

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2337760 DCU Charles Trento
Dissertation Title	Maintaining Peace and Security in Cyberspace: Multilateral Approach of the United Nations on Advancing Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade B2 [16]	Reviewer 2 Initial Grade B2 16	Late Submission Penalty NA
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: OK Suggested Penalty:		

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

Final Agreed Mark. B2 16 (Following correspondence reviewers should list the agreed final internal grade taking before and after any penalties to be applied).

Before Penalty: B2 [16] After Penalty: B2 [16]

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>	GOOD
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	GOOD
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	SATISFACOTRY
• <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>	GOOD
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	GOOD
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	GOOD
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	GOOD
C. Academic Style	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	

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• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	GOOD
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	SATISFACTORY
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	GOOD
• <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

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

This dissertation engages a significant topic and identifies and fills a useful research gap regarding the role of United Nations institutions and the regulation of cyber affairs by States. In doing so it draws well on both secondary literature and in its use of primary materials at the United Nations General Assembly. Significant space is devoted to articulating the development of UN practice in this area and in considering the normative and discursive content that the States through the UN have emphasised regarding cyber. As reviewer 2 has identified the dissertation would benefit from a more specific form of CDA regarding state positions, albeit this would have involved a much broader dataset involving debates as well as resolutions and outcomes. The dissertation concludes by considering the paradoxical engagement by states with international law's normative character, at once looking to impose and construct rules and escape their self-application. Although this insight is welcome and draws on critical literature in IL well, it is reasonably well established in legal theory – the author may wish if revising the thesis to consider the future implications of the research area, particularly in a context of increased competition between a US led international legal position and those adopted by Russia and China and a rising autocracy trend globally. What would the implications of this trend continuing be for the regulation of cyber affairs, especially through the United Nations architecture?

Reviewer 2

This dissertation deals with an interesting and important topic and I learned a lot from reading it. It draws on a very impressive range of secondary sources (as well as analysis of primary documents) and combines insights from international law, international politics, and security studies. It provides a comprehensive and in-depth overview of UN activity in this area, and the story that emerges exemplifies wider issues facing the UN as a regulatory body prone to the interests of powerful states – the bigger question that I suppose this raises is whether we could realistically hope for any more from the UN, beyond what has already been achieved? The biggest issue with the dissertation lay in writing style and grammar: there were frequent typos and glitches, sometimes to the extent of obscuring meaning. I was also expecting more in terms of in-depth CDA, for, while we get a good overview of activities and positions within the UNGA, GGE and OEWG, this was all rather general. It would have been helpful, for instance, to know which states were actually represented within the GGE, in order to get a clearer view of the underlying politics. Also, what (beyond expanded possibilities for participation) was different about the discussions and processes within OEWG? In other words, I thought there was a disconnect between the methodology and the actual empirical content. As a non-specialist, I would also have appreciated a bit more background detail on the role and significance of ITU and ICANN, in order to have a fuller sense of the issues at stake. The underlying tensions between the USA on the one hand and actors like Russia and China on the other were clearly brought out and were one of the most interesting features of the dissertation for me. The US clearly supports multi-stakeholder governance within a framework of globalisation, but I found myself wondering to what extent this can be seen as supporting the 'national

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interest' (I assume this is what was meant on p.22, rather than 'national internet?') and 'cyber superiority' of the USA as a state as opposed to handing agency to large private corporations guided by the profit motive rather than commitment to any particular set of political values? The power of non-state actors in this field and the implications this might have for an organisation like the UN and its pretensions to global governance was, I thought, a point that might have been developed further. Nevertheless, this is still an impressive piece of work that rests on substantial research.