IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	**Glasgow** 2486411 **DCU** 19108508 **Charles** 17287595
Dissertation Title	The Islamic Petroleum State: A Study of US-Led Airstrikes Against ISIS's Oil Network in Iraq and Syria

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade	*Reviewer 2 Initial Grade*	*Late Submission Penalty*
Select from drop down list	*Select from drop down list*	*no penalty*

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: 21 994   **Suggested Penalty:** *no penalty*

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:** A3 [20]   **After Penalty:** A3 [20]

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

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• _Appropriate word count_	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The dissertation seeks to identify and anlyse the US-lead coalition's efforts to disrupt ISIS' oil network in Iraq and Syria, drawing on an original incident dataset compiled and coded by the author. In doing so, the dissertation explores a clearly defined research question that the author convincingly shows represents a critical gap in existing literature and generates new and valuable data suitable for the further study of this phenomenon. The dissertation is clearly and logically structured, with a clear statement of the research question and findings from the outset, and is very well-written.

The study is very well-situated in the literature, in particular in identifying a gap in existing research on this topic that has arisen as a result of methodological challenges in studying this particular phenomenon, alongside a lack of coherence across discrete sub-disciplines (see section 2.3 on conflict studies and terrorism studies). The author demonstrates considerable skill in going beyond a summary of current research, to a detailed and conceptually nuanced critical evaluation, highlighting points of convergence and divergence in the field, alongside key gaps, debates, weaknesses and puzzles in existing scholarship.

In terms of research design and methdology - the study rationale and overall approach is well-justified with clear evidence of the author's familiarity with relevant scholarship on the topic. The specific quantitative methodology is well-specified and makes reference to authoritative sources on best practice in this emerging field, with corresponding attention to limitations and issues of bias and omissions in particular. A relatively comprehensive ethical statement completes the section, reflecting the author's careful consideration of relevant legal provisions, ethical risks associated with subjectivity, and processes of anonymisation.

The empirical sections display an impressive analysis of a large volume of richly detailed original evidence. Given the timeframe and length restrictions on a project of this kind, this represents an extremely impressive achievement overall. However, there are some empirical sections which tends towards lengthier description, than critical interrogation and interpretation of the evidence. In particular, the added value of disaggregation by location (country and site) could have been demonstrated more clearly where currently, this tends in places towards more description without leveraging the theoretical and analytical affordances sub-national, disaggregated incident data can offer. While the original dataset represents an impressive empirical contribution, the dissertation would have been strengthened by more clearly articulating the analytical arc in each section, and how the limitations outlined earlier in relation to research design and method might directly impact the interpretation and conclusions later reached.

Overall, this is a very high-quality dissertation, on a theoretically and empirically important topic, that demonstrates an impressive command of relevant theories, methods and empirical knowledge, while making a valuable empirical contribution for further scholarship.

Reviewer 2

The dissertation intends to investigate the U.S. attempts to disrupt oil networks captured by the so-called Islamic State, cutting one of its main sources of income. Overall, it is clear that

considering the theoretical/conceptual and methodological requirements, the research is meticulous in all of its aspect and leaves very little room for criticism. Both theoretical and empirical contextualizations are appropriately elaborated, while the main strength of the dissertation lies in the methodology. The combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects is sound and serves the goals of the dissertation well. What is appreciated as well is the fact that a critical discussion is provided, showing the limits of the research design. This demonstrates a very careful approach on the part of the author. That being said, considering the strengths of the dissertation, there are partial shortcomings in how the outputs of the method's application are utilized during the interpretation stage. Although the findings are persuasive, one is left unsure that the phenomenon can be explained solely in terms of the suggested indicators and their measurements. A simple statistic might not be sufficient to justify that the target selection was based on the ground of the infrastructure's technological vulnerability. Second, considering that the Islamic State achieved a robust control over the territory, then it might be uncertain that the thesis about unlootability applies, since the Islamic State did not fully fit the category of rebel group at this stage of its existence. However, I would like to emphasize that these are merely minor shortcomings in an otherwise excellently executed research project.