

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2455660 DCU 19108494 Charles 60794525
Dissertation Title	Rightist Shift in Poland's Internal Security: Regional Security Implications for NATO

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade <i>Select from drop down list</i>	Reviewer 2 Initial Grade <i>Select from drop down list</i>	Late Submission Penalty <i>Select from drop down list</i>
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)		
Word Count: Suggested Penalty: <i>Select from drop down list</i>		

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

Final Agreed Mark. (Following correspondence reviewers should list the agreed final internal grade taking before and after any penalties to be applied). Before Penalty: B3 [15] After Penalty: <i>Select from drop down list</i>

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>	Very Good
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Good
• <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>	Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Good
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>	Very Good
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Excellent
• <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>	Very Good
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Excellent
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Very Good
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	Yes

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

- *Appropriate word count*

-Select from list-

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

This dissertation addresses the interesting question of whether the ascent to power of the radical right / populist PiS government in 2015 carried any significant implications for Poland's place and role within the NATO alliance. It focuses on the 2016 Warsaw Summit as well a series of security policy-related steps taken by PiS in 2015-16 that elicited great domestic political controversy in Poland, with centre-left / liberal opposition parties and media charging that PiS' actions would weaken Poland's security position due to their perceived incompatibility with the democratic values upheld by NATO and Poland's key Western allies within it. As the literature review shows, there has also been academic debate about the implications of these events (and PiS' ideological and foreign policy stance more broadly) for Poland's security. Taking the events of 2015-16 as a point of departure, the dissertation asks two main questions: first, did the events in question have any negative impact on Poland's reputation and standing within the alliance? Second, did the new government (staunchly anti-Russian, obsessed with settling domestic political scores dating back to the communist era, steeped in a narrative of historic victimhood at the hands of neighbouring great powers and committed to achieving hard security guarantees against any revival of threat from the East) possibly exert any agency in engineering NATO's shift away from crisis management (focused on Europe's southern borders and Afghanistan) and back towards more straightforward Article 5 collective defence and deterrence (focused on defence of NATO's Eastern flank)? These at least seem to me to be the main questions running through the dissertation, though they are not articulated as clearly as they could be at the start.

These research questions link to pre-existing discussions of the Baltic States and how they have been able to 'punch above their weight' within a multilateral NATO framework on issues such as cyber and energy security. Here, the research questions are situated in relation to wider theoretical debates on the role of agency and structure, which, the author argues, are more helpful than standard realist vs constructivist IR frameworks in shedding light on how states interact within the specific context of regional security systems.

The greatest strengths of the dissertation lie in its empirical depth and solid analysis of data, including original interviews with experts which shed useful light on the issues at hand. For this reader, at least, a number of interesting details emerged - for instance, that there was actually some suggestion of moving the location of the 2016 summit as a result of misgivings over PiS' 'illiberal turn'. Ultimately, though (and, perhaps unsurprisingly, as an intergovernmental organisation focused largely on strategic and interoperational questions), NATO remained largely indifferent to the domestic developments of 2015-16 that caused such a furor in Poland itself. Interestingly (for me), the author argued convincingly that PiS' policies DID damage Poland's standing within NATO and its ability to influence alliance policies, since its Eurosceptic rhetoric and overt orientation towards the US did complicate relations with key member states such as Germany and France. In the end, however, this was immaterial, since the Ukraine crisis changed the calculations not only of the United States but also Germany. As such, PiS was indeed 'pushing at an open door' when it advocated additional troop deployments in the East. Here, I thought the dissertation made an interesting point about how the US government (and other leading NATO powers?) seem to still think of the 'East' as a collective bloc with predetermined interests irrespective of the governments that happen to be in power in individual countries. The author

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

also shows that PiS did not initially deviate from its rhetorical commitment to existing NATO priorities, before shifting to a focus on the Eastern flank. In this regard, though, it could be asked to what extent its eastern policy differed from those of previous Polish governments - after all, Poland's 'controversial' role in the Ukraine crisis predated the onset of a rightist-populist government.

In the final analysis, the dissertation shows that the changed international environment brought about by the Ukraine crisis was determinant in NATO's altered stance, dispelling any suggestion of Polish agency in the matter. I don't think, however, that 'agency' can be attributed to an external environment - rather, it would seem to have a structural attribute (elsewhere, the word 'impact' is used, and this would seem more appropriate). In this respect, I think the overall discussion of structure and agency (and how this relates to standard IR debates) could have been brought out much more clearly across the dissertation.

Reviewer 2

This dissertation observes the effects of Poland's shift to a conservative government on NATO. The author picks up four security events in the first year of the PiS government (pardoning of Minister Kaminski, lustration in security agencies, dismissal of the head of NATO's Counterintelligence Centre of Excellence, and Warsaw Summit of 2016) and analysis if and how NATO reacts to Poland's actions. The analysis is based on reading many official documents and newspaper reports and three elite interviews. The thesis demonstrates the author's insight into Poland's security policy. However, from the reader's perspective, the dissertation is somewhat confusing. The author attempts to fit the analysis into the agent-structure theoretical framework and measure Poland's (PiS's) agency in NATO as a regional security structure. Unfortunately, the author avoids any theoretical debate in which the utilised agent-structure framework could be defined. It is unclear why internal political events should play a role in such an agent-structure relationship. Similarly unclear is the relevance of domestic newspaper debates on NATO. I am not sure why such a traditionally structural factor as the security environment is claimed to have agency. It seems that the author needlessly complicates the analysis of Poland's influence and bargaining power in NATO.