

## **Abstract**

This thesis will create a counterfactual where the United States of America (USA) conducts Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in early 2003. However, USA will deploy 300,000 troops towards preventing a worst-case scenario of an Iraqi insurgency conducting asymmetric warfare against its coalition. The antecedent of a change in troop levels in May 2003 is analyzed for its effect on a specific consequent, the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) weapons system. The consequent is perceived as the effect of contingency planning for securing weapons depots across Iraq to prevent the use of the IED weapons system after conventional military operations end. The foreign policy executive (FPE) is the independent variable whose manipulation will change the dependent variable, USA's geostrategy after 9/11.

Ferguson's *Virtual History* (1997), Lebow's *Forbidden Fruit* (2010), and Harvey's *Explaining the Iraq War* (2012) will give rules to identify how this counterfactual is a plausible break from reality. The framework of neoclassical realism clarifies the ultimate decision unit of the State, the foreign policy executive (FPE) as responsible for war-making. Geopolitics will connect the FPE, which is the independent variable, to USA's geostrategy, the dependent variable, to understand the historic context for the war in 2003.

The theory application begins with a historic analysis of US geopolitics after the Cold War. Contextualizing how unipolarity was understood by the FPE before 9/11 will explain why OIF occurred. Regardless of who was the President of the USA on 9/11, this counterfactual theorizes how different assumptions about modern warfare by the FPE could have motivated it to send additional troops for post-conflict operations towards disarming a potential insurgency of asymmetric potential. A combination of Cohen's net assessment and Quigley's weapons system provide a geopolitical theory that is the basis for a plausible counterfactual to have occurred. In conclusions, the present reality of a post-unipolar world will be considered from a geopolitical perspective.

### **Keywords:**

Counterfactual, Foreign Policy Executive, Geostrategy, Net Assessment, Weapons Systems