

IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	Glasgow 2824306 DCU 22110623 Charles 99403014 Trento
Dissertation Title	The Prigozhin Affair: A Case Study of Ambition, Power, and Miscalculations in Putin's Russia

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

		Late Submission Penalty 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: 21,533 Suggested Penalty: 1 point 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: B3 [15] **After Penalty:** C3 [12] (two point penalty applied for reuse of previous work)

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>	Good
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Very Good
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Very 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>	Very 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>	Very Good
• <i>Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation</i>	Very Good
• <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>	Not required

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- *Appropriate word count*

Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The reviewed thesis explores a hot topic of an individual who exhibited a spectacular rise and fall in Putin's Russia. While their interlinkages could be further developed in the thesis, the choice of two theoretical concepts of patronal politics and (hybrid) entrepreneurs of influence is suitable. The author has also managed to find, read, and incorporate key insights from the booming, yet still limited, academic literature, complemented by insights and data from the grey literature. The list of references is extensive for an MA thesis. There is, however, little to no collection and analysis of primary sources in the thesis.

The objectives and the time period of analysis are clearly stated, albeit the methods section is otherwise underdeveloped. The research question actually has two questions, which is not ideal. The thesis offers a better analysis of, and answer to, the first question concerning Prigozhin's rise and fall, rather than the second question regarding the implications for regime stability. Also, the different time-frames for analyzing the digital and military activities are problematic, albeit in practice, the thesis actually does cover the entire 2010-2023 period in the empirical sections even for the Wagner Group (and its predecessors). The concluding discussion, which attempts to link the conceptual framework to the empirical sections, is relatively brief and underdeveloped.

Most of the shortcomings discussed above are primarily due to the fact that the thesis has been written over a rather short time period just before the submission deadline.

As a supervisor, I must also note that I was not consulted regarding the fact that sub-section 6.7 of the thesis "constitutes the author's previous study conducted on Russia's use of semi state forces (Gibson, 2022)."

Reviewer 2

While I appreciate and praise the fact that this is a well written paper that is very interesting to read, I have a number of concerns and critical remarks I would invite the author to think about and to respond to if a viva takes place.

First, there are indeed two research questions posed in the paper targeting two very different outcomes: a more descriptive one focuses on how Prigozhin has navigated the realm of Russian politics characterized, as it is claimed in the thesis, by patronal networks; the second question looks at Russia's political regime stability as an outcome of interest and is not sufficiently addressed in the thesis. Moreover, throughout the text the author claims to explain the rise and fall of Prigozhin, which presents, in my view, quite a stretch in interpreting what the first RQ is all about.

Second, neither of the questions is situated in a broader academic perspective, which is a necessary element to justify why the questions are worth posing and answering in the first place. Related to this, the author argues that Prigozhin is a hybrid entrepreneur of influence under the conditions of patronal politics of the Russian state, but, first, it is unclear to me how exactly this theoretical and conceptual labeling helps the author to work with the empirical data (theoretical notions seem to be used as a useful vocabulary but not as a ground to make any theoretical

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propositions) and, second, while the author generalizes quite a bit in the text through referring to these theoretical notions, I am not convinced that this case study allows for any generalizations beyond the case of Prigozhin himself.

Third and most importantly, there is no independent empirical analysis carried out in the thesis. I have not noticed any substantial differences between the contextualizing sections of the literature part of the paper and the empirical chapter as all of these are based on the secondary sources such as media reports, journalistic investigations, think-tank pieces, etc. The primary data are not analysed and this is why, I believe, there is no properly developed methodological section in the paper. This is not surprising though taking the nature of inquiry into account but it is problematic since the thesis does not attest to the skills of data collection or analysis. Another challenge posed by the topic choice is that quite often in the text words like "reportedly" or "allegedly" are used, something that does not belong to the domain of academic research. In other words, I think that this is a paper of a different genre: it is a detailed profile paper that contains no factual errors but it is not an original empirical research paper.

Finally, the author mentions on p. 30 that a substantial section of the thesis (almost nine pages out of 63 pages in total) is borrowed from the previous study conducted by the author. I wonder if this has been approved by the supervisor and / or programme convenor.