

## **The Arts of Michael Moore and American Soft Power**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Michael Moore is one of the most disputed authors and filmmakers in the United States. The purpose with this article is to try to shed some new insights and understandings of Moore's political views as they are represented in his book "Dude, Where's My Country?" and film "Fahrenheit 911". By applying insights from international relations theory, we are trying to get a better understanding of Moore's political views by putting his views within the framework of "soft power". According to the soft power concept, the US' mightiest power resource as of today is not its hard power (such as military and economic strength), but its soft power such as the attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies. By applying the soft power concept, the article explains how Michael Moore is advocating a new foreign policy of the United States. This is a United States, which safeguards an international system made up by norms, institutions and a collective international order. Furthermore, the article underlines that Michael Moore's popularity cannot be explained by rising anti-Americanism on a global scale, but quite the opposite. Instead, Michael Moore's films and books could be regarded as a symptom of US soft power where he represents what people around the world regards as the attractiveness of the United States.*

### **INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

Michael Moore is known to the public as an author, commentator and not least, a reward winning filmmaker who became known to the world audience with his two films "Bowling for Columbine" (2002) and "Fahrenheit 911" (2004). In "Bowling for Columbine" he criticizes the American gun culture and the National Rifle Association (NRA). This film won the Anniversary Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and France's Cesar Award for the best foreign film. In the United States, it won the Academy Award for Documentary Feature. In "Fahrenheit 911" Moore examines the political life in the United States in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Furthermore, he seeks to uncover the family ties between the Bush family and the Bin Laden family. For the film, he was rewarded with the Palm d'Or, the top honour at the Cannes Film Festival. It was the first documentary to win such a prize since 1956.

Prior to these two films, his filmmaking includes "Roger & Me" (1989) which was his first film. "Roger and Me" was a critical commentary about what happened to his native town Flint, Michigan, after General Motors closed its factories and opened new ones in Mexico, where the workers were paid much less. "Canadian Bacon" (1995) is Michael Moore's only fictional film, which featured a US president played by Alan Alda who started a fake war with Canada to boost his own popularity. In his film "The Big One" (1997) he criticizes the great multinational corporations for their hunger for even more profits and their propensities to mass layoffs despite record corporate profits. His latest film "Sicko" (2007) is a documentary where he investigates the American health care system where his focus is the American health insurance system and the great influence of the pharmaceutical industry. One of the main arguments in this film is that almost fifty million Americans are uninsured and that those who are covered

are often victims of insurance company fraud and red tape.

His books have also sold in millions. In his book, "Downsize This!" (1996) he analyzed politics and corporate crime in the United States. In "Stupid White Men" (2001) he scrutinized US domestic and foreign policies and in "Dude, Where's My Country?" (2003) he examined the Bush family's relationships with the Saudi royalty, the Bin Laden family and the energy industry, as well as the US response to international terrorism. The book was furthermore a call-for-action for a Democratic victory at the 2004 US presidential election. Prior to the 2008 Presidential election, he also issued an election guide where his main arguments were as follows: "After a disastrous war, the failure to catch bin Laden, millions of families who have lost their homes, the Katrina debacle, soaring gas prices feeding record oil company profits, and the largest national debt caused by the biggest spending and borrowing administration in American history, the country has had it with conservatives, right-wingers and Republicans".<sup>11</sup>

The purpose with this essay is two-fold. Firstly, we will explain that in reality, what Michael Moore is aiming at via his books and films, is that the US should pursue what Joseph Nye Jr. has called a more soft power oriented foreign policy. According to Nye, the US' mightiest power resource as of today is not its hard power (as military and economic strength), but its soft power such as the attractiveness of its culture, political ideals, and policies. Secondly, we will state that Michael Moore's popularity and great influence on world opinion cannot be explained by rising anti-Americanism on a global scale, but quite the

opposite. To illustrate that point we would like to quote from Joseph Nye's book "Soft Power – The Means to Success in World Politics" (2004). Here he is referring to the Czech filmmaker Milos Forman who recounts that when the Communist government let in the American film "Twelve Angry Men" because of its harsh portrait of American institutions, Czech intellectuals responded by thinking, "If that country can make this kind of thing, films about itself, oh, that country must have a pride and must have an inner strength, and must be strong enough and must be free" (quoted in Nye 2004: 17).

This essay is organized as follows. The next chapter will give an overarching description of the American empire at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Based upon novel political science research on the character of empire in the post-modern world, we will try to show that the United States is a different empire as compared with other empires in world history. Nevertheless, we will also try to illustrate how the new trends in American foreign policy have changed other countries' perception of the United States. The central question then seems to be how different the United States is from other empires in world history. We will then turn our attention to the works of Michael Moore, but most focus will be put on his film "Fahrenheit 911" and his book "Dude, Where's My Country?". Both of them were produced and written after the terrorist attacks and therefore cover what this essay is seeking to explain, namely Moore's view upon what role the US should play in the world. After that, we will compare the views of Michael Moore with the views presented in Joseph Nye's book on American soft power. In the last part of the essay, we will seek additional explanations. By building upon insights from social constructivist theory, we can also state that Michael Moore's film, "Fahrenheit 911" and book "Dude, Where's My Country?", raise some interesting arguments about how the representation of something as a threat to the United States can be used to justify measures that would otherwise not be seen as legitimate.

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.michaelmoore.com/books-films/index.php>

## The character of the American empire

### *The United States – A Different Empire?*

Ever since the United States became a great power and later on a superpower in the second half of the twentieth century, it has mostly pursued a foreign policy orientation based upon multilateralism. A multilateral oriented foreign policy is characterized by emphasis on international institutions and on a high degree of international legitimacy for the realization of its interests. It could even more be stated that it was the United States that took the necessary initiatives to establish several of the multilateral institutions as we know them today (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), The World Bank, etc.).

G. John Ikenberry has described a system based upon a grand bargain between the United States and several of its closest allies (Ikenberry 2001). He explains that on the one hand, the United States exported security and opened up its markets for foreign investors. On the other hand, these allies functioned as military and political supporters of the US leadership in the world. Additionally, the leading role of the United States in the international system was accepted by the other actors as long as the United States abided by international norms and pursued an institutionalized foreign policy. As the Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad has written on several occasions, the United States was an empire by invitation (Lundestad 2003). During the Cold War, but also in the 1990's, the United States enjoyed a very high degree of legitimacy and was regarded by others as a "primus inter pares". The allies of the United States felt that they had a high degree of influence upon the foreign policy of the country (Melby 2002: 13). In the sense that the United States was an empire, it was a benevolent empire with a liberal ideology.

In the 1980s, the debate on whether or not hegemony or an empire in the

international system is necessary, dominated the international political economy (IPE) discourse with the so-called hegemonic stability theory. This theory was presented by Charles Kindleberger who stated in his book "The World in Depression 1929 – 1939" that there must be a hegemon for an international system of trade and finance to function smoothly (Kindleberger 1986). This is because there is a collective action problem in international politics where the regulation and institutionalization of trade and finance is a public good, that is, it benefits the community. To solve the collective action problem, a hegemon takes the lead and is motivated to do so because of the benefit it gains; for example, the US dollar benefited greatly as the reserve currency under the Bretton Woods system.

What seemed to be characteristic of the American empire was that it was a very different empire who behaved differently from other empires in world history. It was a liberal and benevolent hegemony, which pursued a multilateral oriented foreign policy. Additionally, the story of the United States is also a story of a country that pursues ideal norms in its foreign policy based upon an exceptional ideology. Central to this exceptional approach is that the political system of the United States represents something very special and that the United States for this reason has a special responsibility in world politics. It is within such a context we must understand President George H. W. Bush's statement at his so-called State of the Union address in 1991. Here he underlined that "We are a nation of rock-solid realism and clear-eyed idealism". This statement also shows one of the most central tensions in American foreign policy, that between realism and idealism. While realism in accordance with the realist school in international relations (IR) theory deals with questions connected to power relationships, balance of power issues and the impact of the international anarchy upon the different states, idealism deals with questions connected to how the United States can contribute to make the world a better place to be. Hence, as John

Adams, the second president of the United States emphasized: "The United States will last forever, govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man" (quoted in Melby 1995: 21). Therefore, President George W. Bush's statement from 2005 that "America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one" is standing in a rather long tradition that illustrates the exceptional ideology that underpins the US state construct.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the United States' sense of itself is that it is quite different from other countries in world politics. As the former US Secretary of State Dean Rusk underlined, "While other countries have different interests, the United States have responsibilities" (ibid.). Hence, and according to the exceptional ideology, the United States has superior ideal motives for its actions, and therefore must impose upon itself another idealistic standard in the conduct of its foreign- and security policy. Therefore, Americans have tended to reject the idea that their high-minded republic might be imperial (much less imperialist). Empire has traditionally been identified with conscious military expansion. Washington may have organized an alliance, but it did not seek to conquer territory nor, supposedly, to dominate other societies (Maier 2002). The United States has therefore been what Michael Cox has called an empire by denial (Cox 2004; Cox 2005). Therefore, Americans don't do empire; they do "leadership" instead, or as underlined by the conservative British historian Niall Ferguson, they do "hegemony" (Ferguson 2003).

By underlining these aspects, we also reach a deeper understanding of the character of the American form of empire. It therefore seems relevant to argue that the American empire traditionally has worked in a Gramscian way. The American empire

has in many corners of the world, and the case is especially evident in Europe, worked through consensual domination and invisible power relations. The empire we are analyzing here is an empire, which has formed political, military, cultural and economical discourses. This we can see by tracing how the formation of meaning has been organized over time, how meaning has frozen in certain formations and ways of understanding "reality" (representations), and why exactly in these formations and not in others (Neumann 2001 quoted in Græger 2005: 86).

While other empire's influence has stopped at its borders, the American empire has turned global through its attractiveness of its culture, way of life, or at least the way of life represented in media through its film industry but also through its economical as well as military strength. We must therefore understand the character of the American empire as of today, by seeing it through the prisms of globalization. The globalization process is driven forward in large part due to technological innovations and neo-liberal ideology. However, this form of empire has also been institutionalized, for example via NATO and other institutions where the United States has been and still is dominant.

Therefore, it is important to underline, as Niall Ferguson so cleverly underlines, that empire has never exclusively meant direct rule over foreign territories (Ferguson 2003). Instead, it is important to distinguish between "direct" and "indirect" rule. In such a sense the United States could be regarded as an empire – albeit one that has, until recently, generally preferred indirect and informal rule. Whether its recent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq presage a transition to more direct and formal imperial structures remains to be seen (ibid.). As a conservative British historian Niall Ferguson is of the opinion that the US has been a reluctant empire and that the demise of the US Empire (and indeed the Iraq response may exemplify decline) is a net loss to the world.

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<sup>12</sup> See John F. Harris (2005): "An Ambitious President Advances His Idealism", *Washington Post*, 21 Januar 2005. See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24961-2005Jan20.html>

*Enter George W. Bush*

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 had tremendous effects upon the American society. It seems even fair to argue that it seems to be very difficult to overestimate these effects upon American society as well as politics. With George W. Bush in the White House, we will argue that during recent years and especially in connection with the Iraq war in 2003, the United States developed a foreign policy characterized by idealistic inspired exceptionalism. We will argue that idealistic inspired exceptionalism is a central part of the neo-conservative ideology, which has inspired large parts of the Bush administration. We are, however, also aware of the fact that the neo-conservative approach has contributed to “a renewed relevance of classical Realists such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau. Niebuhr’s and Morgenthau’s approach not only addressed themes at the heart of contemporary neo-conservatism, but who also provided prescient warnings of the dangerous directions in which neo-conservative understandings of the national interest could lead” (Williams 2005: 307). Central to such a neo-conservative ideology is the use of force, including military force, conducted if necessary in a pre-emptive and unilateral manner, to replace authoritarian regimes with democratic ones. The Iraq war in spring 2003 was in our view the peak point in the neo-conservative influence upon American foreign policy.

Because of neo-conservative influence, the multilateral track in the United States foreign policy has, additionally, been left and replaced with a unilateral one. The last issue is firstly due to the character of the international system that still is unipolar nearly 20 years after the end of the Cold War. Secondly, the United States has largely militarized its foreign policy, which has alienated its closest friends and allies, especially in Europe, but also in other parts of the world. Several European governments have therefore stated that the

United States has broken with the most central norm in transatlantic relations since the creation of NATO in 1949, namely mutual adaptations to each other’s security needs within a multilateral framework (Sæter 2005: 45). The most critical voices in Europe have come from the governments in France and Germany as well as from several other middle sized and small European powers. Hence, the transatlantic relationship has weakened considerably. In the research discourse on the transatlantic relationship it is even debated whether the security community in the North Atlantic Area still exists (see e.g. Knutsen 2007).

This “Bush revolution” in American foreign policy is based upon the premise that the unipolar system will last and that the American empire is sustainable (Melby 2002: 17-20). Hence, the Washington foreign policy elite tends to see itself as “masters of a universe in which the United States has a very special part to play by virtue of its unique history, its huge capabilities and its accumulated experience of running the world for the last 50 years” (Cox 2005: 26).

In the IR debate on American foreign policy, on questions related to unipolarity and empire, it has during recent years been a debate on why the American empire has not been counter-balanced by other powers. Some of the answers to this question have been that the American empire is a different one and therefore has a higher legitimacy. Others have argued that it is only a matter of time before other powers will rise. Most researchers and political analysts argue that China might become a global peer competitor to the United States. Charles A. Kupchan does not buy this argument. According to him, it is not China but the emerging and integrating Europe that might become a competitor to the United States on the global arena (Kupchan 2002). He is therefore in line with the political realist Christopher Layne who in a much-cited article in “International Security” has written on the unipolar illusion and why other powers will rise (Layne 1993).

In the IR debate we have also witnessed a turn in the debate towards arguments on whether the United States in reality is behaving differently from other empires in world history. The turning point in the debate was of course the terrorist attacks on September 11. These terrorist attacks implied that the United States declared a war on terrorism and hence went to war two times within a time-span of two years (Afghanistan and Iraq). Additionally, in the aftermaths of the terrorist attacks and in connection with the Bush administration's war on terror, we have also witnessed a huge expansion of United States' interests to places not previously known to be traditional spheres of American interests. These spheres are first of all Caucasus and Central-Asia including countries like Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Hence, the United States seems to behave as other empires have done. However, as the British historian Arnold Toynbee once pointed out, there are two problems that empires seem to meet: the threat of decay from within and the present danger of overextension abroad (Cox 2004: 586).

Toynbee's point seems to be relevant as of today when we relate it to the American presence in Iraq. More than 4 200 American men and women have been killed so far. Approximately 31 000 have been wounded. According to the website [iraqbodycount.org](http://iraqbodycount.org), about 90 000 Iraqi civilians have been killed by the military intervention.<sup>13</sup> Even more, the war was initiated on false and/or misinterpreted intelligence data and on neo-conservative desk-analysis. As it turned out, the links between Saddam Hussein and the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington were non-existent and, furthermore, not a single gram of weapons of mass destruction has been found. Instead, the United States finds itself in a quagmire, in an Iraq characterized by civil war and where it seems nearly

impossible to withdraw with honour. Additionally, Iraq is splitting up in three different parts based upon ethnic and religious cleavages. Paradoxically, the United States is not, despite being the most powerful military nation on earth, able to control the situation on the ground.

Characteristic for American defence planning in recent year has been its emphasis on high-tech warfare, the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and not on nation building, which would have demanded more boots on the ground. As the British General Sir Michael Rose articulated in an article in *International Herald Tribune* in August 2004: "Instead of using overwhelming military force as the principle weapon in this war, a longer term, more indirect strategy, employing all instruments of government – economic, political social and military – needs to be adopted. This will inevitably entail a new doctrine and a different balance of force. Above all, increased manpower will be needed in the future of nation-building" (Rose 2004).

As a consequence, and according to Charles Grant of the London-based Centre for European Reform (CER): rarely in history had one nation mobilized so much hard power in such a short space of time; and never had it lost so much soft power in the process (quoted in Cox 2005: 28). An American commentator also emphasized that never had the country gone into battle with so few allies actually prepared to back it enthusiastically: "In fact never had such a war, even before it began, generated so much global opposition, the overwhelming bulk of it caused less by any sympathy that people might have had towards America's intended target than by what many regarded as the dangerously aggressive policies of an overpowered state led by a president with little concern for global opinion" (ibid.: 27).

Such a concern corresponds perfectly with the arguments made by Joseph Nye in his criticism of the foreign policies of the Bush administration. In this connection, he is referring to a speech on

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<sup>13</sup> At the website [www.iraqbodycount.org](http://www.iraqbodycount.org), between 88 951 and 97 092 Iraqi civilians have, as of 16 November 2008, been killed due to the military intervention so far.

the concept of soft power he gave at a conference organised by the US Army in Washington DC. One of the other speakers was Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. According to a press account, "The top military brass listened sympathetically" to Joseph Nye's views, but when someone in the audience later asked Rumsfeld for his opinion on soft power, he replied, "I don't know what it means" (Nye 2004: ix).

### **Michael Moore's perspectives on the United States' role in the world**

It is not an exaggeration to argue that Michael Moore's book "Dude, Where's My Country?" and film "Fahrenheit 911" represents a frontal attack on George W. Bush and his presidency. In an academic term, it is an attack on the Bush-administration's securitization of the threat from terrorism and how the United States is applying the terror threat as a strategy to dominate the world in an imperial manner.<sup>14</sup> What the Bush administration has done, according to Moore, is to create a discourse at home as well as abroad in which terrorism is presented as an existential threat to the American and international society. By applying some key concepts from social constructivist approaches to IR, we could argue that this attempt to securitize terrorism has initiated a process of securitizing moves (Buzan & Wæver 2003: 70-76). In this connection, terrorism is only securitized, when this move is accepted or forced to be accepted, by the American and the broader international society as well. It is not an overstatement to argue that this attempt to create such a securitizing move has succeeded. The US attempt to make a securitizing move to gain

support for the Iraq war was, however, not that successful.

With this theoretical approach in mind, we can reach a deeper understanding of the seven questions he asks George W. Bush (or George of Arabia as Moore is calling him) in the beginning of the book (Moore 2003: 1-40). Several of the same questions are also posed in the film. By posing questions connected to the business affiliations between the bin Laden family and the Bush family, by questioning the so-called "special relationship" between the Bushes and the Saudi royalty, on why a Saudi jet was allowed to fly around in the US to pick up family members of Osama bin Laden in the days right after the terrorist attacks, why representatives from Taliban travelled around in Texas before the terrorist attacks to meet George W. Bush's oil and gas company friends etc., Moore is attempting to create an enemy image of the US president. More than that, he is in fact trying to make the presidency of George W. Bush "The Other". By "othering" the Bushes, Moore was (unsuccessfully) trying to create a like-minded front of liberals to replace Bush with John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election.

Moore's way of making his arguments is therefore an example of the ever-increasing polarization of US politics (see e.g. Nivola 2005). On the one hand, it could therefore be argued that President George W. Bush is, through the securitization of terrorism, via the creation of different forms for securitizing moves (e.g. Afghanistan and Iraq), trying to lay the foundation for a lasting American empire. This time not an empire by denial, but an explicit American empire based upon the so-called Bush doctrine. This Bush doctrine could be labelled "the promotion of democracy through American leadership, if necessary, with the help of American military force". On the other hand, Michael Moore, we would argue, could be regarded as the personified "Other" to the President. He considers himself a person who stands up to fight the President's domestic as well

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<sup>14</sup> The analytical term "securitization" has dominated the IR discourse in recent years and is central to the so-called Copenhagen school of IR. See e.g. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003): *Regions and Powers – The Structure of International Security*; Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge University Press.

as international crusade.<sup>15</sup> Even more than that, when the United States President states in an interview with MSNBC in February 2004 that: "I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign-policy matters with war on my mind";<sup>16</sup> Bush is, according to Moore, not only trying to create an American empire abroad, but he is also undermining American civil rights at home.

By passing the so-called Patriot Act and by creating a Department for Homeland Security, the US is in practice, challenging, according to Moore, the so-called fourth amendment of the US Constitution. This amendment states that each human being has the right to privacy. With the Patriot Act (which is, according to Moore not patriotic at all), the fundamental human rights are challenged: "[T]hat once you allow your rulers to snoop into your life and violate your "space", the notion of living in a free society is out the window" (ibid.: 107). According to the Patriot Act, the US government may now "trap and trace" all those countless e-mails you thought were private. Moore states further that if this continues, you might as well delete the word "confidential" from your spellchecker: "Also up for inspection: banking records, school records, the list of library books you or your nine-year old checked out this year (or even how often you have logged onto the Internet at the library), and your customer purchases. Think I'm exaggerating? Next time you are sitting in your doctor's waiting room or waiting in line at the bank, read their new privacy statements. Buried in the legalese you will find new warnings that your privacy

<sup>15</sup> The concept "crusade" was applied by the US President in the days right after the terrorist attacks as a label on the US fight against terrorism. See e.g. Peter Fords article in Christian Science Monitor: "Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists", 19 September 2001. The article could be found on: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html>

<sup>16</sup> This statement was made by the US president in an interview with Tim Russert at MSNBC on 8 February 2004. The transcript of the interview can be found on <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618/>

protections do not cover the Big Brother provisions of our new Patriot Act" (ibid.: 106).

What these efforts by the Bush administration have done, is to make it look like the US is at war abroad as well as domestically. The Patriot Act, the creation of the Department for Homeland Security, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq must therefore be seen in connection with each other since their origin is the same: The fear of future terrorist attacks and the different securitization moves which have been put forward so as to secure the national security of the United States. According to the neo-conservative approach, the best way to secure the US from a future terrorist attack, is that the US should pursue a foreign- and security policy, which upholds the unipolar international system. Therefore, Michael Moore attempts not only to attack the Bush-administration, but also the neo-conservative ideology, which has formed American foreign policy since 2001 when George W. Bush illegally, according to Moore, became president.<sup>17</sup>

Central to the neo-conservative ideology is e.g. the think tanks like the Project of the New American Century (PNAC) which states that: "American leadership is good both for America and for the world; and that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle .... [PNAC] intends (...) to explain what American world

<sup>17</sup> There has been some debate within the IR community on the influence by the neo-conservatives upon US foreign- and security policy. In an article in "International Politics" Steven Hurst of the Manchester Metropolitan University argues that neo-conservatism has had very little impact upon the framing of the Bush administration's foreign- and security policy (Hurst 2005). According to him, the Bush administration's foreign policy is framed more along the lines of nationalist impulses. We are, however, in this essay sticking to the widely held opinion that the neo-conservative impulse has been quite large. This impulse has, in our view, decreased significantly during recent years due to the tremendous difficulties the US and other members of the "Coalition of the willing" are facing in Iraq.

leadership entails. It will also strive to rally support for a vigorous and principled policy of American international involvement and to stimulate useful public debate on foreign and defence policy and America's role in the world". Within PNAC we will find influential personalities, who have contributed significantly to the turn in American foreign policy in recent years (the so-called "Bush-revolution") as well as persons who have shaped the IR debate on e.g. transatlantic relations. Here we will find personalities like Lawrence F. Kaplan, William Kristol, Robert Kagan and Paul Wolfowitz who until recently was the head of the World Bank. Robert Kagan became influential in the IR debate when he argued that Europe was from Venus and the United States from Mars, and hence, Europe was weak and the United States strong (Kagan 2002).

What the Bush administration is aiming at, according to Moore, is a "feverish desire to rule the world, first by controlling us, and then, in turn, getting us to support their efforts to dominate the world" (Moore 2003: 101). Therefore, September 11 was the Bush administration's moment – a moment handed to them by fate, via the terrorists – to seize the "reins and ram the USA down the throats of any people in the world who dare question who is number one. Who is number one? **I SAID, WHO IS NUMBER ONE?** That's right. Say it loud! Say it, for George and Dick and Johnny and Condi: **WE ARE NUMBER ONE! USA! USA! USA!**" (ibid.). As we can understand, irony and exaggerations are parts and parcel of Michael Moore's method of communicating with his audience.

By applying fear via the securitization of terrorism, by creating a link between the September 11 attacks and Saddam's Iraq and with the National Security Strategy decided upon in September 2002 as a foundation, Moore is telling us his story of how the Iraq war was started and how the administration created a "coalition of the willing" to oust Saddam from power. Furthermore, the National Security Strategy defined the concept of pre-emptive attacks, or preventive war as

critics would have said, which entails a premise that deterrence against terrorist actors will not work, and that the United States must strike pre-emptively (or preventively) before the terrorists attack the United States.<sup>18</sup> In this connection, Moore emphasizes that: "George W. Bush laid the groundwork for scaring us silly early on. In his speech to the United Nations in September 2002, Bush said with a straight face that "Saddam Hussein has defied all these efforts and continues to develop weapons of mass destruction. The first time we may be completely certain he has a nuclear weapons [sic] is when, God forbids, he uses one" (ibid. : 43). Soon after, on October 7, Bush, according to Moore, told an audience in Cincinnati: "If the Iraqi regime is able to produce, buy or steal an amount of highly enriched uranium a little larger than a single softball, it could have a nuclear weapon in less than a year.... Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof – the smoking gun – that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud" (ibid.).

As we all know today, these statements made by the US President and all other Heads of State and Governments who supported the Iraq war (the Coalition of the willing), were false. Up to present day, no weapon of mass destruction has been found. The so-called links between al-Qaida and the Saddam Hussein regime were spurious at best. In fact, Osama bin Laden considered Saddam Hussein to be an infidel. Hussein committed the sin of creating a secular Iraq instead of a Muslim state run by Muslim clerics.

Additionally, Michael Moore is referring to a US poll which found that half of those questioned, incorrectly, thought that one or more of the September 11 hijackers held Iraqi citizenship: "The Bush administration had succeeded in perpetrating one of the biggest lies of all time, confusing Saddam with Osama in the

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<sup>18</sup> The National Security Strategy of the United States can be found on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

minds of the American public" (ibid.). The Bush administration was therefore successful when they managed to convince the American public about the links between the September 11 attacks and Iraq. The truth is that 15 out of the 19 hijackers held Saudi citizenship. This fact makes Michael Moore speculate whether the hijackers were Saudi military pilots, and not aviation amateurs (ibid.: 15-19). Furthermore, he is also questioning Osama bin Laden's health situation when he is referring to his kidney problems and therefore questions this man's ability to plan the most horrendous terrorist attacks in world history (ibid.).

As a consequence - and history has on this point proved Michael Moore correct - the Iraqi regime did not pose any global threat. It did not pose any regional threat either. It did pose, however, a threat to its own population as we can see from its history of using poison gas against its Kurdish population. Iraq also applied poison gas in the war against Iran, which lasted from 1980 until 1988. However, in this connection, Moore makes no secret out of the fact that in the 1980's, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, was a close ally with the United States. It was during this time that Iraq fought a bloody war with the US' archenemy Iran, in which the US provided the Iraqi regime with information on Iranian troop movements etc. In fact, during the 1980's the US government and US companies supplied the Iraqi regime with several "dual use"<sup>19</sup> technologies, including high-powered computers, lasers, and other items instrumental to the making of nuclear weapons and their components (ibid.: 50).

Therefore, Moore is stating, the US has a long tradition of supporting dictatorships. In fact, he underlines, the US likes dictators (ibid.: 58). The list of dictatorships the US has supported during history is therefore quite long. These days, China, "the world's biggest Saddam-o-rama, is our favourite dictatorship" (ibid.: 59). In China, the government imposes severe

limits on media outlets, the Internet, worker's rights, religious freedom, and any attempts to independent thinking. According to Moore, these elements "combined with a judicial system that totally ignores any rule of law and is festering with corruption, China is a perfect place for American companies to do business" (ibid.).

Therefore, the prescription Moore is proposing to prevent future terrorist attacks is quite different from those proposed and implemented by the present US administration. In his ironic and exaggerating approach, he is, in chapter 5 of the book, telling us how the US should pursue a policy which in the IR debate could be labelled liberal as well as multilateral. It is liberal in the sense that it is possible to transcend "power politics" and govern relations between peoples and states on the basis of legal norms, moral principles and according to what is "right" and "just" (Steans & Pettiford 2005: 30). It is furthermore multilateral in the sense that it assumes that international institutions and regimes might change state behaviour through learning and that states behave differently in information-rich environments as compared with information-poor environments (Keohane 1984).

Careful reading of Michael Moore's suggestions implies that he, in accordance with the liberal school in IR, takes a broad approach to security challenges and threats. He suggests that the level and scope of terrorism might be reduced by combating poverty and promoting the spread of democracy based upon multilateral cooperation. On the other hand, he is emphasising that such a strategy will not eradicate terrorism: "There *will* be future terrorist attacks... Bush's program for homeland security is providing us with no security at all" (Moore 2003: 119). On the other hand, he is arguing that the "only true security comes from ensuring that all people, here and around the globe, are able to meet their basic needs and dream of a better life. At the very last, we have to make damn sure we are not the ones robbing them of that dream" (ibid.: 128).

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<sup>19</sup> Dual use technologies refer to technologies, which can have civilian as well as more military purposes.

His suggestions when it comes to security and defence issues are that the US security strategy should be revised with the abolition of the strategy of pre-emptive strikes. Furthermore, Michael Moore's proposal for getting rid of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is to start getting rid of them self. Hence, what he is proposing is unilateral disarmament (ibid.: 125). When conferring Moore's view with the IR-debate on the future status of the non-proliferation treaty (NPT), very few people indeed, including security and defence experts, fully understand the real dynamics which underpin the NPT. In the treaty, the non-nuclear signatories are obliged not to procure, possess, and produce nuclear weapons. The NPT treaty acknowledges, however, that there are five countries that are in possession of such weapons – China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States. The utility of the NPT is therefore conditioned upon a dual dynamics in which the non-nuclear countries renounce any nuclear programme, while the nuclear powers are obliged to pursue a policy of nuclear disarmament. It is this dual dynamics of nuclear abstention and disarmament which is the driving force behind the treaty. Hence, a policy by one or more of the nuclear powers to improve their own nuclear capabilities may therefore tempt some of the non-nuclear countries to start doing research and establish themselves as future nuclear powers. Furthermore, it is nearly commonly agreed in the IR community that a proliferation of nuclear weapons may imply increased international instability.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, according to Moore, global nuclear disarmament may enhance international

stability and reduce the scope of international terrorism.

Michael Moore's views as they are presented in his latest book and film (Fahrenheit 911) are therefore liberal, not only in a political sense, but in a IR perspective as well. Therefore, the next chapter will focus upon in which way the views presented by Moore can be represented within the context of soft-power, a concept elaborated by one of the most influential IR scholars of our time – Joseph S. Nye Jr.

### **Joseph Nye and the concept of soft power in American foreign policy**

The soft power concept, elaborated by Joseph Nye in several books and articles of his, has been one of the most discussed phenomena in the IR-literature in recent years. The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). Therefore, soft power refers to the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Therefore, a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries – admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness – want to follow it. The success of soft power heavily depends on the country's reputation within the international community, as well as the flow of information between actors. Thus, soft power is often associated with the rise of globalization and liberal IR theory, even though it is much too simple to equate globalization with Americanization. Other cultures contribute mightily to global connections as well. Popular culture and

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<sup>20</sup> The agreement has, however, not been unanimous. Some neo-realists, like Kenneth N. Waltz and John Mearsheimer underlines that a controlled nuclear proliferation to countries like Germany and Ukraine, may enhance European and Euro-Atlantic security. See e.g. John Mearsheimer's much disputed article "Back to the Future – Instability in Europe After the Cold War" which was published in the highly acclaimed IR-journal "International Security" (Vol. 15, No. 1) in 1990.

media is regularly identified as a source of soft power, as is the spread of a national language, or a particular set of normative structures; a nation with a large amount of soft power and the good will which inspires others to acculturate, avoiding the need for expensive hard power expenditures.

Nevertheless, Nye also emphasises that attraction can turn into repulsion if the US acts in an arrogant manner and destroys the real message of the US' deeper values. According to Nye, the four-week war in Iraq in the spring of 2003 was a dazzling display of America's hard military power that removed a tyrant, but it did not resolve the US' vulnerability to terrorism. It was also costly in terms of the US' soft power – the ability to attract others and thereby sidelining with the US in the so-called "Coalition of the willing". In the words of the *Financial Times*: "To win the peace, therefore, the US will have to show as much skill in exercising soft power as it has in using hard power to win the war" (quoted in Nye 2004: xi). Therefore, domestic or foreign policies that appear to be hypocritical, arrogant, indifferent to the opinion of others, or based upon a narrow approach to national interests can undermine soft power (ibid.: 14).

This is especially the case in times when the security threats become asymmetrical and originate from non-state actors. Nye agrees with the Bush administration's focus upon threats from terrorism as well as from weapons of mass destruction (WMD), but he disagrees with the Bush administration's exaggerated focus upon the US ability to exercise hard power, and according to Nye, it is through soft power that terrorists gain general support as well as new recruits (ibid.: 24).

*Soft power and Michael Moore's approach to American foreign policy*

Michael Moore's views as they are represented in his latest book ("Dude, Where's My Country?") as well as film ("Fahrenheit 911") suits well within the framework of a soft power approach to US

foreign- and security policy. Therefore, what Moore clearly is advocating is a foreign- and security policy orientation which is more soft power-oriented. In his book and film, Moore clearly rejects the US Administration's and the neo-conservative's overarching aim of upholding the US-dominated unipolar international system. Moore disavows any form of American imperialism and the notion of an American empire. Even more than that, Moore's views clearly correspond with the European approach to international politics, namely effective multilateralism.<sup>21</sup> He even states that France is one of the US' closest allies: "They've brought us the Enlightenment, and The Enlightenment paved the way for the widespread acceptance of all the ideas and principles that America was founded on.... In fact, France has always been the best friend to the United States" (Moore 2004: 68-69). In this perspective, the then French minister of foreign affairs and also former Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, could be regarded as a spokesperson for a soft power approach to international relations. Moore is referring to him and his speech at the United Nations as the war in Iraq began:

*"Make no mistake about it: the choice is indeed between two visions of the world. Those who choose to use force and think they can resolve the world's complexity through swift and preventive action, we offer in contrast determined*

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<sup>21</sup> The concept "effective multilateralism" was so to say "invented" by the European Union (EU) in its security strategy (ESS) from 2003 which is labeled "A Secure Europe in a Better World". The ESS states e.g. that: "In a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective." This multilateral approach to the security risks, threats and challenges now facing us runs contrary to the US National Security Strategy with its emphasis on pre-emptive strikes and unilateralism in foreign affairs questions.

*action over time. For today, to ensure our security, all the dimensions of the problem must be taken into account: both the manifold crisis and their many facets, including cultural and religious. Nothing lasting in international relations can be built therefore without dialogue and respect for the other, without exigency and abiding by principles, especially for the democracies that must set the example. To ignore this is to run the risk of misunderstanding, radicalization and spiralling violence. This is even more true in the Middle East, an area of fractures and ancient conflicts where stability must be a major objective for us” (quoted in Moore 2004: 64).*

Hence, a foreign policy orientation that is multilaterally oriented which ensures an international system based upon collective arrangements, is central to a soft power oriented foreign policy. Joseph Nye underlines that the US has been more successful in the domain of hard power, when the US has invested more, trained more, and has a clearer idea of what the US is doing. The US has been less successful in the area of soft power, where the US public diplomacy has been woefully inadequate and where the neglect of allies and institutions has created a sense of illegitimacy that has squandered the attractiveness of the United States (Nye 2004: 147). The same goes for a policy based on a securitisation of all the challenges now facing the US where such a securitisation is leading towards a policy that justifies measures that would otherwise not be seen as legitimate.

As an example, in his film “Fahrenheit 911” Moore interviews a group of elderly peace activists who have assembled to write newspaper articles and arrange meetings in which their aim is to protest against the war in Iraq. However, their existence did not go unnoticed by the Bush administration. After some time a new

person joined this group. It later turned out that this was a FBI informant. By contrasting several of the statements made by this group with several statements made by the President, Moore manages to present President Bush as somewhat paranoid; seeing terrorists on “every corner”. In fact, the whole Bush administration is ridiculed in this way. Why is the FBI using resources on sending a clandestine informant to infiltrate this group of people whose only “felony” has been to discuss books on peace, writing letters to newspapers and talking to fellow citizens on the streets and at the local “speakers corner”? That portrayal is of course Moore’s intention. The statements made by the President are meant for a national or international audience, showing that the United States is responding strongly against any threat to the national security. When mixed into a very local – almost private – context, these statements by the President are easily conceived as being out of place, with little relevance to the groups activities. Furthermore, Moore is telling us in his way how the US authorities are applying measures which in more “normal times” would have been regarded as inappropriate. In this way Moore is also telling us his view on the Bush administration’s willingness to securitize domestic affairs. Hence, instead of regarding the fight against terrorism as a “war”, the US should, according to Moore, instead regard terrorism as a serious crime. By defining terrorism as a crime, the US citizens could have avoided the most serious consequences of the securitization moves made by the US government. It could also have avoided the serious tensions that have risen between the US and several of its traditional closest friends and allies (France included). In fact, there is a debate within the IR community now where it is argued that those who see the fight against terrorism as “war” regard the international system through the prisms of the Westphalian system, while those who regard terrorism as crime regard the international system through the prisms of an international society approach (Frederking, Artime & Pagano 2005). This

dispute perpetuates two dominant post-cold war trends: attempts by many in the international community to construct global collective security rules, and resistance to that project from a hegemonic United States. A United States which safeguards an international system made up by norms, institutions and a collective international order, corresponds with a soft power-oriented USA.

### *The critics of Michael Moore*

However, Michael Moore is one of the most disputed authors and filmmakers in the United States. A much held view among Moore's critics is that he is a powerful anti-government and anti-war protester, a domestic enemy, a liar and a cheat, who uses information and interviews selectively to pursue certain political goals as for instance make American politicians look useless, corrupt and stupid (Acher 2004). He is also by some regarded as an opportunist who has made millions of dollars by spreading conspiracy theories and attacking capitalism or that he is undermining the American effort to spread democracy and defeat terrorism, or even as Marxist propaganda (Koch 2004). However, as Michael Moore stated in an interview in *Vanity Fair* in 2004: "I must do something right, to get so much venom from the wrong people".

Careful reading of Michael Moore's book and similarly careful look at his film shows that he in no way could be regarded as an anti-American. On the contrary, he could also be regarded as an American patriot, an archetype of a "good old" American working-class hero and a man of the people. In other words, he is trying to behave as a down to earth ordinary Joe fighting corporate America, multinationals and Republicans. He furthermore claims that his aim is to educate and enlighten the American people about the Bush administration and its politics and multinational corporations. He applies humour by behaving as an easygoing person asking serious questions or

comments to men in power. He often uses the "one lonely man against the rich and powerful" image. This has made him a world hero and the British newspaper *The Mirror* made him "The greatest living American" in 2005.

His work can furthermore be regarded as a continuation of traditional leftwing critics in the political tradition of Noam Chomsky. However, Michael Moore is more; he is also an entertainer, a filmmaker and a journalist. He is down to earth and not an academic. He dropped out of college at the age of 22, and this can in some groups of the population make him even more trustworthy. Moreover, he has proved to be right in many cases, like the Iraq war. However, Moore's movies, books and television programs are not clear on what he wants to accomplish. He does not articulate it, other than his goal to enlighten the American people, but the message is clear: The war must stop and President George W. Bush has to get out of office. Nevertheless, we cannot find a clear-cut alternative of what he really wants instead. He has been rather reluctant on that matter, other than his support for John F. Kerry during the presidential election campaign in 2004 and of course Barack Obama in 2008. We have no reason not to believe his agenda, but there is a danger in making politics or politicians look like greedy or funny morons. It could of course lead to better politicians, who take his points seriously and change the course of American politics to soft power again, but it could also lead to a further decline in American voting participation and more distrust towards politics in general.

### *The rise of anti-Americanism on the world stage*

The evidence is clear: There has been a markedly increase in anti-Americanism on the world stage since the "war" against terror was initiated in 2001. As underlined by Nye, this could have serious consequences. It is true that the United States has recovered from unpopular

policies in the past, but that was against the backdrop of the Cold War, in which other countries still feared the Soviet Union as the greatest evil (Nye 2004: 129). As an example, by July 2003, according to a Reuters poll, one-third of Germans under the age of 30 said that they thought the American government might even have staged the original September 11 attacks (ibid.: 130). Furthermore, the United States is also considered by many to be a greater danger to world peace and stability, than both Iran and North Korea's nuclear programme.

According to a research project conducted by Pew Research Center in Washington DC in the spring of 2006 among 17 000 respondents from 15 countries it is evident that anti-Americanism is still on the rise more than three years after the major hostilities in Iraq ended. As an example, the share of the respondents with a positive image of the United States has fallen from 71 % to 56 % in India, from 43 % to 23 % in Spain and from 23 % to 12 % in Turkey. The majority of the respondents are also of the opinion that the US war against terrorism has contributed to increased international instability. 60 % of the British respondents are of the opinion that the war in Iraq has made the world a more dangerous place. 30 % thinks the opposite - that the world has become a safer place.<sup>22</sup>

However, Michael Moore's influence and popularity cannot be regarded as part of this rising anti-Americanism. On the contrary, Michael Moore's popularity must be seen within the framework of American soft power. In our view, the key to understand Michael Moore's influence on world opinion is to be found in such intangible power resources as the attractiveness of the American society to

others, including its universalistic culture and its national cohesion. Hence, what Michael Moore is representing, is the image of the United States that other people around the world find attracting with the American society. American soft power is therefore still a factor to reckon with. Furthermore, Milos Foreman is correct when he stated that the US must have an "inner strength", it must be "strong" and "free" when Hollywood could produce such films as "Twelve Angry Men" back in the 1950's (Nye 2004: 17). Therefore, the United States is the only country in Joseph Nye's overview of countries and regions, which scores "strong" on all power resources, tangible and intangible power resources likewise (Nye 1990: 174). The tangible power resources are basic resources (e.g. natural resources as coal-, oil- and steel production), military strength, economic development and scientific and technological progress. Intangible power resources are national cohesion, universalistic culture and international institutions. This fact also illustrates that popular culture, including media and English as the world's *lingua franca*, have created new and formative normative structures which frames peoples mindsets and creates new identities. These elements must therefore be taken into consideration when one assesses the influence of Michael Moore's books and films.

At the same time, we would also argue that the neo-realists are correct when they argue that absolute power does not attract – it repels (see e.g. Mearsheimer 1990: 11-21). Therefore, the present American administration's policy of creating a formal American "empire" by upholding the present unipolar system, is what other people (and also states to an increasing extent) around the world find repulsive. As such, anti-Americanism is also due to the unattractiveness of the present Bush administration. But we must also in our analysis take into consideration that a policy by the US which underscores its hard power, in the longer run, also risks losing its soft power resources. Hence, anti-

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<sup>22</sup> The results from the Pew Research Center were published in the Norwegian daily *Dagsavisen*, 14 June 2006. For a more thorough description of the investigation, see <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>

Americanism could not only be regarded as resistance towards what the Americans are doing, but also resistance towards who they are. In such a perspective, the films and books by Michael Moore could be regarded as a warning sign to the US authorities about what will happen to the United States if the arrogant and unilateral course of the Bush Administration continues.

### **Additional Explanations**

#### *The Promise of Social Constructivism*

The social constructivist approach to IR is interested in the interplay of interests and ideas, as well as in the impact of norms, culture and institutions of international politics (Steans & Pettiford 2005: 181). According to Emanuel Adler, social constructivists share two understandings: what Stefano Guzzini summarized as the social construction of knowledge and the construction of social reality (Adler 2001: 95). These are, according to Adler, social constructivism's common ground, the view that the material world does not come classified, and that, therefore, the objects of our knowledge are not independent of our interpretations and our language (ibid.). Therefore, social constructivism sees the world as a project under construction, as becoming rather than being. According to Adler: "Unlike idealism and post-structuralism and postmodernism, which take the world *only* as it can be imagined or talked about, constructivism accepts that not all statements have the same epistemic value and that there is consequently some foundation for knowledge" (ibid.).

As already pointed out in the previous chapter, social constructivism can also be applied as an approach to achieve a better understanding of Michael Moore's book and films which treats the US after the terrorist attacks in 2001. Both Moore's book and film raises some interesting arguments about how the representation of something as a threat to a particular community can be used to justify measures that would otherwise not be seen as legitimate. In Jill

Steans and Lloyd Pettiford's book "Introduction to International Relations – Perspectives & Themes" they apply a social constructivist approach to get a deeper understanding of "Fahrenheit 911". Their point is that the US foreign policy is not guided by rational calculations of threats to the national interests, based on sound intelligence (as realists and neo-realists suggest it is, or at least should be), but instead the notion of a "threat" which is discursively constructed, first of all by the Bush administration (Steans & Pettiford 2005: 199): "The Bush administration and the mass media created a state of fear in the USA that led people not only to be suspicious of strangers, but to take steps to protect themselves from possible attack – even in the local, neighbourhood Wal-Mart in middle America" (ibid.). Even more, as already underlined in the previous chapter, there was no credible intelligence to suggest that Saddam Hussein was supporting or harbouring al-Qaida terrorists, and those WMD's have not, and most probably never will be, discovered.

Jill Steans and Lloyd Pettiford also underline that social constructivism is similar to post-structuralism, although a poststructuralist would be likely to see the "threat" to the US mainland as constructed in the service of justifying and legitimising intervention in Iraq: "However, in so far as it is suggested by Moore that this intervention was to safeguard the interests of the US oil industry, which in turn had close links to George W. Bush and other key members of the administration, you might feel that this film resonates more with neo-Gramscian notions of hegemony, ideology and transnational class interests" (ibid.).

Steans and Pettiford's last point is important to take into consideration when one investigates Michael Moore's book and film. Hence, there are several ways to approach our research object. Social constructivism can therefore be applied as a supplementary approach to our soft power understanding of how Michael Moore is communicating with his audience. The promise of social constructivism lies in the

fact that it is showing us how even threats can be discursively constructed. Social constructivism's strength is that it gives us a better understanding of how the world is continuously reproduced in the interplay of structure and agency. Furthermore, for social constructivists, national interests is a category that needs to be explained, rather than being treated as an explanatory factor. Furthermore, social constructivists are interested in how interests and norms and institutions interact – for instance – in the “construction” of threats against the United States. Methodologically speaking, a social constructivist approach normally stresses historical processes, because it is otherwise unable to demonstrate the interplay of structure and agency. As suggested by Steans and Pettiford, also critical theories as well as Gramscian and neo-Gramscian approaches could have been applied.

### Conclusions

Michael Moore is one of the most disputed authors and filmmakers in the United States. The purpose of this article has therefore been to try to shed some new insights on our understanding of Michael Moore's political views as they are represented in his latest book (“Dude, Where's My Country?”) and film (“Fahrenheit 911”). By applying the soft power concept, we have tried to illustrate how Moore is advocating a new foreign policy of the United States. This is a United States which safeguards an international system made up by norms, institutions and a collective international order. We have therefore tried to illustrate how these views correspond with a soft power-oriented USA.

It has furthermore been an aim with this article to try to put Michael Moore into the current IR debate on such important themes as American multilateralism versus unilateralism, the influence of the neo-conservatives and the state of the American “empire”. By doing that, we have tried to reach a deeper understanding of the intellectual tradition Michael Moore is standing in. Furthermore, by applying an

“IR-way”, we have tried to explain why Michael Moore has become one of the most influential Americans at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is our view that Michael Moore's influence on the international stage must be seen within the context of the tremendous changes which have taken place in the foreign policies of the United States in recent years. A United States which is at “war” against terrorism internationally as well as domestically, has changed the political life in the United States dramatically in recent years. By securitising terrorism, the US has applied measures which in more “normal times” would have been regarded as illegitimate. Michael Moore's recipe is more soft power as a way to meet the challenges from terrorism. It is however also important to underline that Moore is not dismissing hard power as a measure in the fight against terrorism either. But, as emphasised by Moore, the fight against terrorism is not a war that can be won. Terrorism is crime and must be treated in such a way.

Therefore, Michael Moore's critique of the foreign policy orientation of the current Bush Administration has gained him much critique and repulsiveness, but also admiration as well as respect. This is, in our view, also a sign of American soft power. We could therefore state that the views Moore represents is the culture and values that other people around the world find attractive with the United States. What is more, Moore is aiming to tell us that he represents an “another America” as compared with the foreign- and defence policy elite in Washington DC. As we have tried to illustrate, popular culture and media, as well as a particular set of normative values, is regularly identified as a source of soft power. Therefore, Michael Moore's views must not be regarded as part of the rising anti-Americanism in the world. On the contrary, Michael Moore could be regarded as an American patriot, but also an American patriot who applies left-wing populist rhetoric as a way to communicate with his audience.

The rise of anti-Americanism must therefore in part be understood as a consequence of the present unipolar international system as well as the foreign policy orientation which characterise the Bush Administration. Furthermore, it must also be emphasised that anti-Americanism has long “intellectual roots” in e.g. European history. In fact we can trace anti-Americanism back to the times when the American republic was

created at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Anti-Americanism is therefore not a new phenomenon. A soft power oriented United States, however, which pursues a multilateral and hence institution based foreign policy with emphasis on collective arrangements as e.g. the United Nations (UN), could therefore, in a longer perspective, reduce the unfortunate results that anti-Americanism poses.

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On the PNAC, see:  
<http://www.newamericancentury.org/>

On the National Security Strategy of the United States, see:  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>  
On soft power, see Wikipedia:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft\\_power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_power)

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