national sentiment and collective action” (p.
Thus, a potential example of a conflict narrative springing out of ressentiment can be found in the 2005 Cronulla riots, which were nurtured by a discourse of simplistic collectivist stereotyping (Collins, 2008). Consequently, tensions between people of ‘Middle Eastern’ appearance and young Anglo-Australians boiled over and social unrest occurred (Collins, 2008). Inherent to this event were explicit misconceptions regarding the ‘moral gulf’ between the two groups (Collins, 2008). Clearly, the above arguments demonstrate that passivity is not an immutable component of ressentiment as Nietzsche (1989) and Scheler (1994) would argue. Therefore, its instrumental value in affecting desired outcomes, especially social change, is undeniable. As many of the arguments presented have highlighted how ressentiment is a phenomenon having greatest consequence for the internal politics of states (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990; Meltzer & Musolf, 2002; Solomon, 1995; Vaneigem, 1979), it is necessary to illuminate under what conditions ressentiment becomes a factor influencing international politics.

Theoretical Analysis Discussion

Two problems are posed by the application of ressentiment to IR; first, one must consider under what conditions ressentiment may be interpreted as influencing international politics, and second, what the potential effects of this interpretation are on state vis-à-vis relations. In addressing the first issue, at least two interrelated conditions must be met for ressentiment to transcend state boundaries and impact IR. The first condition requires the population of a nation-state to be ressentiment prone. As there is no ideal type of nation-state (even the most ethnically homogenous have minority groups), internal competition for access to resources is inevitable (Brown, 2000). However, provided these groups remain unaware of the true source of their misfortune (should they be experiencing any), they may become prone to ressentiment and specifically one geared towards demonising an external ‘alien’ threat (Brown, 2008). Moreover, the
aforementioned conclusions of Greenfeld (1990) illustrate the dynamic and aggressive nature of nations experiencing ressentiment and their ability to act as powerful inducers of collective action. This assertion supports the potentiality of ressentiment to influence IR, provided the ressentiment experienced by the nation can be harnessed by political elites.

Thus, the second condition relates to the subjective aspirations and agenda of political elites. Specifically, they must have some objective where the demonization of an external nation-state or ethnocultural group will aid them in achieving their subjective goals. For example, the use of propaganda promoting simplistic stereotyping of the Soviet Union as backwards and oppressive helped to unify public support in the US for a number of different wars that had no ‘rational’ national interest at stake (neorealists claimed the Vietnam war was not in the national interest; Waltz, 2000) (Hixson, 1997, pp. 5-9), and a burgeoning arms race that outwardly only lead down one mutually destructive pathway (the same could be said of Soviet Union propaganda stereotyping the US) (Garnett, 1999). Consequently, if both these conditions are met, it is highly likely that a ressentiment discourse will emerge demonising a target group in order to advance the subjective agenda of the political elite.

Also requiring attention is the plethora of ways in which ressentiment ideologies might be interpreted as affecting state vis-à-vis relations and international politics. It must be clarified that it is impractical to go into great detail regarding each of the following summations because of the restricted scope of this paper. Instead the included case study shall focus on evidencing one of these summations in depth, which will be ressentiment’s influence on inter-state conflict and war. This is not to say that other case studies will not emerge in the future detailing different interpretations and effects of ressentiment on IR. Moreover, as this is new ground and unchartered by the existing scholarship, they have been included here simply to begin a dialogue regarding the potential for new
interpretations of ressentiment’s effect on IR. Thus, the envisaged effects of ressentiment on IR may be split into two categories, the indirect and the direct. Indirect effects include ressentiment ‘spill-over,’ loss of national prestige, and the erosion of international institutions. In contrast, direct effects include embargos and sanctions, insurgency, and inter-state conflict. The remainder of this section will be dedicated to the concise analyses of these potential consequences.

The ‘spill-over’ of ressentiment could occur when the ideological narratives promoted in one state spill over into another. It is possible that ‘spill-over’ occurred during the war on terrorism, when political elites from many nations capitalised on the ideological narrative emanating from the US to advance certain policy objectives like the tightening of civil liberties (Zehfuss, 2003, p. 1). The second possible ramification is the devaluing of the national image of a targeted nation-state. As the ideological narratives promoted by the ressentiment prone state begin to devalue the target state, its image on the international stage could become tarnished, especially if the ideological narrative resonates with other nation-states and international actors. A case study of Cuba could demonstrate this, as perceptions of it as a malevolent entity have carried into the 21st century, in spite of the collapse of its benefactor the Soviet Union, and Cuba’s recent dormancy. Despite this, the US still characterises Cuba as being an ‘evil’ state which hints that ressentiment could be at work (Bolton, 2002). Another possible indirect effect of ressentiment on international politics could be an ability to erode international institutions. The ensuing case study will touch on this theme, as the US engaged in inter-state conflict in spite of international law and against the behest of the United Nations. As it will be later argued that ressentiment was a major factor influencing the US path to war, it could be theorised that the phenomenon inadvertently aided in the undermining of these fundamental international institutions as well.
Sanctions and embargos are a potential direct effect of ressentiment on state vis-à-vis relations. These might take the form of trade and financial sanctions or arms and technology embargoes. Once more, Cuba could prove to be an interesting test case because of the embargoes and sanctions which remain on the state, long after the end of the Cold War (Dominguez, 1997, pp. 67-62). Insurgency is another possible direct action resulting from ressentiment ideologies. It has been argued that the revolutionary effectiveness of ressentiment prone groups is undeniable. As Solomon succinctly concluded, revolutionaries are men and women of ressentiment. The communist revolutionaries of the Cold War could provide a fruitful case study; especially as simplistic collectivist stereotyping was characteristic of the Cold War (Rabe, 1999, pp. 9-14).

There is not a single force more destructive for state vis-à-vis relations and the security of civilians than war; it is without doubt the most studied political phenomena of all time. Consequently, it is with that thought in mind that this paper shall provide a different interpretation of how the political-elite persuade their peoples to send their children into battle to face a proverbial state of nature where life is “nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1998), and in doing so subject many thousands of innocent civilians to untold atrocities and hardships.

**Conclusion**

It is therefore the contention of this thesis that four principles of ressentiment contribute to the proliferation of the ideology in dynamic ways. The first ‘anomie’ principle established that the phenomenon is a precursor to ressentiment. Given that it is invariably difficult to identify those at risk of ressentiment via their social identity, it is proposed that through anomie and the various socio-economic indicators which incubate it, it becomes possible to identify a nation particularly susceptible to ressentiment ideologies. The transvaluation principle highlighted the psychosomatic process of ressentiment prone
individuals and also identified many of the different types of language employed in the simplistic collectivist stereotyping born out of its discourse. The role that elites play in incubating a dynamic type of ressentiment was discussed in the third principle. The political elite are seen as suffering the most intense pain, and thus induce the phenomenon in order to alleviate their legitimacy crises. However their inducement should not be thought of as rational self-interest, instead it is an irrational response to their pain and shame. The fourth principle highlighted the potential for ressentiment to create social unrest and dynamic conflict narratives, this occurs because ressentiment promotes a politics of ideological confrontation. However, as conflict narratives are social constructions, the potential for them to collapse when everyday experiences do not resemble the narrative being articulated is an ongoing danger. Finally, the discussion section illuminated two conditions which must be met for ressentiment to affect international politics, as well as a number potential impacts of the phenomenon on state vis-à-vis state relations.
Chapter 3: Case Study

In keeping with the Nietzschean (1989) tradition, this case study shall demonstrate not why, but how state elites manipulate their constituents to support questionable foreign policy objectives. It must be noted that the following analysis is in no way meant to belittle the loss of the families of the 2,977 victims of 9/11 (9/11 Commission, 2004). The attacks remain a shocking testament to the brutality the human species is capable of inflicting. Instead it should be viewed as a fundamental shift in the interpretation of the events following the attacks. It does not seek to explain why these attacks occurred, nor does it presume to pass judgement on the actions of the American people as a whole (many objected to post 9/11 politics) (Zeyfuss, 2004; Kirkwood-Tucker, 2004; Reinemer, 2003). It simply attempts to explain how the collective pain of the nation could be manipulated to affect foreign policy outcomes in the subjective interest of the political elite. Bearing that in mind, since the link between anomie as an inducer of ressentiment has previously been argued (Brown, 2008; Greenfeld, 1990), a number of structural factors and socio-economic indicators will now be highlighted. These factors will point to both the anomic dislocation of the US public, and their proneness to ressentiment.

Anomie In the United States

Given the intrinsic assumptions of both Durkheim (1951) and Merton (1938) that democratic and capitalist states are generators of anomie, it is clear from a cursory viewing of the political and economic structures of the US that its people are at risk of ressentiment. The US is one of the most evolved and weathered democracies a part of international society; the same can be said of its capitalist free market economy. However, the decline of democracy in the US is well documented with some theorists postulating that it is seriously compromised and impaired by the inequality of resources amongst its citizens (Almond, 1991). Fuelling this decay is the dominance of large, autonomous corporations which act as
an institutional barrier to a more complete democracy (Almond, 1991). Despite its decay it is still characterised as a ‘full democracy’ by the ‘Democracy Index,’ (Democracy Index, 2010) ranking 17th out of 167 countries in 2006 (a ranking it maintains today). Similarly, the ‘Index of Economic Freedom’ (Index of Economic Freedom, 2006) rated the US’ free market model 9th out of 179 economies. While quantitative indices such as these tend to simplify complex political and economic systems, they do provide an elementary overview of the politico-economic integrity of the US in comparison to other countries. Accordingly, the structural characteristics of the US indicate that it has satisfied the first criteria of an anomie prone nation-state. Statistical data will now be provided to further support this claim.

Figure 3.1  US Unemployment Rate from 2000 – 2006 for people 16 years old and over.

Figure 3.1 demonstrates a clear spike in unemployment from 4 percent in 2000/01 to around 6 percent in 03/04. This 2 percent increase (while modest) indicates an increasing pool of anomic individuals at a critical stage for the inducement of ressentiment. As access to income is a fundamental requirement to the provision of financial (and personal) security, it indicates that an increased number of Americans face an uncertain future right around the time the US political elite’s campaign characterising simplistic ideological narratives is hitting full stride. Remembering Merton’s (1938) assumption regarding the inverse relationship between anomie and the ‘American dream,’ even a seemingly nominal
increase like the one illustrated in figure 3.1 would lead to a larger pool of anomic peoples susceptible to ressentiment ideologies.

Table 3.1  Strictness of Overall Employment Protection (Overall) on a scale of 0 – 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(OECD.Strat, 2011)

Table 3.1 represents the strictness of employment protection in three highly developed economies, namely Australia, Germany and the US. This is represented on a scale of zero to six, where zero is the least strict and six is the strictest. It is clear that employment protection in the US is almost non-existent; in fact it has the least protection out of 41 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (OECD.Strat, 2011). In a study of 15 OECD countries (including the US), Anderson and Pontusson (2007) found that workers felt more secure and less anxious in countries where legislation limited the ability of employers to dismiss workers. They also found that policies designed to increase the employability of unemployed individuals and which aid them to find new work decreased labour market insecurity (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007).

The effect of such a low level of employment protection has multiple consequences. The first impacts the unemployed of the US; with little support from their government, jobless Americans face a more uncertain future than their counterparts in other OECD countries. As a result, these individuals are exponentially more vulnerable to anomic dissonance, and are therefore more prone to ressentiment. Low level employment protection also promotes insecurity amongst the employed population (Anderson & Pontusson, 2007), especially in times of market contraction. Anxiety and fear will prevail if
there are fewer jobs on offer due to a reduction in the size of the job market. As a consequence of this contraction there would also be more competition for the jobs that are available, therefore increasing the numbers of people out of work for longer periods. Data from the US Labor Bureau (2011) supports this supposition during the period 2002 to 2006, as figures 3.2 and 3.3 demonstrate.

**Figure 3.2**  Number Unemployed for 15 weeks and over and 16 years and over

**Figure 3.3**  Number Unemployed for 27 weeks and over and 16 and over

In summary, the above data suggests that during the period 2000 to 2006, more individuals were out of work, and for longer. Compounding this are low levels of employment protection in the US. Given Merton’s (1938) assumption regarding the American dream, and the deduction that the further an individual is from reaching the dream, the more likely they are to experience anomie, these statistics are a clear indication of the ressentiment prone state of the US population. However, it must be conceded that
these statistics should not be interpreted as a literal indication of the numbers experiencing anomie, they merely point at a trend towards increasing numbers of potentially anomic individuals due to increasing levels of instability. Underlying this assumption is the fact that not all unemployed persons emanate from low socio economic segments of society, and thus the strain on them at being jobless may be less than someone who is the sole provider for their household. Additionally, it is debatable whether new entrants into the job market (which are included in the above figures) would experience the same levels of anxiety from joblessness as someone who is recently unemployed and had a more burdensome household to support.

The income disparity index is another indicator of anomie and ressentiment, with Oishi, Kesebir and Diener (2011) claiming that widening income inequality is a major cause of unhappiness in the US. The income disparity index is calculated with the Gini coefficient, where 0 is perfect equality and 1 indicates maximum inequality (Noss, 2010). Table 3.2 demonstrates an astonishingly high level of inequality for an advanced industrial economy; its income inequality is substantially higher than the fledgling democracy of Timor-Leste (0.32 in 2002) and the equivalent, industrialised nation-state of Australia (0.305 in 2006) (CIA Factbook, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0.436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In fact, income inequality is substantially higher in the US than any other developed country and even more damning is its steady increase over the last 25 years. Demyanyk (2006) postulated that rising income inequality is harmful to society because among other things, it can cause slower economic growth, increased crime rates, decreased well-being and unsatisfactory educational outcomes. Furthermore, inequality has for a long time been identified as a generator of anomie (Zhao & Cao). Accordingly, the above data is just another indicator of the potential pool of anomie individuals in the US.

### Table 3.3 Income Distribution – Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>around 1990</th>
<th>mid-90s</th>
<th>around 2000</th>
<th>mid-2000s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(US Census Bureau, 2011)

Table 3.3 demonstrates the percentage of people living with an income under 50 percent of median income; this figure is perhaps the most damning of the socio-economic situation in the US. Moreover, the mid 2000s figure is higher than 28 other OECD countries with only Turkey and Mexico having a higher percentage of the 31 samples (OECD.Strat, 2011). When considered with regard to Merton’s theory of the American dream and its inverse relationship with anomie, an even larger portion of the social strata can be postulated as experiencing a dislocation.

### Table 3.4 Social Expenditure

In percentage of Gross Domestic Product
Social welfare expenditure is another indicator of anomie. In a study of inequality, the welfare state and institutional anomie theory, Savolainen (2008) found that nation-states with generous welfare programs seemed to be “immune to the detrimental effects of economic inequality” (p. 1036), with a primary effect of the inequality being anomie. Hence the relatively low levels of expenditure on social welfare illuminated in table 3.4 (10th out of 35 OECD countries) are yet another example of the burgeoning pool of anomic individuals (OECD.Strat, 2011). As a result, it is clear from the volume of data readily available that a situation of instability was evident, causing anomie to entrench itself within the collective American national psyche. Given Durkheim’s (1951) assumption that anomie can lead to suicide and Merton’s (1938) supposition that anomie leads to crime, it is worth considering the suicide and crime rates of the US.

### Table 3.5 Suicide and Violent Crime Rate in US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crime*</td>
<td>506.5</td>
<td>504.5</td>
<td>494.4</td>
<td>475.8</td>
<td>463.2</td>
<td>469.0</td>
<td>479.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property Crime*</td>
<td>3,618.3</td>
<td>3,658.1</td>
<td>3,630.6</td>
<td>3,591.2</td>
<td>3,514.1</td>
<td>3,431.5</td>
<td>3,346.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide**</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* By volume and rate per 100,000 inhabitants (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).
** Causes of mortality, Intentional self-harm, Deaths per 100 000 population (standardised rates) (OECD.Strat, 2011).

Clearly table 3.5 demonstrates a falling violent crime, property crime and relatively steady suicide rate during the period 2000 to 2006. When interpreted in conjunction with the above socio-economic data which indicates a larger pool of potentially anomic individuals during the same period, and given that anomie can lead to one of three things:
suicide (Durkheim, 1951), crime (Merton, 1938), and ressentiment. It is clear that through this period more anomic individuals were increasingly seduced by the simplistic narratives of ressentiment, rather than turning to crime or suicide. Having established the increasing anomic dislocation of US society and the link between anomie and ressentiment, the case study shall now further highlight the prevalence of ressentiment in the US.

Trans-valuation, Stereotyping and the US Political Elite

For clarities sake, this section of the case study shall illuminate the trans-valuation and elite principles concurrently. Underscoring this methodology is the link already established between both principles, stating that a rampant ressentiment ideology relies on the inducement of the elite. Furthermore, the archival data employed in this section is a demonstration of both the trans-valuation and elite principles. 9/11 was exceptional for a number of reasons, each of which aided the development of ressentiment in the US. Primary among these was its profound symbolism, the unprecedented media coverage it received, and its method of execution (Zehfuss, 2003). Combined, these three factors etched 9/11 into the memories of people around the world. When considering the symbolism of the attacks, it is hard to ignore the tri-pronged approach Al Qaida adopted, targeting the foremost symbol of globalisation and capitalism (WTC), the headquarters of the US military establishment (Pentagon), and the failed attempt on the heart of American democracy (White House) (Zehfuss, 2003).

Irrespective of the failure of the White House operation, the attacks were a resounding success from Al Qaida’s point of view (Yousafzai & Moreau, 2010; Azzam, 2008; Kydd & Walker, 2006). They humbled the premier superpower within its own borders and broadcast their grievances to the entire world (Zehfuss, 2003). In fact it is argued by many that the attacks were planned with maximum publicity in mind (Kydd & Walker, 2006). New York, being a principal media hub and one of the most important cultural and political
metropolises in the world was bound to have TV crews on hand, and even if they had missed the first plane strike, there was no way they could have missed the second (Zehfuss, 2003). It was therefore an extreme act of intimidation and provocation, multiplied by the method of execution (Kydd & Walker, 2006, p. 59). The use of airliners as suicide vessels with their passengers held hostage inside is something far darker than Hollywood could ever dream up. Now consider that images of this event were beamed into lounge rooms across America, repeated footage of the plane strikes, the explosions and the collapses, civilians jumping to their deaths on national television. The emotional ebbs and flows the viewership experienced must have been staggering (they were for me), from fear, to anger, to grief and back again. All emotions synonymous with anomie, an event such as this could serve to be the catalyst for a ressentiment most insidious (Brown, 2008).

Before the discussion of ressentiment can proceed further, it is important to contextualise the manner in which Bush came to power and its dubiousness (Choper, 2001). The controversy surrounding the 2000 election which installed him in office was based on the awarding of Florida’s 23 electoral votes to Bush by the High Court whilst Al Gore won the popular vote by some 500,000 votes (Choper, 2001). The actions of the High Court have been claimed by many pundits as delegitimising, partisan and lacking in merit (Choper, 2001). Compounding the dubious start to his tenure as President was a series of protests that occurred across the country, including in Washington D.C at his inauguration ceremony (BBC, 2001). Police claimed that it was the largest protest they had seen since Nixon’s inauguration in 1973, with one protester hurling an egg at the presidential limousine (CNN, 2001). Combined, these factors made for trying times at the start of his first term in office, raising serious doubts over his legitimacy. The fact that the American people had voted for Gore by a margin of over 500,000 votes is no small thing, especially when coupled with the High Court’s decision to overturn the ruling of Florida’s judiciary (Choper, 2001). Furthermore, polling indicated that his approval rating was declining slowly in the first
months of his presidency (PollingReport, 2011). Thus, it is contended that Bush faced a moderate crisis of legitimacy immediately after entering, thus increasing his own predisposition to ressentiment.

It has been established that the greatest feelings of emotional pain were experienced by the priestly caste (Sanhedrin), the former exercisers of authority in Jewish society (Nietzsche, 1989; Langbert & Friedman, 2003). The modern equivalent of the Sanhedrin in the US during this time was President Bush and his administration. Interestingly, the similarities in this case go further than those outlined in the elite principle. Not only is Bush the exerciser of legislative and judicial power, but he has clouded the fundamental democratic principle separating church from state. Mathy (2004) argued that the separation of church and state was designed to protect religion in the US, whereas elsewhere the inverse is true (the state is protected from the church). This assumption illuminates the sacrosanct regard of the church in America and is a fundamental disconnect between the values of the US and some of its principal allies in the war (most notably France) (Mathy, 2004). Perhaps more controversial are countless references to God in Bush’s public speeches, or Michael Kelly’s assertion, that his foreign policy was “armed evangelism” (Healy, 2003). However, immortalising Bush’s piousness was an encounter he had with a former Palestinian Foreign Minister where he claimed that God told him to invade Iraq, or that he had been inspired by God to invade (interpretations differ depending on the translation of the Palestinians’ account, however the consequences remain the same) (Isherwood, 2007; Bush ‘God talk’ rumors about Iraq war spark controversy and debate, 2005). Considering this, the similarities between Bush and the Sanhedrin high priest who demanded the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth become more pronounced (Langbert & Friedman, 2003). In addition to his legislative and judicial power and the religious overtones which frame his execution of it, he is also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces; therefore he is ultimately responsible and accountable for any failure to defend the
homeland (Constitution of the United States, 2011). Consequently, the legitimacy crisis he faced in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was unlike any other faced by an American President before him and it called for a response equally exceptional.

Whilst anomie was prevalent in the years prior to 9/11, the days following the attack were chaotic and fearful, only serving to heighten the dislocation of the American people (since sudden crises of power and social change generates anomie; Durkheim, 1951). However, once the initial chaos had subsided and the US administration had taken stock of the situation, they began the articulation of simplistic collectivist stereotyping. This devastating attack had violated the sanctity of US sovereignty, exposing the nation’s soft underbelly and the people were left feeling weak and defenceless. It was characterised by Bush and understood by the people as an attack on the American way of life (Bush, 2001). Where they had once considered themselves strong and untouchable, they now felt insecure and vulnerable. In order to remedy the weakened state of the national psyche and to seek vengeance from the injustice they had suffered, Bush and the administration initiated a discourse aimed at inducing ressentiment. Their methodology identified Al Qaida (and the wider Islamic ethnocultural community) as evil oppressors and the American people (and the ‘West’ more broadly) as righteous and virtuous. This ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality, coupled with the shocking nature of the attacks, helped to polarise public opinion and it became taboo to critically examine the underlying causes (Zehfuss, 2003). Instead the people only see a threatening enemy who wishes harm upon them, and against whom they must resist (Zehfuss, 2003). It is through their obscuring of the underlying causes with a veil of collectivist stereotyping that Bush and the administration can free themselves of the shame felt because of their loss of legitimacy and esteem.

Amplifying the situation of ressentiment in the US is Terry Aladjem’s (2008) postulation that American culture is preoccupied with vengeance which can often take
violent forms. He argued that the US justice system cannot account for vengeance because of its liberal foundations, which attempt to relieve the irrational pain and anguish caused by crime via the process of rational justice (Aladjem, 2008). Moreover, he posits that Americans are conditioned to assign blame, to personalise with the enforcement of law and characterise conflict in terms of good and evil (Aladjem, 2008). Consequently, this results in a culture which is “far more interested in reaching the vengeful conclusion than in discovering the truth” (Aladjem, 2008, p. 64). Aladjem’s (2008) work explicitly refers to Nietzschean ressentiment and contends that a fundamental trans-valuation of justice into vengeance has occurred in the US (Aladjem, 2008). Clearly his work is another indication of rampant ressentiment in the US post 9/11, and when considered in conjunction with the ongoing inducement of the phenomena by elites like Bush, it begins to paint a dire picture. To truly understand the insidious nature of the ressentiment brewing amongst the nation and the elites who encourage it, full consideration must be given to the political rhetoric they engage the population with.

The most effective technique employed to communicate their rhetoric are political speeches, with the most important of all being the annual SoU address delivered by Bush. The address not only reports on the condition of the US but also sets out the legislative agenda and the national priorities of the President; it is televised live and reached an estimated audience of 62 million people in 2003 (TVNZ, 2010). However, to understand the dramatic shift in rhetoric that occurred between changing administrations during 2000/01 and thus frame this section of the debate, it is pertinent to consider some of the dominant themes of former President Clinton’s (2000) final address. Because of the large audience the address reaches, the power of the language employed cannot be understated. The political elite understand this most of all, and employ a number of techniques to appeal to their audience. Aristotle illuminated three ‘modes of persuasion,’ namely logos, pathos and ethos; logos appeals to reason, pathos appeals to emotions and ethos appeals to character.
In Clinton’s final address, he almost exclusively employed logos (which in turn supported his ethos), and relatively little pathos. The effect of this was to create an informed, authoritative and convincing address. He relied on statistical information to document the prosperity and social progress of the US and highlighted almost an absence of internal crisis and very few external threats. He referred to no ‘evil’ enemies or collectivist stereotypes and celebrated our ‘common humanity.’ The positive spin which dominated the address could only serve to endear Clinton to the audience (Clinton, 2000).

In contrast, Bush very cunningly identified pathos as an effective tool for the articulation of ressentiment, because in essence it is an emotional reaction to stimuli and pathos appeals to emotion. His appeal to the emotive side of the American people was achieved via the identification of certain individuals, and their personal stories of hardship, or their compassion for the ‘cause.’ In fact, Bush blatantly employed pathos in every SoU address from 2001 until 2006 whilst comparatively, he used very little logos (a complete list of pathea is provided in Appendix I). One example from 2002 stated: “At a memorial in New York, a little boy left his football with a note for his lost father: “Dear Daddy, please take this to heaven. I don’t want to play football until I can play with you again some day”” (Bush, 2002). Another, from 2006, states:

A young woman in Baghdad told of waking to the sound of mortar fire on election day and wondering if it might be too dangerous to vote. She said,

"Hearing those explosions, it occurred to me: The insurgents are weak; they are afraid of democracy; they are losing. So I got my husband and I got my parents, and we all came out and voted together.” (Bush, 2006)

This use of pathos evokes a wide spectrum of emotions in all who hear the SoU addresses; however the emotional reactions of different individuals will vary greatly
depending on their underlying theme. The above examples have been provided because they highlight both ends of the emotional spectrum. The first evokes sadness, despair and anger, while the second arouses pride, patriotism and courage (in spite of its contradictory nature). Hence, the orator (Bush) is able to steer the emotional direction of his audience in whichever way he sees fit, making pathos a powerful tool in the inducement of ressentiment and the manipulation of people.

In addition to Bush’s employment of pathos, he also utilised anaphora (another rhetorical strategy), whereby he referred to information already given in another clause or sentence repetitiously in order to place emphasise upon it (Hall, 1997). An example of an anaphora was Julius Caesar’s notorious remark “I came, I saw, I conquered” (Suetonius, 1913). One of the most salient examples of an anaphora was in Bush’s post 9/11 speech, where he stated that “they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism” (Bush, 2001). Another powerful example of anaphora can be found in the 2002 SoU address: “We have known freedom’s price. We have shown freedom’s power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom’s victory” (Bush, 2002). In fact, he employed anaphora in many of his major speeches, and all of his SoU addresses. So successful was Bush’s combination of pathos, anaphora and collectivist stereotyping that his popularity skyrocketed after 9/11, reaching heights never achieved by an American president (as high as 92% on some opinion polls) (PollingReport, 2011). Critically, this was the indicator Bush needed to begin hatching his plans of invading Iraq.

Having highlighted Bush’s use of pathos and anaphora, his characterisation of simplistic collectivist stereotypes will now be illuminated. In January 2002 Bush delivered one of his most powerful speeches, declaring in the opening stanza that “as we gather tonight, our Nation is at war; our economy is in recession; and the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers. Yet, the state of our Union has never been stronger” (Bush, 2002).
Immediately Bush set the tone of the address; in spite of great adversity including war, recession and unprecedented danger, the US was stronger than ever. His goal here was to establish that in the aftermath of 9/11 the US had recovered from its defencelessness and was once again strong. Bush then stated that: “Our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness. They were as wrong as they are evil. The American people have responded magnificently, with courage and compassion, strength and resolve” (Bush, 2002). This is a prime illustration of the language of ressentiment and is a quintessential example of the trans-valuation process (as well as pathos and anaphora). Bush first highlighted the diminished, devalued perspective held by the enemies of America, then characterised that point of view as wrong and evil, and finished by reiterating the strength and resolve of the American people. In addition, he cleverly articulated this stereotyping in conjunction with rhetorical strategy; layering clauses in this manner is a power method of resonating with an audience.

Bush alluded to the ‘evil nature’ of the Islamic ethnocultural group on five occasions during the 2002 address stating that: “We’ve come to know truths that we will never question: Evil is real, and it must be opposed” (Bush, 2002). However he did not stop there, making the assessment that “states like these and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.” Not only did he characterise Al Qaida as inherently evil (a simplistic yet arguable claim), but he also cast the net wider, grouping Islamic nation-states, Iran and Iraq within an ‘axis of evil.’ The symbolism of this simplistic assessment is plain to see, as Bush attempted to liken the Iraqi and Iranian regimes with those of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan, who constituted the Axis powers during World War Two, and who epitomise true malevolence for many people. Characterisations of this nature only serve to foster the ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. However, this mentality had dominated his rhetoric from the very beginning, with Bush previously stating that “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (Bush, 2001). This
narrow assessment of the complex situation that the US found itself in 2001/02 is laden with the language of ressentiment and methods of persuasion, and can be considered a clear demonstration of the political elite inducing ressentiment. However, to give a clearer indication of the depth of state generated ressentiment during Bush’s time in power, it is necessary to take into consideration subsequent SoU addresses.

The 2003 address had another three overt references to the ‘evil’ nature of America’s enemies and Bush’s use of rhetoric was as strong as ever: “In all these days of promise and days of reckoning, we can be confident. In a whirlwind of change and hope and peril, our faith is sure; our resolve is firm; and our Union is strong” (Bush, 2003). However, the blatant objective of the 2003 address was to prepare the nation for war with Iraq. In the address Bush made his case with 19 explicit references to Saddam Hussein, detailing some of the atrocities committed by the Ba’ath party against its own people, commenting that: “If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning” (Bush, 2003). In addition, Bush included a number of fabrications to add depth to the developing conflict narrative. This was a cunning ploy, where he linked the most salient example of ‘evil,’ the Al Qaida network, with Hussein and his regime. This is important because the conflict narrative thus far had developed in the midst of the war on terror and its popular support was predicated on the collective hatred of Al Qaida (and all it stood for) by the American people. By creating a link between Hussein, the Ba’ath party and Al Qaida, Bush drags Iraq into the dynamic conflict narrative that is the war on terror. Driving the point home was his claim that Hussein may pass weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to Al Qaida, “secretly and without fingerprints” (Bush, 2003).

The effect of this on his popularity is illustrated by opinion polling at the time, which indicated a marked rise from around 58% in January before the address to 70% by the end of March after the invasion (PollingReport, 2011). Clearly the pattern indicated by
these figures demonstrates the ressentiment driven conflict narrative Bush is promoting is resonating with the public. He is methodical and he is consistent, as such his Mission Accomplished speech employed all the elements which made his SoU addresses a success. Thus, it should not be excluded from this analysis. “One of those who fell, Corporal Jason Mileo, spoke to his parents five days before his death. Jason’s father said, “He called us from the center of Baghdad, not to brag, but to tell us he loved us. Our son was a soldier”” (Bush, 2003). This excerpt is another clear example of pathos, amongst others, as well as his typical employment of anaphora. He maintained the US commitment to fighting evil, explicitly referring to the 19 ‘evil’ hijackers of 9/11.

Bush delivered another address loaded with the language of ressentiment and rhetorical strategy in 2004. Once more he began by highlighting the strength of the union, “Americans are rising to the task of history... In their efforts, their enterprise, and their character, the American people are showing that the state of our Union is confident and strong” (Bush, 2004). This quote suggests a more self-assured outlook, indeed the now dynamic conflict narrative had mobilised support for Bush; he was no longer insecure in power and his legitimacy crisis had long since been resolved. In fact, his average approval rating from the start of the Iraq war to the time of the 2004 address was a little over 61% (PollingReport, 2011). However, having invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush required a broader target with which to continue the articulation of his collectivist stereotyping; he finds this target in the Middle East.

As long as the Middle East remains a place of tyranny and despair and anger, it will continue to produce men and movements that threaten the safety of America and our friends. So America is pursuing a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East. We will challenge the enemies of reform, confront the allies of terror... (Bush, 2004)
Bush sought to expand the object of American ressentiment here to include the greater Middle East, an entire geo-political region. Typically, his love affair with anaphora continued along with his simplistic characterisations, which by now had helped to alienate a large portion of the Islamic world and brought about more support for the extremist groups they were trying to defeat in the war on terror (Yaqub, 2002). The SoU addresses of Bush’s second term displayed a noticeable tempering of language compared to those of his first term. However, his key themes of terrorism and the struggle against ‘evil’ continued to play a central role, as well as his distinctive rhetorical strategy. He concerns himself with ensuring Americans never forget the horror of 9/11.

Five years have come and gone since we saw the scenes and felt the sorrow that the terrorists can cause. We've had time to take stock of our situation... We know with certainty that the horrors of that September morning were just a glimpse of what the terrorists intend for us--unless we stop them. (Bush, 2006)

Before moving to the next section of the analysis, it is necessary to consider the role that the political elite around Bush played in the inducement of ressentiment. One salient example of the assistance rendered to the president was the further development of the infamous ‘axis of evil’ by John Bolton and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (Colin Powell’s replacement). Bolton expanded the axis explicitly in his speech “Beyond the Axis of Evil,” where he incorporated Cuba, Libya and Syria within its bounds. Interestingly, two of these states are dominated by an Islamic ethnocultural core. Continued characterisations of this manner only serve to alienate factions within the targeted states and as a result, promote a counter ressentiment of the US. Rice adopted a different characterisation in 2005 after the inauguration of Bush for his second term, calling Belarus, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe ‘outposts of tyranny.’ While it is clear that none of these states are democratic
and they are all overly oppressive towards their citizens the symbolic nature of the language used to categorise them is simplistic and an example of pathos. They are referred to in this manner simply to feed the ressentiment ideology, to remind the American public that they have enemies, enemies who may harbour the omnipotent evil that is the Al Qaida network.

Bush also received support from a number of elites in the promotion of his interventionist policy in Iraq, notably from Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Colin Powell. These two men cunningly made the case for war with Iraq along with Bush, and while scepticism remained in many other countries (notably France, Germany and Russia), for the most part the American public supported action. Cheney, in an address to the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) convention in 2002 outlined his argument for war with Iraq. He highlighted the evil nature of Saddam Hussein, saying that if he were not stopped, he would become more powerful by the day and develop more WMD to add to his existing stockpile. He also links Hussein with terrorist networks, stating that WMD in their collective hands constitutes “as grave a threat as can be imaged” (Cheney, 2002). Cheney employs the rhetorical strategies pathos and ethos in his speech, evoking an emotional response and appealing to the character of the VFW audience.

The daughter of an Army Air Corpsman described growing up with her father, and the values she learned from him without even knowing it. As she recalls, "Honesty, integrity, hard work, personal responsibility, and perseverance were all around me and I absorbed them almost imperceptibly."

Our veterans have had a similar effect on the entire nation. (Cheney, 2002)

In 2003, Powell made an address to the United Nations (UN) outlining Iraq’s violations of resolution 1441 (which stipulated that the state must submit to weapons inspections, disarm and cease its association with terrorist groups) (Powell, 2003). Powell
employed rhetorical strategy, and chiefly logos to argue his primary thesis: that Iraq was a
dangerous state, producing WMD, consorting with terrorists and potentially supplying
those terrorists with WMD. This speech was the corner stone of the US’s argument for war
with Iraq; Powell categorically stated that Iraq was collaborating with Al Qaida, the ‘evil’
perpetrators of 9/11, and whom the American public viewed with much disgust. The extent
of this alleged collaboration was immense, claiming that Iraq was harbouring an Al Qaida
network and training camp headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. Thus, the persuasiveness of
this address cannot be understated, it fooled governments and laymen alike and whilst not
explicitly advocating war with Iraq, it was inferred by his statement, “we have an obligation
to this body to see that our resolutions are complied with. We wrote 1441 not in order to
go to war, we wrote 1441 to try to preserve the peace. We wrote 1441 to give Iraq one last
chance. Iraq is not so far taking that one last chance” (Powell, 2003, p. 3). Clearly this
anaphoric statement alludes to the potentiality of war if Iraq does not take that ‘last
chance,’ which, as we now know it did not. Thus, the above arguments demonstrate that
both Cheney and Powell were complicit in the push for war with Iraq, while Bolton and Rice
were both involved in simplistic collectivist stereotyping. Thus, the next portion of this case
study will be dedicated to the analysis of why this conflict narrative fell apart after the
invasion of Iraq.

Dissecting Bush’s Conflict Narrative

“The moral condemnation of those who are stereotyped as enemies generates a
politics of ideological confrontation” (Brown, 2008, p. 778). The salience of the ideological
confrontation which occurred post 9/11 is one of the most overt aspects of the war on
terror. It was initially a very successful conflict narrative based on Bush’s positioning of the
US as the defenders of democracy, liberty and freedom; and in fact, it did seem for a time
as if they were virtuous, their cause just and their actions in the greater good. Furthermore,
Al Qaida played their role perfectly, the beheading and dismemberment of journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 by its operatives could only serve to harden the ressentiment of Americans towards the group (McCarthy, 2002). In addition, the rise in terrorist activity from ideologically similar groups like Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf fed into the same global war on terrorism narrative, reaffirming to the American public that it truly was a global scourge. Consequently, Bush and his administration enjoyed popular support for some time with an average approval rating of 68.5% from February 2001 until August 2003 (PollingReport, 2001). However, things soon began to change and his popularity began to plummet, and by the end of his presidency only Presidents Truman and Nixon had finished with lower approval ratings (Saad, 2009). This begs the question, how could such a meteoric rise be accompanied by such an equally spectacular fall? The answer lies in ressentiment’s inherent instability and with the conflict narrative which sustains it; because of this instability they are liable to breakdown if the collectivist stereotypes which underpin them are shown to be false by ‘everyday experiences.’ It is postulated that the attempted inclusion of Iraq in the global war on terror narrative was a fundamental error when the three primary arguments for invasion turned out to be falsehoods; additionally the conduct of the war was unbecoming of a nation claiming to be the defender of democracy, liberty and freedom. This is at its very core a jus ad bellum (right to wage war) and jus in bello (justice of the conduct) argument and when the US failed to live up to these standards the collapse of the collectivist stereotypes employed by Bush to fuel American ressentiment occurred.

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, three fundamental untruths emerged surrounding the argument to wage war with Iraq, and the intelligence reports underpinning those arguments. The first related to Iraq’s stockpile of WMD and its ability to replenish those WMD. Specifically, the report conducted by the Select Committee on Intelligence (2004) analysing the Central Intelligence Agencies assessments of Iraq concluded that most of the
information contained within Powell’s speech was either “overstated, misleading, or incorrect” (p. 253). The second untruth surrounded the claimed link between Al Qaida and Iraq, and specifically that Iraq housed training camps and a network headed by Al-Zarqawi, there was in fact ‘contact’ (primarily in the early 1990s) however there was no evidence of co-operation or complicity (Butler, Chilcot, Inge, Mates & Taylor, 2004). Therefore, it can be deduced that the very dire claim that Iraq might pass WMD to Al Qaida ‘secretly and without fingerprints’ proved to be another fabrication. Critically, these three intelligence failures combined to undermine the authority and legitimacy of the Bush administration and therefore fundamentally eroded the ressentiment narrative that had previously been so successfully articulated. After all, how could Bush continue to claim the Iraq war was ‘just’ when it was based on such overt falsehoods; or in the greater good when civilians and soldiers alike were dying, live on CNN.

Coupled with the destabilising effect that these falsehoods had on the US ressentiment narrative was the conduct of the global war on terrorism. This is fundamentally a jus in bello argument, and there is damning evidence against the conduct of the US military and administration. Much of this came to light from the photos which emerged from the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, where many Iraqi detainees were subjected to torture, rape and other unspeakable acts (Amann, 2005). Diane Amann (2005) argued that Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo and the methods employed there to extract information from prisoners was the “self-conscious creation of the Executive” (p. 2086). Moreover, the dubious characterisation of detainees as ‘unlawful combatants,’ rather than prisoners of war, despite declarations of war by both belligerents (the US and Al Qaida) was a cunning ploy to avoid the mandate of the Third Geneva Convention (Zehfuss, 2003; International Humanitarian Law, 2011). Clearly, the manner in which the US military and administration conducted the war on terrorism was not consistent with acceptable war time conduct. When these reports came to light in 2004 they fundamentally nullified the
moral high ground which Bush had claimed since 9/11, in fact the hypocrisy of the US position was now striking. Consequently, with the collapse of the illusory jus ad bellum (right to wage war) argument which Bush and his cohorts had constructed prior to invading Iraq, together with their contempt of jus in bello, the formally persuasive ressentiment ideology and conflict narrative sustaining it came crashing down. Blinded by their pursuit of vengeance and legitimacy, their collectivist stereotyping was broken by their own hand. The result of this is illustrated in approval polling from the time, where Bush suffered a dramatic fall in popularity, dropping from his Iraqi war time high of 71% to 46% in just over a year (PollingReport, 2011). As the casualties kept mounting, and the revelations of abuse and falsehoods kept emerging his popularity plummeted further, hitting an all-time low of 25% in 2008 when the trillion dollar financial cost of the war started to take its toll on the US economy (Schifferes, 2008).

It is worth considering for a moment what could have motivated Bush and his administration to pursue a course of intervention. There is a multitude of opinion amongst the scholarship questioning why post 9/11 politics played out in the fashion they did. Many scholars point to the intent of the Bush led administrations for confrontation with Iraq very early in his presidency. Two of those scholars are Nick Ritchie and Paul Rogers (2007), who illuminated that regime change in Iraq became a strategic priority for the elite post 9/11. Furthermore, they claim that many members of the administration began to believe the intelligence assessments filtering down from the ‘top,’ highlighting Iraq’s WMD programmes and it’s harbouring of Al Qaida operatives and training camps. Additionally, many arguments have been made that US oil security strategy mandated a need to sure up supplies sourced from the Middle East, and as Iraq contained 9.7 percent of the total world oil reserves (in 2004), those same arguments highlighted regime change as sure fire way of achieving that goal (Ritchie & Rogers, 2007). Whether the motivation lay in Iraq’s oil wealth, or in removing a regional threat to stability and alleged Al Qaida sympathiser is
unclear (it is most probably shades of each), what is clear is the intent of Bush and his cohorts to remove Hussein and the Ba’ath party in contempt of the potential human (over 600,000 people (Burnham, Doocy, Dzeng, Lafta & Roberts, 2006) and financial cost ($3 trillion (Schifferes, 2008). What is most striking about these astronomical figures is what could have been achieved had the war been averted in the first place. Hillary Clinton claimed that the trillion dollar cost “is enough to provide health care for all 47 million uninsured Americans and quality pre-kindergarten for every American child, solve the housing crisis once and for all, and make college affordable for every American student” (Schifferes, 2008). While the partisan nature of these comments suggests they are somewhat exaggerated, it is enlightening to consider what ‘good’ could have been done if the war had been avoided, not to mention the lives that would have been saved. Surely this later scenario should be the objective self-interest of any American administration and not the war mongering of the Bush era.

It is also interesting to consider the immediacy with which Bush, Cheney, Powell and Bolton shifted the focus from Afghanistan to Iraq. Combat operations began in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 and just over a year later the American people were being prepared for another war on the other side of the world. Not only did this completely destabilise the rebuilding effort in Afghanistan (to such an extent that escalating violence persists there today), but it destroyed the moral high ground the US had held post 9/11 in matters of diplomacy and foreign policy because they acted without the express permission of the UN. Further tarnishing their international identity was their affront to ‘just war’ principles, jus ad bellum and jus in bello. Clearly, the above examples cannot represent the objective self-interest of rational political players. They are instead an example of the irrational subjective agenda of resentiment prone elites attempting to relieve their pain, caused by the undermining of their legitimacy.
Conclusion

It is clear that through the period 2000 to 2006 more anomic individuals were increasingly seduced by the simplistic narratives of ressentiment, rather than turning to crime or suicide. In addition, the horrific nature of 9/11 and all the symbolism attached to it deeply scarred the US national psyche and undermined the legitimacy of President Bush. The anxiety, fear and pain felt by many people after the event allowed for the inducement of an insidious ressentiment by the political elite (who were attempting to relieve their own feelings of shame). The elite harnessed this ressentiment, demonising parts of the Islamic world and then used it to further their subjective interests, chiefly the invasion of Iraq. Hence, with the realisation of this goal, ressentiment can be interpreted as having influenced state vis-à-vis state relations. The simplistic ‘virtuous us,’ ‘evil other’ narrative promoted by Bush used two primary rhetorical strategies to persuade its audience, pathos and anaphora. The consistent methodical way that Bush reaffirmed these stereotypes helped to maintain his popularity for some years, however, as the war dragged on the narrative was challenged by the everyday experience of the soldiers on the ground, and the people at home. Essentially, US ressentiment was undermined by the collapse of its jus ad bellum arguments for war with Iraq, as well as its contempt for jus in bello. Testament to this was the intelligence failure which becomes apparent after the invasion, and the revelation that Abu Ghraib prison was used as a torture house. Combined, these two factors smashed the illusory ressentiment experienced by the American people, waking them to the horrible nightmare that was the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2004/05. Accordingly, Bush’s popular support plummeted and he finished his tenure as president being one of the most unpopular of all time.
Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusions

The US case study demonstrated that ressentiment can be interpreted as a force effecting IR. Furthermore, it was also made clear that the conditions for anomie induced ressentiment were realised in this case, and coupled with the catastrophic injustice that was 9/11, the social fabric of America irreversibly changed forever. Consequently, the American people became more vulnerable to manipulation by simplistic collectivist stereotyping. When considering all these elements in context, the events following 9/11 resembled a ‘perfect storm’ scenario. During the discussion of the hybrid theory of ressentiment it was established that two principles must be met for ressentiment to effect international politics. The first condition stipulated that the subject nation be prone to ressentiment, clearly the US satisfied this condition. The second condition necessitated the requirement for some objective where the demonization of an external nation-state or ethnocultural group will aid them in achieving their subjective goals. Through the analysis of the statistical and archival evidence presented in the case study, it is clear that the invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein was an explicit objective of Bush’s administration.

Due to the sheer volume of literature encompassed by the political and social phenomena under analysis (anomie, ressentiment, war, terrorism and IR), it was necessary to define the scope of this study. Implicit to this thesis is its interpretive approach; it did not seek to explain why 9/11 occurred, it simply provided one interpretation of the events following the attack. Moreover, 2001 to 2006 was identified as an appropriate time frame for analysis because statistical and archival evidence suggested a spike in anomie and collectivist stereotyping during this time. In qualifying the arguments made, a hybrid notion of ressentiment influenced by Nietzsche, Scheler and Brown (amongst others) was
formulated consisting of four principles. The four principles which made up hybrid resentment included the anomie principle, which established that the phenomenon is a precursor to resentment. A number of socio-economic indicators were used to illustrate the destabilising effect of anomie in the US. The trans-valuation principle highlighted the psychosomatic process of resentment prone individuals and also identified many of the different types of language employed in simplistic collectivist stereotyping. The role that elites play in incubating a dynamic type of resentment was discussed in the third principle. The political elite are seen as suffering the most intense pain, and thus induce the phenomenon in order to alleviate their legitimacy crises. However their inducement should not be thought of as rational self-interest, instead it is an irrational response to their shame. The conflict narrative principle highlighted the potential for dynamic conflict to spawn out of resentment because it promotes a politics of ideological confrontation. However, as the conflict narrative is a social construction, the potential for it to collapse when everyday experiences do not resemble the stereotypes being articulated is an ever-present danger. Finally, the discussion section illuminated two conditions which must be met for resentment to affect international politics, as well as a number potential impacts of the phenomenon on state vis-à-vis state relations.

During the period 2000 to 2006 anomie was endemic to the US and consequently increasing numbers of individuals became susceptible simplistic stereotypical narratives. The shocking nature of 9/11, including its symbolism, method of execution and excessive media coverage served to etch the event into the minds of all Americans. President Bush, who was suffering a legitimacy crisis attempted to resolve his shame by articulating a resentment discourse, demonising the Islamic ethnocultural core of the wider Middle East region. Bush managed to resolve his legitimacy crises for some time, with approval polling indicating that he was the most popular US president since polling began in the months immediately after 9/11. Underscoring his success was the rhetoric he employed and the
consistent, methodical way he utilised pathos and anaphora. He made the most of his popularity and mobilised support for the invasion of Iraq, however, this was a fatal mistake for his simplistic collectivist stereotyping. Essentially, the ressentiment he induced was undermined by the collapse of the administration’s jus ad bellum arguments for war with Iraq, coupled with its contempt for jus in bello. Testament to this was the categorical intelligence failure which is now synonymous with the Iraq War, and the revelation that torture and other atrocities including homicide occurred at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. With the collapse of his conflict narrative in Iraq, Bush’s popular support plummeted and he spent the last year in office as one of the most unpopular presidents of all time.

It is worthwhile reiterating the primary hypotheses which stated that; a) ressentiment is a force influencing international relations and state vis-à-vis state relationships; b) former President Bush was as much a victim of the ressentiment mentality as his constituents, and; c) Bush harnessed ressentiment ideologies to mislead, manipulate and mobilise the American public to commit to an unjust war. Indeed, the US proved to be a salient example of a ressentiment prone state, which experienced a ‘perfect storm’ type scenario due to a number of symptomatic factors and multiplied by 9/11. Hence, it is clear in this case that ressentiment can be interpreted as effecting IR, whether the same results will be found in other test cases is up for debate. An interesting starting point may be a comparative case study juxtaposing post 9/11 US ressentiment and Cold War era America, because even a cursory viewing of the discourse between the US and the Soviet Union indicates similar collectivist stereotypes to those articulated by Bush. President Reagan’s, Evil Empire speech immediately springs to mind.

The second hypothesis called for an analysis of both Bush and his constituent’s ressentiment proneness. It was demonstrated through the case study that Bush entered office under dubious circumstances, coupling that with the delegitimising nature of 9/11
and it is clear that he faced great challenges in the first year of his presidency. Bush successfully resolved the shame he felt resulting from 9/11 by engaging with and inducing ressentiment. The anomic dislocation of large portions of US society was indicated by the socio-economic factors employed in the first section of the case study, their anomie developed into ressentiment when Bush began characterising simplistic collectivist stereotyping, demonising the Islamic ethnocultural core of the Middle East. The people responded with enthusiasm, which is not surprising given the severity of the situation post 9/11, indeed they had witnessed the destruction of a cultural icon, the symbolism and ramifications of which should not be understated.

The third hypothesis necessitated an analysis of the potential for Bush to mislead, manipulate and mobilise the American people to commit to an unjust war. The case study provided salient examples of the untruths Bush and his administration told to convince not just his people, but the international community that Iraq needed to be invaded, and Saddam Hussein removed from power. He manipulated their opinions through the use of rhetorical strategy and collectivist stereotyping and that, coupled with the endemic condition of anomie, created a demos prone to collectivist action. The ‘just war’ argument demonstrated that the US conducted a war which was far from satisfactory. In fact I am prepared to say that the acts which occurred in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, if committed by a smaller power, would have landed the political elite of that nation in the International Criminal Court. As a consequence, there is no denying the unjust nature of the Iraq War.
Appendices

I. 2001 SoU address pathos examples

2002 SoU address pathos examples
Last month, at the grave of her husband, Micheal, a CIA officer and marine who died in Mazar-e-Sharif, Shannon Spann said these words of farewell, "Semper Fi, my love." Shannon is with us tonight. Shannon, I assure you and all who have lost a loved one that our cause is just, and our country will never forget the debt we owe Micheal and all who gave their lives for freedom.

Now America is embracing a new ethic and a new creed, "Let's roll." In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters, and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like.

2003 SoU address pathos examples
Our Nation is blessed with recovery programs that do amazing work. One of them is found at the Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A man in the program said, "God does miracles in people's lives, and you never think it could be you." Tonight let us bring to all Americans who struggle with drug addiction this message of hope: The miracle of recovery is possible, and it could be you.

2004 SoU address pathos examples
Last month a girl in Lincoln, Rhode Island, sent me a letter. It began, "Dear George W. Bush. If there's anything you know I, Ashley Pearson, age 10, can do to help anyone, please send me a letter and tell me what I can do to save our country." She added this P.S.: "If you can send a letter to the troops, please put, 'Ashley Pearson believes in you.'"

2005 SoU address pathos examples
“Our enemies know this, and that is why the terrorist Zarqawi recently declared war on what he called the "evil principle" of democracy. And we've declared our own intention: America will stand with the allies of freedom to support democratic movements in the Middle East and beyond, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”

“One of Iraq's leading democracy and human rights advocates is Safia Taleb al-Suhail. She says of her country, "We were occupied for 35 years by Saddam Hussein. That was the real occupation. Thank you to the American people who paid the cost but, most of all, to the soldiers." Eleven years ago, Safia's father was assassinated by Saddam's intelligence service.”

Recently an Iraqi interpreter said to a reporter, "Tell America not to abandon us."
II. All polling figures sourced from PollingReport.com and taken from the Gallup Poll with a sample size of roughly 1000. It asked “Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling his job as president?”
http://www.pollingreport.com/BushJob1.htm
Reference List


