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Beyond Realism and Liberalism: *Ressentiment* as an Alternative Lens in Understanding the New Axis of Evil

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Introduction

Despite the significant role that negative emotions play in shaping human existence and social interactions, the influence of feelings such as anger, envy, and collective hatred within political contexts remains relatively underexplored in academic circles. In an era where political manipulation increasingly relies on appealing to the emotional and sentimental dimensions of human nature, the issues addressed in this work are particularly relevant – not only for understanding social processes and transformations but also for navigating and countering the manipulative narratives that shape our rapidly changing reality. This article will explore the role these emotions, particularly when radically embodied in the form of *ressentiment*, play in various political contexts and cultures, with a specific focus on the foreign aspect of state policy.

Ressentiment is a philosophical term first introduced by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his book *On the genealogy of morality* (1887), where he famously writes: 'Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying "yes" to itself, slave morality says "no" on principle to everything that is "outside", "other", "non-self": and this "no" is its creative deed' (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 20). This powerful statement on slave morality, which further translates into a worldview characterised by an 'us versus them' mentality, will serve as a fundamental tool for understanding the conclusions drawn later in this work.

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Ressentiment, being an 'affective catch-all concept, covering a wide range of sentiments', as claimed by Koen Abts and Sharon Baute (Abts and Baute, 2022, p. 40), encompasses various aspects of human and social nature, and the importance of its study lies precisely in recognising these vulnerabilities and preventing the development of deeply destructive feelings that hamper social interaction. In today's political environment, *ressentiment* remains an extremely widespread yet often overlooked interdisciplinary phenomenon affecting various aspects of political discourse. As the research question, this work aims to explain the connection between the traditional vision of *ressentiment* and its contemporary manifestations within global politics, particularly in the context of alliance formation and international security. By adopting a comparative approach and introducing the 'New Axis of Evil' geopolitical alliance – consisting of the Russian Federation, North Korea, and Iran – I aim to disclose the role of emotions and shared sentiments in contemporary international politics and security studies.

Philosophical foundations

Despite their considerable influence on contemporary political discourse, the links between emotions and politics remain a relatively under-researched topic among authors and scholars. Nevertheless, it is still possible to trace fundamental philosophical works that laid the conceptual foundations for understanding *ressentiment* as a complex notion.

For an initial understanding of the phenomenon of *ressentiment*, it is necessary to refer to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, who first explored this concept in depth in his seminal work *On the genealogy of morality* (1887). As a pioneer in the field, Nietzsche does not provide a specific definition of *ressentiment*, nor does he depart from the French spelling of the word. Nevertheless, it is possible to define *ressentiment* through the key concepts outlined by the author. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is classified as an intensely reactive emotion, having a significant impact on the formation of the subject's value system. This system seeks to shift responsibility for one's failures onto a perceived source – whether an individual, a social class, or society as a whole. Such an explanation allows Nietzsche to present his vision of the so-called 'man of *ressentiment*', who is essentially a slave to his own emotions, primarily deep hatred. Nietzsche famously writes:

> 'The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge. Whereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying "yes" to itself, slave morality says

> "no" on principle to everything that is "outside", "other", "non-self": and *this* "no" is its creative deed' (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 20).

For the purpose of this work, it is also important to highlight the concepts of alienation, rejection of progress, and psychological entrapment motivated by perceived injustices, as they are key to understanding the role of *ressentiment* in shaping value systems, which, in Nietzsche's view, glorify weakness and condemn moral strength. While this paper does not aim to critique the Christian aspect of morality, Nietzsche quite rightly observes how, historically, the doctrines of the priesthood labelled qualities such as strength, ambition, and dominance as sinful, reinforcing moral systems built on *ressentiment*. Nietzsche believes that these moral structures develop as a coping strategy for people who cannot wield power, allowing them to justify their oppression and portray their oppressors as fundamentally evil.

When reading:

> 'The beginning of the slaves' revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself turns creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of those beings who, denied the proper response of action, compensate for it only with imaginary revenge' (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 20),

it becomes apparent that, according to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* implies a certain passivity and an inability to act openly. On the surface, this casts doubt on the theory's applicability to political science, as it contradicts the key idea of active political participation. However, *ressentiment*-driven mentality ultimately creates new value systems and ideologies, which may later lead to a redefinition of ethical and political frameworks, thereby profoundly affecting power dynamics in ways that extend beyond mere individual passivity. Nietzsche's critique is not limited to individual psychology; it highlights how emerging moral systems can destabilise social and political structures, influencing broader ideological struggle.

The work of another German philosopher, Max Scheler, literally entitled *Ressentiment* (1912), continues to develop the ideas laid down by Friedrich Nietzsche. However, unlike his counterpart, Scheler pays more attention to the sociological and political manifestations of the phenomenon, which is more relevant to the issue discussed in this work. He classifies *ressentiment* as a perverted and unnatural feeling, which has 'a tendency to degrade or reduce genuine values and their bearers', as noted by William H. Werkmeister (Werkmeister, 1974, p. 132). Most important from the point of view of further analysis is the clear distinction between *ressentiment* itself – which Scheler defines as a 'lasting mental attitude, caused by the systematic repression of certain emotions and affects which, as such, are normal components

of human nature' (Scheler, 1976, p. 4) – and its accompanying emotions, including envy, spite, and resentment. The key factor that allows us to speak seriously about the development of *ressentiment* lies precisely in the systematic suppression of these emotions due to helplessness and the lack of an individual's coping mechanisms. When compared to Nietzsche, Scheler elevates the notion of *ressentiment* to a much broader social context, stating that this 'socio-historical emotion is by no means based on a spontaneous and original affirmation of a positive value, but on a protest, a counter-impulse against ruling minorities that are known to be in the possession of positive values' (Scheler, 1976, p. 55).

Furthermore, Scheler introduces the idea of *ressentiment* as not only a reaction of the powerless, but also an effective tool of those in power, writing that:

> 'Every change of government, every parliamentary change of party domination leaves a remnant of absolute opposition against the values of the new ruling group. This opposition is spent in *ressentiment* the more the losing group feels unable to return to power. The "retired official" with his followers is a typical *ressentiment* figure' (Scheler, 1976, p. 17).

It is particularly this instrumentalisation of *ressentiment*, associated with the public construction of a victimhood image and its subsequent transformation into a tool for achieving political goals, that highlights the significance of this phenomenon in contemporary political contexts.

Finally, further expanding on these abstract concepts and bridging the gap between the classical notion of *ressentiment* and factual politics, French philosopher Michel Foucault suggests a distinct yet equally valuable perspective through which to analyse *ressentiment*. While Nietzsche and Scheler emphasise the psychological impulse behind its development, Foucault adopts a broader perspective, focusing on power structures, societal discourse, and historical narratives. His approach provides a mechanism for understanding how *ressentiment* operates on the institutional level, making it a recurring theme across his works, with such essays as *Society must be defended* (1976) and 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history' (1971) directly addressing the role of collective hatred and the formation of value systems. In 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history', Foucault argues that historical narratives are not neutral but are shaped by those in power to justify their dominance, stating that 'The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them' (Foucault, 1971, p. 151). Thus, manipulating historical grievances can fuel *ressentiment*, transforming it into a tool for political mobilisation and legitimisation of conflicts among nations. In *Society must be defended*, Foucault further elaborates

on the mechanisms of power and its exploitation, exploring how political entities contribute to constructing the image of enemies and justifying oppression through discourses of self-defence. He argues that modern states often present themselves as being under threat, using narratives of historical grievances to reinforce power and suppress opposition. In this framework, *ressentiment* is a key mechanism for shaping societal discourse, establishing clear 'us versus them' divisions that make complex political and historical narratives more accessible and emotionally compelling for the general audience. As Foucault explains, 'If you want to live, you must take lives, you must be able to kill' (Foucault, 1976, p. 255), illustrating how political elites frame certain groups as existential threats to society, thereby justifying exclusion, discrimination, and ultimately violence. It is precisely this weaponisation of *ressentiment* that allows ruling elites to gain public support by channelling collective grievances against perceived enemies, thus maintaining their legitimacy.

Ressentiment as a driving force of international relations

Despite the fact that the abuse of *ressentiment* is widely recognised as a powerful instrument for legitimising authority in domestic political struggle, it is not traditionally viewed as a complementary aspect of international political interaction. Yet, on the global stage, states frequently invoke past injustices, collective traumas, and nostalgic visions of a lost golden age to justify current foreign policy decisions and diplomatic stances. Such appeals to historical emotion allow governments to reframe geopolitical ambitions as moral imperatives, presenting revisionist or defensive actions as acts of historical correction. Together, these aspects reveal the dual-edged nature of *ressentiment*, being capable not only of galvanising national pride and resistance but also of fostering aggressive revanchist policies and enduring geopolitical and regional divisions.

Crucially, the effectiveness of *ressentiment*-driven narratives in foreign policy discourse does not necessarily depend on the genuine belief of political leaders in their historical claims. In many cases, what is expressed in domestic discourse – the rhetoric of moral superiority, collective suffering, and national rebirth – diverges significantly from pragmatic foreign policy objectives. The strategic use of sentiments enables political elites to mobilise domestic support and maintain nationwide legitimacy, even though in most cases their external conduct is guided by realist and pragmatic considerations. Consequently, it may be argued that the invocation of history functions not as a reflection of genuine conviction but as a calculated political performance that bridges domestic politics and international strategies.

The construction of a national myth plays a central role in this process. While many of these myths celebrate heroic moments of collective triumph, others emphasise

past injustices, territorial losses, and perceived betrayals. Such inverted myth-making transforms past humiliations into inexhaustible and unifying moral resources, channelling *ressentiment* into a coherent worldview that defines both the nation's sense and its perceived enemies. This instrumentalisation of history is particularly evident in states that have experienced colonisation, occupation, or forced political transitions. However, it is equally prevalent in former empires whose elites and populations have not yet reconciled with the loss of their imperial status.

The strategic use of history is closely linked to another concept – memory laws – which, as described by Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczyńska-Grabias, 'commemorate the victims of past atrocities as well as heroic individuals or events emblematic of national and social movements' (Belavusau and Gliszczyńska-Grabias, 2017, p. 1). A striking example of such *ressentiment*-driven narratives can be observed in the Russian Federation under Vladimir Putin. By invoking pseudo-historical claims, Putin has repeatedly threatened countries that were once part of the Russian Empire and later the USSR, infamously calling its collapse 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century', as quoted by *NBC News* (*NBC News*, 2005). This tendency became particularly evident in his 2021 essay, published shortly before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, where he presented his revisionist interpretation of history. In it, Putin argued that 'The name "Ukraine" was used more often in the meaning of the Old Russian word "okraina" (periphery)' and insisted 'that Russians and Ukrainians are one people – a single whole' (Putin, 2021). By emphasising historical grievances and spreading false narratives, political leaders such as Putin justify hostile and aggressive policies to reclaim past power, resist external interference, or demand reparations and recognition – thus attempting to enhance national prestige and achieve long-term strategic goals.

As a driving factor in shaping worldviews and ideological values, it is worth considering that *ressentiment* also plays a profound role in the formation of strategic military alliances. While scholars differ in their assessments of why states seek alliances – ranging from the realist security assumption that 'states facing a common geostrategic external threat will form a military alliance to secure themselves, survive, and remain independent', as claimed by Nikoloz G. Esitashvili and Félix E. Martin (Esitashvili and Martin, 2020, p. 17), to liberal institutionalists' conviction that 'states are concerned with absolute gains and mutual gain outcomes are possible from collective problem-solving endeavours', as noted by Andre Byrne (Byrne, 2013, p. 7) – the emotional and ideological aspects of this process are often overlooked. Therefore, I argue that *ressentiment* should be viewed as an alternative, complementary aspect to security theory, not limited to traditional schools of international relations. Alliances built on common grievances, perceived humiliations, and dissatisfaction with the existing global order bring together states that, at first glance, do not share immediate geopolitical threats

or economic interests. Instead, their cooperation is driven by ideological narratives of resisting an external oppressor, regaining past influence, and reshaping the international system according to their leaders' worldview.

A large number of precedents for such alliances can be found in history. For instance, the anti-Western bloc formed under the leadership of the USSR in the aftermath of the Second World War was primarily based on opposition to Western capitalist ideology. In *The tragedy of great power politics*, Mearsheimer notes that the Cold War 'was driven mainly by strategic considerations related to the balance of power, which were reinforced by the stark ideological differences between the superpowers' (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 460). However, in this case, *ressentiment* functioned only as a subsidiary factor, complementing the broader picture of the post-Yalta geopolitical divide. While the Soviet Union's alliance policy was largely based on seeking partners united by common anti-Western and anti-imperialist sentiments, significant ideological contradictions among member states prevent the Warsaw Pact from being wholly defined by *ressentiment*.

Case studies

In contrast, in today's geopolitical environment, the concept of *ressentiment* as a driving force in alliance formation is particularly evident in the emergence of a bloc often controversially referred to as the 'New Axis of Evil', consisting of the Russian Federation, Iran, and North Korea. While the emerging bloc cannot be classified as a formalised alliance in the traditional sense of the term – being instead a loose ideological coalition in which each state operates within its own distinct political and economic context – they share a common strong emphasis on anti-Western sentiments, reinforced through state policies and widely supported within national societies. Although the origins of their grievances are rooted in historical and socio-economic factors that differ for each country, it is precisely the ideological alignment that brings them together in a highly heterogeneous but strategically cooperative alliance.

Among the three states, the Russian Federation has played the most active role in shaping this alliance. Shortly after the collapse of the USSR and the beginning of Fukuyama's 'end of history', Russia, under Boris Yeltsin, faced a critical choice regarding its new national identity. Initially, the West viewed Russia as a potential ally, particularly given its willingness to enter global markets and provide cheap energy resources. However, within a few years, the nature of the new Russian state diverged significantly from those expectations. A turning point in Russian–Western relations came with Vladimir Putin's infamous 2007 Munich Security Conference speech, where he 'sharply criticised [the] George W. Bush administration for maintaining a "unipolar" view of

the world and relying too much on force in international relations', as summarised by Godfrey Hodgson (Hodgson, 2007, p. 33). This speech, along with Russia's subsequent invasion of Georgia in 2008, demonstrated a clear shift away from Western integration.

Under Putin's leadership, Russia's initial goal of joining NATO and engaging with the West was gradually abandoned in favour of positioning itself as a champion of multipolarity and a challenger to American hegemony. Over the past two decades, Russia has been framing its foreign policy through the lens of perceived Western betrayal, particularly regarding the eastward expansion of NATO, while placing strong emphasis on 'family values', traditionalism, and patriotism – pervertedly manifesting in the established notion of *pobedobesie*, which can be roughly translated as 'victory frenzy', with such slogans as 'we can do it again' in contrast to the widely accepted 'never again', becoming state-endorsed narratives of the Russian government's societal engineering. The positioning of the Russian Federation as an 'anti-America' culminated in 2014, when, following the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity and the escape of pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovych, 'the Kremlin accused the United States and the European Union of supporting the protests that led to this political shift', as observed by Nicole Fernandez (Fernandez, 2024, p. 74). From that moment, Russia's foreign policy became extensively defined by *ressentiment*. The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, the proxy war in the east of Ukraine, and the full-scale invasion of 2022 were not simply territorial conflicts but well-thought-out attempts to reshape the international order, aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the Western-led system of international relations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a second major actor in the emerging alliance, provides another example of a state constructing its identity around an 'us versus them' narrative. The roots of Iranian *ressentiment* can be traced back to the 1953 CIA-orchestrated coup, as, according to Mostafa T. Zahrani, 'to many Iranians, the United States betrayed its own values by covertly joining with Britain to depose an elected leader, and then abetting the imperial ambitions of Shah Mohammed Pahlevi' (Zahrani, 2002, p. 93). Additionally, Zahrani points out that 'for Americans, the unintended result was the rise of political Islam, leading to the 1979 revolution and the present continuous impasse in Iranian–US relations'. The establishment of the Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini further solidified these sentiments, transforming Iran's political identity into that of a self-proclaimed champion of the Islamic world and an adversary of US hegemony, with the United States frequently referred to as the 'Great Satan'.

Since then, Iranian *ressentiment* has been institutionalised both through rhetoric and specific policy decisions. The incorporation of the *Velayat-e Faqih*, a religious doctrine which 'transfers all political and religious authority to the Shia clergy and makes all of the state's key decisions subject to approval by a supreme clerical leader', as explained by Kasra Aarabi (Aarabi, 2019), into the state's legal framework justified the absolute authority granted to the religious leaders of the country, further strengthening Iran's

role in the Islamic world. At the same time, Iranian political leaders have consistently reinforced anti-Western narratives in their public addresses. Ján Dančo identifies the dominant themes of these speeches, including the following claims: '[The] West is responsible for spreading anti-Iran propaganda; the West exploits the entire Muslim world through global imperialism; Western countries deliberately spread instability in the region and support terrorist organisations operating in the Middle East; and the Western concept of liberal democracy is characterised by moral decay' (Dančo, 2023, p. 7). Western policies, including the decision to support Saddam Hussein during the First Gulf War, as well as the subsequent economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, further reinforced Iran's perception of being a victim of Western aggression. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly referred to as the Iran nuclear deal, was intended to ease tensions between Iran and Western powers. However, Donald Trump's unilateral decision to withdraw from the initiative in 2018 confirmed Iran's suspicion of Western inconsistency, reinforcing the common belief that confrontation remains a higher priority than diplomacy. Consequently, the *ressentiment*-based nature of Iranian foreign policy can be viewed as a response to the occasionally cynical posture of the West in international relations.

Crucially, contrary to the earlier observations made in this article regarding *ressentiment* serving as a calculated political performance, Iran represents a notable exception. While scholars agree on the fact that the initial stages of Russian aggression towards Ukraine were primarily caused by geopolitical factors – as former US adviser Zbigniew Brzeziński famously claimed, 'It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire' (Brzeziński, 1994, p. 80) – the Iranian leadership often appears to genuinely believe in the narratives it promotes, even when these convictions come at significant strategic cost. As a rule, this ideological commitment leads to counter-pragmatic behaviour that undermines Iran's own long-term interests. For instance, rather than capitalising on Russia's war in Ukraine as an opportunity to normalise relations with the United States and the European Union – which would theoretically allow it to shed the burden of sanctions damaging the country's economy – Tehran chooses to provide Moscow with direct military assistance, further deepening its international isolation. Decisions like this exemplify the observation that, in Iran, *ressentiment* functions not merely as a political tool but as a deeply internalised and institutionalised component of national identity and foreign policy – where belief and rhetoric overlap.

Finally, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) presents a unique case of *ressentiment*-driven foreign policy. Unlike Iran and Russia, whose geopolitical influence extends beyond national borders, North Korea remains largely isolated from the international community. However, this isolation does not prevent the DPRK

government from conducting domestic and foreign policy through a deep-seated sense of grievance – particularly toward the West and the United States. Similar to the cases described earlier, the origins of North Korean *ressentiment* can be traced back to a significant societal upheaval: the Korean War of 1950–1953, which devastated the peninsula and triggered a prolonged political crisis. Kim Il Sung, the first General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, constructed a post-war narrative rooted in national victimhood and the role of foreign powers in the conflict. This narrative was institutionalised through the state ideology of *Juche*, centred on the self-reliance of the state and resistance to external influence. As Charles K. Armstrong observes, 'Kim Il Sung regularly pointed to "US imperialism" as the main enemy of the Third World peoples, and advocated *Juche* as the very embodiment of anti-imperialism' (Armstrong, 2009, p. 5). In contemporary DPRK, anti-Western propaganda is reinforced through regime-sponsored cultural initiatives – ranging from literature and cinema to compulsory educational sessions – that portray the United States as an existential threat to national survival. The construction of a national myth around the idea of reclaiming territory unjustly lost during the Korean War, with direct blame placed on Western forces, serves as an evident example of Nietzschean *ressentiment*.

Summarising the intermediate result, it can be observed that, despite the distinct reasons that led to the development of *ressentiment* in the national consciousness of the selected states, all of them were caused by a common catalyst – profound social upheavals, whether the collapse of the state, religious revolution, or military conflict. In contrast to traditional security alliances, which are typically based on mutual defence paradigms or pragmatic economic cooperation, the emerging 'New Axis of Evil' is bound by what can be characterised as a form of 'strategic desperation'. International isolation has pushed these states to seek alternative allies not out of shared values or interests, but as a response to their collective exclusion from the international order. In this case, *ressentiment* serves as both a cause and a consequence of their isolation, supported by internal narratives and the attribution of blame for domestic political issues.

At present, cooperation between Russia, Iran, and North Korea within the framework of this alliance remains primarily limited to the provision of Iranian striking drones to Russia and the involvement of Korean troops on the battlefields of Ukraine. However, their increasingly coordinated diplomatic actions pose a significant threat to global security – especially considering the nuclear capabilities of Russia and Korea, as well as Iran's growing potential to develop its non-conventional weapons. Their shared *ressentiment*-driven worldview prioritises ideological confrontation over pragmatic diplomacy, challenging traditional deterrence strategies and calling for new mechanisms to address emerging centres of power.

It is also important to clarify that this analysis purposefully omits the role of the People's Republic of China in the emerging 'New Axis of Evil'. Although elements of

ressentiment are undoubtedly present in contemporary Chinese political discourse – especially in narratives surrounding the so-called 'Century of Humiliation' and the subsequent restoration of national greatness – the phenomenon of Chinese nationalism operates through complex historical, ideological, and cultural dimensions, which require specific expertise and a separate analytical framework. Furthermore, while certain scholars tend to align China within the broader anti-Western coalition, its pragmatic foreign policy – particularly visible in its economic interdependence with Western states – makes its inclusion in this study problematic. Therefore, the issue of Chinese *ressentiment* requires a dedicated and more thoughtful investigation that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the 'New Axis of Evil', rooted in historical humiliation, striking doctrinal differences, and systematic exclusion from the Western-dominated global order, reflects not merely pragmatic cooperation but a shared *ressentiment* towards the 'collective West'. While the motivations of each state differ, their convergence emphasises the need to view *ressentiment* as a powerful complement to traditional materialist and institutional theories of international relations – particularly when analysing alliance formation. It should also be noted that such cooperation significantly threatens established international norms, forcing states to seek new security mechanisms. While the scope of this cooperation between the actors of the 'Axis of Evil' remains limited when compared to more traditional alliances such as NATO, it is plausible to suggest that initiatives of this kind will attract more actors who feel marginalised within the established world order dominated by Western powers. Therefore, I consider the observations made with regard to the formation of alliances based on *ressentiment* of great value and interest in terms of further contributions to political science, as the international community will inevitably be forced to seek new responses to the growing threats posed by political entities such as the 'New Axis of Evil'. Recognising the political function of *ressentiment* is therefore crucial for understanding the persistence of ideological conflict and the emotional underpinnings of global politics in the twenty-first century.

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Beyond Realism and Liberalism: *Ressentiment* as an Alternative Lens in Understanding the New Axis of Evil

Abstract

This article explores the concept of *ressentiment* as a powerful yet often overlooked phenomenon shaping both domestic and international political dynamics. Traditionally examined within the context of internal political struggle and legitimacy-building, *ressentiment* also functions as a key driver of states' foreign policy decisions and alliance formation. By invoking collective memories of past injustices, territorial losses, or imperial decline, political leaders construct powerful sentiments that justify aggressive and revisionist behaviour in global affairs. Through analysing a formation of alliance described as a 'New Axis of Evil' – an ideological coalition of the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, united not solely by strategic or economic interests but by shared grievances and anti-Western narratives – this article demonstrates how *ressentiment* operates as both an ideological 'glue' and a foreign policy catalyst. It further highlights that while some leaders deliberately manipulate historical narratives, using them as a calculated political tool, others genuinely internalise them, often at the expense of pragmatic long-term national interests. Ultimately, this paper concludes that *ressentiment*-driven politics represent a pressing force in the reconfiguration of the contemporary international order.

Keywords: *ressentiment*, memory politics, New Axis of Evil, national identity, strategic alliances

Poza realizmem i liberalizmem: resentyment jako kategoria wyjaśniania nowej osi zła

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano analizie koncepcję „resentymentu" jako istotnego, lecz często pomijanego zjawiska, które kształtuje zarówno politykę wewnętrzną, jak i stosunki międzynarodowe. Chociaż zjawisko resentymentu tradycyjnie kojarzone jest z wewnętrzną rywalizacją o władzę, może ono także wywierać znaczny wpływ na politykę zagraniczną państwa poprzez odwoływanie się do pamięci o przeszłych niesprawiedliwościach, utraconych terytoriach czy do przekonania o upadku imperium. Rozpoznaniu problemu służy analiza tzw. nowej osi zła – koalicji Federacji Rosyjskiej, ChRL i Korei Północnej, opartej nie tylko na interesach ekonomicznych, ale także wspólnym sentymencie antyzachodnim. Resentyment pełni rolę spoiwa ideologicznego i katalizatora dla działań z zakresu polityki zagranicznej. Autor wskazuje, że chociaż niektórzy przywódcy celowo manipulują narracjami historycznymi, świadomie wykorzystując je jako narzędzie polityczne, inni rzeczywiście je internalizują, nierzadko kosztem długoterminowych interesów państwa. Autor ostatecznie dochodzi do wniosku, że polityka kształtowana przez resentyment stanowi jeden z najistotniejszych czynników w procesie transformacji współczesnego ładu międzynarodowego.

Słowa kluczowe: *resentyment*, polityka historyczna, polityka pamięci, tożsamość narodowa, oś zła