

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2670399 DCU 21109648 Charles 81662022
Dissertation Title	The Influence of Colonialism on the Child Soldier Phenomenon: A Comparison of Myanmar and South Sudan

Word Count: 24105		

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	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Excellent
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Good
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Satisfactory
• <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>	Very Good
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Very Good
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Good
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Very Good
C. Academic Style	
This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• <i>Appropriate formal and clear writing style</i>	Excellent
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Excellent
• <i>Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)</i>	Excellent
• <i>Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?</i>	Yes
• <i>Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)</i>	No

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- *Appropriate word count*

Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The dissertation explores the question of the impact of colonialism on the child-soldier phenomenon, using Myanmar and South Sudan as case studies. The structure is coherent. The literature review chapter is comprehensive and demonstrates the Author's broad familiarity with relevant works and divisions within the field.

The research design chapter discusses the case selection and methodology. The analytical framework is presented in a tad cursory manner, though, and does not relate to the topical literature. It is chapter 4 (a model of colonialism's impact) that constitutes the proper analytical framework. The use of questionnaires addressed to academics and professionals is the dissertation's forte.

While case study chapters provide an insightful analysis of the use of child-soldiers in both cases, they would have benefitted from direct application of the framework introduced in chapter 4. The use of two analytical frameworks - one to understand the reasons behind the use of child-soldiers (briefly introduced in chapter 3) and another to analyse the impact of colonialism (chapter 4) creates some confusion. Building a single framework would have benefitted the dissertation. The impact of colonialism could have been explored more in-depth and with more extensive use of the proposed framework. It is employed in a non-systematic manner only in chapter 7. As a consequence, the analysis of the child-soldier phenomenon and of the impact of colonialism, are a bit detached from each other.

Overall, this is a highly original dissertation, employing correct methods and demonstrating the familiarity with the literature and the understanding of the phenomenon under study. Creating a better link between contemporary situation and the impact of colonialism would have strengthened it significantly.

Reviewer 2

In the MA dissertation under review, the author delves into the intricate relationship between colonialism and the use of child soldiers in postcolonial states, shedding light on an underexplored area of research. The study, while not without its merits, raises both commendable points and areas of concern that warrant careful consideration.

Positive Points:

Originality and Contribution: The dissertation is noteworthy for tackling a relatively unexplored connection between colonialism and the recruitment of child soldiers. This originality is commendable, as it seeks to fill a gap in the literature and address a critical issue within conflict studies.

Empirical Insights: The inclusion of case studies on Myanmar and South Sudan enriches the scholarly discourse. The dissertation provides valuable insights into the use of child soldiers within the context of their recent or ongoing civil wars, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

Utilization of Interviews: The incorporation of semi-structured interviews with academics and practitioners enhances the empirical foundation of the study. This approach adds depth to the analysis and lends credibility to the findings by drawing upon the perspectives of those directly engaged with the issue.

Weak Points:

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The research question regarding the influence of colonialism on the use of child soldiers lacks ambition and academic relevancy.

The dissertation's research design raises concerns. The comparative analysis of similar case studies of Myanmar and South Sudan, while interesting, falls short in convincingly establishing or refuting the hypothesis. The study could benefit from a more robust methodological framework, referencing basic methodological sources.

The empirical analysis appears to rely on process tracing to establish a link between colonialism, structural poverty, and the use of child soldiers, although without author's explicit acknowledgment. However, other causal claims made this causal observations less convincing (see pages 81/82).

The author did not report the number of returned questionnaires. This omission weakens the transparency and reliability of the study's data collection process.

Insufficient Focus on Research Question: The case studies on Myanmar and South Sudan could benefit from a more direct and focused approach in addressing the central research question.

In conclusion, the MA dissertation presents a commendable effort to explore the complex interplay between colonialism and the use of child soldiers in postcolonial states. While its originality and empirical insights contribute to the academic discourse, there are notable weaknesses in its research design, methodological approach, and empirical analysis.