IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	**Glasgow** 2244006 **DCU** 20109768 **Charles** 27186624
Dissertation Title	Influencing Peace: The Impact of Ethnocentricism in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade	***Reviewer 2 Initial Grade***	***Late Submission Penalty***
C2	*C2*	*N/A*
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:*** *23660* ***Suggested Penalty:*** *N/A*		

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: C2 ***After Penalty:*** C2

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*	Good
• *Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified*	Satisfactory
• *Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work*	Satisfactory
• *Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions*	Good
• *Application of theory and/or concepts*	Good
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*	Good
• *Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument*	Satisfactory
• *Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence*	Good
• *Accuracy of factual data*	Good
C. Academic Style This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• *Appropriate formal and clear writing style*	Very good

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• *Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation*	Very Good
• *Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)*	Very Good
• *Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?*	Yes
• *Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)*	Not required
• *Appropriate word count*	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The first thing I want to say is that the student deserves merit for approaching a study of the UN through the lens of ethnocentrism. While not entirely novel in its own right, as discussions of ethnocentrism within the context of UN origins do exist, the approach to apply it to a discussion of the challenges for peacekeeping is welcome. In saying this, there are a range of weaknesses that are apparent when reviewing the dissertation in its final form. Being clearer about whether the main focus of the dissertation is the place of ethnocentrism in the workings of the UN or about better understanding peacekeeping is important and I would encourage the student to establish the central focus up front and structure the thesis around this. The failure to do so has resulted in a discussion that doesn't really do justice to either sets of literature. Speaking of literature, while it is clear that there has been engagement with scholarship on both ethnocentrism and the UN, there is scope to take this further and at times the discussion is less critical and more descriptive in nature. If the central focus is about evidencing examples of ethnocentrism in the UN then I would expect to have seen a fuller lit review on this building on the materials that that touched upon in chapter 5. If it was more about providing a reflection on peacekeeping, then a more critical discussion of the limitations of the existing literature on UN peacekeeping operations is required and as it stands the dissertation doesn't really do this either. I wonder if the question in its current formation is part of the problem – and if some reformulation could have helped address the structural weakness of the dissertation. For example, 'In what ways does ethnocentrism in the UN create political challenges for the UN's peacekeeping operations?' or "How does P5 ethnocentrism impact the influence of non-permanent or global south states within the UN" – the second question would have allowed the student to focus less on peacekeeping and extend the analysis to other areas of UN operation. Other areas of concern are the reference to quantitative analysis of voting behaviour as I am not convinced that this provides clear evidence of ethnocentrism, and this speaks to an assumption that national interests are ethnocentric in nature – more evidence of this would need to be provided. There are also some bold claims throughout the dissertation which peek the readers interest, but which are not adequately backed up and evidenced. An example of this would be that the actions of the P5 relate strongly to one of the main facets of ethnocentrism – exploitation. Discussion of issues such as mission mandate or mission participation also fail to adequately provide detailed and justified relationships with ethnocentrism beyond unsubstantiated claims such as financial dominance of the larger powers over UN peacekeeping budgets highlights an ethnocentric feeling of superiority that dominates the organisation. This is interesting but doesn't go far enough in proving the fact. Overall, the dissertation would benefit from more in depth and purposeful literature reviews that inform the research question clearly, an improved discussion of the limitations (with reference to existing literature), including some critical reflections of the study in the conclusion which was limited in scope and a discussion of the value of the work could have been included.

For the oral defence, I think it would be helpful to ask for clarity on the central purpose of the thesis and how the question might have been reframed to support that.

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Reviewer 2

The reviewed thesis attempted to apply a sociological approach to make sense of UN politics and practices, in particular focusing on UN peacekeeping operations (UN PKOs). While this ambition is praiseworthy, the content of the thesis suffers from numerous shortcomings, especially when it comes to literature review/s and theory application to the empirical evidence.
Although the thesis has two theoretical chapters, it does not capture the existing state of the art either on theoretical accounts of UN politics in general or UN peacekeeping in particular. There are many journal articles (especially in the journal of International Peacekeeping) and books (I especially recommend the volume edited by Kseniya Oksamytna and John Karlsrud, United Nations Peace Operations and International Relations Theory). These offer substantially more nuanced theoretical perspectives on the topics discussed in the thesis than chapter 1.1, which offers very brief (1-2 paragraphs long) and superficial summaries of "major" IR theories (many of which are excessively based on single dated book chapter by Risse-Kappen, 1997).
Similarly, the thesis completely lacks a proper review of the rich literature on UN peacekeeping. As such, it neglects important works that have been already published on the key topics discussed in the thesis, including the legal basis and principles of UN missions, the origins of UN peacekeeping and its evolution over time, and the reform attempts and lessons learned since the end of the Cold War. These again offer much more nuanced accounts than those presented in the thesis. The author may certainly challenge them but this cannot be done without reviewing them first. Similarly, there are several accounts of the liberal peace critique which specifically discuss the role of the UN and UN PKOs, including the works of Pugh, Duffield, Richmond, Bellamy, Williams and others. Almost none of these are discussed in the thesis.

The application of ethnocentric approach is also problematic. The author claims to provide empirical evidence for ethnocentric arguments by focusing "on UN documents, independent reports, secondary literature, and analyzing voting patterns, mandate structure, and financial contributions." In reality, in addition to the missing literature reviews, only few UN peacekeeping documents and independent reports are actually discussed in the thesis in detail. The author has also not really performed a genuine content analysis of the few documents mentioned in the thesis, such as the Brahimi and HIPPO reports. Similarly, there is no real data-based analysis of either financial or troop contributions of UN member states to UN PKOs. Moreover, the author fails to discuss the important difference between the two – the former are mandatory, the latter are voluntary.

The review of the literature on ethnocentricism is more detailed but its relevance to either IR theory in general, or the study of UN/UN PKOs is almost absent. The author identified "six specific facets of ethnocentrism are visible within the concept: preference, superiority, purity, exploitativeness, group cohesion, and devotion. (p 35)" However, these are not subsequently applied in the analysis of UN/UN PKOs. Moreover, the author makes several important but insufficiently discussed and/or empirically demonstrated assumptions in the application of ethnocentricism. These include the notion that states are composed of single (ethnic?) groups;

that state-centric IR theories arguments are similar enough to ethno-centric arguments; that the permanent members of the UN Security Council are ethno-centric and "Western", etc.

Due to the lack of more nuanced discussion of the history of either UN or UN PKOs, the author also misses several important facts which do not fit with the ethnocentric explanations advanced in the thesis, including the important role of UN General Assembly and UN Secretary General in the origins and evolution of UN PKOs during the Cold War, the dominance of the de-colonization agenda of the UN during the 1950s-1970s, the non-Western dominated composition of the high-level panels in charge of both the Brahimi and HIPPO reports etc.