IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	**Glasgow** 2684966 **DCU** 21109125 **Charles** 45002189
Dissertation Title	Investigating international factors aiding an authoritarian turn: The case of Tunisia

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: *20,666*   ***Suggested Penalty:*** *no penalty*

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

Final Agreed Mark *:* B3 [15]

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*	Good
• *Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work*	Good
• *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*	Good
• *Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence*	Satisfactory
• *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*	Good
• *Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation*	Satisfactory
• *Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)*	Good
• *Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?*	Yes
• *Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)*	-Select from list-

• *Appropriate word count*	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The thesis is interesting, well-structured, generally well-written and factually correct. It looks at a topic that is well-established in the literature and widely discussed by the scholars. It does so by bringing together a number of relevant academic debates – with some inconsistencies, tho. The literature review stretches to include several theories and debates, at times loosing focus. At times, it is unclear why some references are used, i.e. "the region's cultural endowment (Kramer, 1993; Cavatorta, 2018; Kraetzschmar & Rivetti, 2018)" why these references to Cavatorta, Kraetzschmar and Rivetti? They do not seem to be relevant; "[…] the prevalence and peculiar logic of monarchy (Anderson, 1991;" Is a work from 1991 a good reference for post-2011 political processes? There is a lack of pointed references, which makes the whole referencing at times vague. There also seem to be some contradictions when discussing the literature, i.e. "Contraditions: resource abundant Gulf monarchies had strong coercive apparatuses to resist protests within their countries during the Arab Spring, whereas resource poor countries like Egypt and Tunisia were not. The dictators in Egypt and Tunisia relied on aid from their western partners and had to maintain strong economic and diplomatic relations with their donor states to maintain their coercive apparatuses as they would not receive international criticisms. For instance, neoliberal economic reforms promoted by the west in 90s with promises of financial aid and their adoption by Ben Ali's regime, added to the 'capacity' of the coercive nature of the regime, as repression of the civil society and social movements increased but it went unnoticed by the western partners (Durac & Cavatorta, 2015)." Or the discussion of Heydemann's upgrading authoritarianism and his cultural exceptionalism approach. In sum, the literature review discusses everything, with no sharp reading of the existing scholarship. The thesis reports all existing theories and analysis with no critical prioritising/sharp axis for contrast and comparison; a good example is the section on civil society. There is a lack of proper references, at times: "However, as we investigate the statements made by the office of HR/VP published in the next three years, there is no mention of the term 'deep democracy' anymore (Add more sources)." Comments by students not deleted, see p. 43; p. 46: there is a reference in title.

Methodologically, it is unclear why process tracing has been included, and how PT is actually applied. Process tracing, as a component of this methodology, does not seem to be identifiable in the thesis. Also, as the research question is "How does the discourse created by the EU towards Tunisia since the Arab Spring played a role in Kais Saied consolidating executive power over the Tunisia's institutions?", it seems that the thesis missed a discussion of causality. The analysis is mostly focused on facts and events. While relevant EU discourses as listed, they are not analysed in depth.

In conclusion, the thesis attains most of intended learning outcomes, some more securely grasped than others, resting on a wide-enough range of evidence and displaying a variable depth of understanding.

Reviewer 2

This is an interesting topic, but the introduction could be more concise--much of the background should be saved for a later section.

The literature review is extensive and at its strongest when it integrates the topical literature with the Tunisian case--at some points, section two reads like a very well written outline but struggles to link to the topic.

The review of the documents is extensive but the mixed methods of discourse analysis and process tracing tends to be used unevenly and the overal benefit of the approach is either understated or unrealised. I did, however, learn much as a reader about the history of EU attitudes towards Tunisia and the European Union although I had questions as to the link of Tunisia with other Middle Eastern cases embroiled in the Arab Spring. More could have been done to situate the case in a comparative context. The work reads like a discrete history project in places.