IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

Student Matriculation No.	**Glasgow** 2790194 **DCU** **Charles** **Trento**
Dissertation Title	From Shadows to Spotlight: Analyzing NSO Group's Cyber-Surveillance Legitimation Practices in Israel

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

		Late Submission Penalty *Select from drop down list*
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:*** 21,931 ***Suggested Penalty:*** *no 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: A3 [20] ***After Penalty:*** Select from drop down list

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*	Excellent
• *Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified*	Excellent
• *Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work*	Excellent
• *Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions*	Excellent
• *Application of theory and/or concepts*	Very 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*	Excellent
• *Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument*	Excellent
• *Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence*	Very Good
• *Accuracy of factual data*	Excellent
C. Academic Style This refers to your ability to write in a formal academic manner	
• *Appropriate formal and clear writing style*	Excellent
• *Accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation*	Excellent
• *Consistent and accurate referencing (including complete bibliography)*	Excellent
• *Is the dissertation free from plagiarism?*	Yes
• *Evidence of ethics approval included (if required based on methodology)*	Not required

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• *Appropriate word count*	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

This dissertation examines the legitimation strategies carried out by private surveillance companies. The focus is on the NSO Group and its approach to legitimising its strategies in Israel. The main finding of the study suggests that the NSO Group has adopted a wide range of legitimation strategies in pursuit of its broader objectives but that after the 2018 scandal surrounding its Pegasus software it has overwhelmingly adopted securitisation rather than militarisation to legitimise its practices. Overall, the dissertation is well-written, well-structured, and well-situated in the appropriate literature. The student demonstrates solid knowledge of relevant works, particularly the theoretical studies on securitisation and legitimation and the methodological studies on critical discourse analysis. The methodology employed is appropriate for answering the main research question. I particularly liked that the student provided details on how the critical discourse analysis unfolded and that the key limitations of critical discourse analysis were acknowledged. I also found the theoretical section on legitimation extremely well crafted and the core theoretical framework of securitisation as legitimation well structured. The analysis section was very detailed and identified the most common legitimising narratives adopted by the NSO Group before and after the 2018 scandal. This is where the student's analytical acumen came across very clearly. Finally, the conclusion acknowledged the limitations of the study and identified several avenues for future research. Taken together, this is a throroughly researched and critically engaging study. That said, there were a few areas for improvement: I would have liked to see a stronger rationale for the selection of the 18 documents analysed; recurrent legitimation strategies could have been identified in a table that would have shown the variation in these strategies before and after 2018; the analysis chapter ends rather abruptly on page 75. These minor suggestions aside, the student has produced a very strong dissertation. Well done!

Reviewer 2

The dissertation deals with narratives produced by the NSO group, involved in the development of the Pegasus spyware, before and after the 2018 scandal (murder of Jamal Khashoggi). It focuses on Israel and shows the changing pattern of narrative strategies that served to legitimize the company's operation.

This is an excellent dissertation. I especially appreciated the careful handling of selected empirical material, which allowed the dissertation to fully demonstrate particular strategies that led to an observable shift in the company's overall narrative strategy. A clear contributing factor to this analytical success is a robust methodology, itself anchored in a firm understanding of both securitization and legitimation theories (even if this section could be briefer).

My only critical comment pertains to visualization of the main result, surely, two screenshots from the coding software could be replaced with full tables. Given their importance, the time invested in them would not be wasted.

All in all, an excellent dissertation.

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