

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2685582 DCU Charles 85310025
Dissertation Title	Russia and the (De)colonization of International Law

<p>Word Count Penalty (1-15% over/under = 1gr point; 15-20% over/under = 2 gr points; 20-25% over/under = 3 gr points; more than 25% over/under = 0 fail)</p> <p>Word Count: 22023 Suggested Penalty: no penalty</p>		

JOINT GRADING (subject to agreement of the external examiner and approval at Joint Exam Board)

Final Agreed Mark. : A4 [19]

DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
A. Structure and Development of Answer	
This refers to your organisational skills and ability to construct an argument in a coherent and original manner	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Very Good
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Very Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Excellent
B. Use of Source Material	
This refers to your skills to select and use relevant information and data in a correct manner	
• <i>Evidence of reading and review of published literature</i>	Excellent
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Excellent
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Very Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Excellent
C. Academic Style	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Excellent
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Excellent
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Excellent
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	Not required
• <i>Appropriate word count</i>	Yes

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ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The dissertation marries a most up-to-date topic with an interesting theoretical viewpoint from which the author investigates it. Much has been – and numerous times more will be written – about Russia after its full-scale invasion of Ukraine last February. And while it is always tricky to pursue a topic that is still dramatically developing, the author has found the right angle from which to approach the empirical material. The dissertation asks whether the prosecutions started against Russia’s representatives (not only in connection to Ukraine, but also to the earlier war in Georgia), including president Putin, signify a larger shift in the country’s international standing.

The dissertation is rooted in the theory of Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL), a post-colonial approach seeking to debunk international norms and the institutions that manage them as instruments of neo-colonial oppression. While the precedent for international criminal justice, the Nurnberg Tribunal in the aftermath of WWII, prosecuted and punished representatives of a ‘first-world country’, the modern incarnations thereof, including the workings of the International Criminal Court, have heavily focused on African conflicts. Hence, an intriguing question arises: can international criminal prosecution of Russia be treated as the country’s relegation to a third-world status?

The author presents the contours of TWAIL and related theoretical concepts with clarity and sure understanding. The dissertation excels in its consistent references to the selected theoretical framework – in short, theory has become a real working tool here, not a mere symbolic nod to academic duties. At the same time, the core of the dissertation rests on a meticulous content analysis of select judicial documents and related sources, demonstrating the author’s ability to steep himself in the empirical material. The result is thought-provoking and poignant.

That being said, I regard two problems in the author’s approach. Firstly, I believe at least some critical reflection of TWAIL would be helpful. While the central claim of Africa-centric approach of ICC is hard to dispute, it still leaves open the question whether such a focus has not, in fact, been warranted by the type of conflicts which Africa saw since the end of the Cold War. The author also channels the criticism of the Nurnberg Tribunal, where the question is even starker: does the ‘imperfect justice’ (as one of the source articles calls it) invalidates the benefits and contribution of this international criminal process? Secondly, while I deeply appreciate the author’s thick theorization throughout the text, I miss a bit more specific questions and answers concerning Russia’s status, including its ensuing implications (e.g. the role Russia seeks to play in Third World conflicts through outfits like the Wagner Group).

Reviewer 2

This is an interesting and original approach. The paper is well written, pointing out the rationale of this research in a logical manner. I would have liked to know more about your journey starting from the factors which informed your decision in choosing those particular cases in the ICC to contrast the “Third World legal vulnerability” with the “First World structural immunity” and the method of content analysis, and to specify possible obstacles to your investigation in, perhaps, a separate chapter on methodology. I agree with the first reviewer that a more in-depth analysis of Africa’s unique pathway would have added value to your paper and would have led, perhaps, to some relevant conclusions. Overall, I appreciate your effort and I think that your investigation will open the door to further research in the field.



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