

MASTER'S EXAMINER REPORT

GPS – Geopolitical Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	The Virtual FPE: A Counterfactual Analysis of Operation Iraq Freedom
Name of Student:	Aaron Smith
Referee (incl. titles):	Rndr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.
Report Due Date:	28.1.2024

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the four numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Contribution and argument:

I think, the thesis is very interesting and innovative from the methodological perspective as it is a counterfactual study (quite rare animal among our theses).

Also, the thesis solves an interesting aspect of US policy. I wish however, the research question was better articulated. As it is now, it is not clear if the aim is relatively narrow – to analyze the potential impact of a different US policy on Iraq resistance – and namely their use of the IED's, or if the focus is broader (geostrategy). While the two can be connected, I have my doubts the connection is so straightforward.

2) Theoretical and methodological framework:

I think the main methodological inspiration (Lebow, Harvey, etc.) is fine. Also, the neoclassical realism can be taken as a good theoretical starting point. I am not sure however how much relevant are the subchapters about geopolitics, or “The Chessboard and the Project”. I think these could be cut out.

I can imagine, the core of the thesis could use a more explicit method of dis/proving the counterfactual (e.g. using the template provided by Harvey).

3) Sources and literature: fine – see above.

4) Manuscript form and structure:

Generally OK, as I have noted above, I think there are some parts of the thesis that are not directly connected with the aim of the thesis and could be cut out, or radically shortened. BTW this creates a bit of a disbalance, as the core of the thesis (the counterfactual) covers less than 50 % of the pages.

Also, it is not good when the majority of the thesis uses copied charts and maps... instead of creating its own in the core part of the thesis. As it is now, it seems, as if the thesis was primarily a compilation of other books and articles.

5) Quality of presentation

Generally OK.

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Contribution (research quality, analysis, and conclusions) (max. 40 points)</i>	32
<i>Theoretical and methodological framework (max. 25 points)</i>	22
<i>Sources and literature (max. 10 points)</i>	10
<i>Manuscript form and structure (max. 15 points)</i>	14
<i>Quality of presentation (grammar, style, coherence) (max. 10 points)</i>	9

TOTAL POINTS	<i>(max. 100 points)</i>	87
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)		B

Suggested questions for the defence are:

I do recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	A	= outstanding (high honor)
81 – 90	B	= superior (honor)
71 – 80	C	= good
61 – 70	D	= satisfactory
51 – 60	E	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	F	= failing. The thesis is not recommended for defence.