

## IMSIS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

<b>Student Matriculation No.</b>	<b>Glasgow</b> 2338634 <b>DCU</b> 17116503 <b>Charles</b> 565650
<b>Dissertation Title</b>	Black Swans in the Black Sea – Scenarios for the Future of NATO-Russia Relations in the Black Sea Region

### INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

<b>Reviewer 1 Initial Grade</b> <i>For internal use only</i>	<b>Reviewer 2 Initial Grade</b> <i>For internal use only</i>	<b>Late Submission Penalty</b> <i>no penalty</i>
<b>Word Count Penalty</b> (1 UofG grade point per 500 words below/above the min/max word limit +/- 10%)		
<b>Word Count:</b> 21,881 <b>Suggested Penalty:</b> no penalty		

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

<b>Final Agreed Mark.</b> (Following correspondence reviewers should list the agreed final internal grade taking before and after any penalties to be applied).	
<b>Before Penalty:</b> A2 [21]	<b>After Penalty:</b> A2 [21]

### DISSERTATION FEEDBACK

Assessment Criteria	Rating
<b>A. Structure and Development of Answer</b>	
This refers to your organisational skills and ability to construct an argument in a coherent and original manner	
• <i>Originality of topic</i>	Very Good
• <i>Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified</i>	Excellent
• <i>Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work</i>	Excellent
• <i>Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions</i>	Excellent
• <i>Application of theory and/or concepts</i>	Very Good
<b>B. Use of Source Material</b>	
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>	Excellent
• <i>Selection of relevant primary and/or secondary evidence to support argument</i>	Very Good
• <i>Critical analysis and evaluation of evidence</i>	Excellent
• <i>Accuracy of factual data</i>	Very Good
<b>C. Academic Style</b>	
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>	Yes

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- *Appropriate word count*

Yes

### ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

#### **Reviewer 1**

The student presents a piece of original research aimed at exploring the value of 'scenario analysis' for the field of Security Studies. S/he applies the analysis to the case of NATO-Russia relations in the Black Sea Region, presenting the readers with narratives of four 'possible futures' that are likely to materialize in the next 10 to 15 years.

The student engages in a thorough literature review, providing an overview of the historical evolution of 'scenario analysis' as a tool for management and planning in the corporate business to its latest application to the field of IR. The literature review is informative, balanced, and touches upon critical aspects of 'scenario analysis' and the contributions it made to each field.

The methodology section presents in details both the limits and advantages of this analytical approach; key steps for the operationalization of the method and its application to the case study are defined and thorough discussed.

The analysis is well structured, creative, and speaks to the student's ability to engage in critical thinking. Considering the large amount of possible scenarios, it is remarkable how the student availed of 'expert interviews and surveys' that s/he personally conducted to set the criteria with which s/he limited the range of possible futures subject of analysis. The discussion of critical uncertainties also reflects the qualities of the student's analytical thinking.

This is a piece of original research. It's most valuable contribution is the thorough methodological discussion that accompanies the application of 'scenario analysis' to the case chosen. Of particular value is also the illustration of the four possible 'scenarios' selected by the student, and the narrative presented.

The dissertation is extremely well organized, the use of referencing is close to faultless, and the text allows for flow of conversation, keeping the reader engaged at all times.

In light of all these merits, there is one aspect of this research that deserved further elaboration, in my view. This concerns the use of interviews and surveys as methodologies for data collection. Expert interviews were central for the student to set out the 'Critical Uncertainties' that guided the analysis, and helped him/her to identify the relevant scenarios to be discussed. However, it is not entirely clear if it was the student to identify these 'Uncertainties' prior to the interview/surveys and then confirm these with experts, or if the 'Uncertainties' emerged from the interviews with the experts. Also, if surveys were conducted, it would have been useful to understand how the questionnaire was structured. These differences bear significance in terms of methodological approach. Therefore, further elaboration on how the data were collected, and judgement made about them, would have clarified the logic and reasoning that the student applied in certain aspects of the analysis.

Lastly, it is somewhat unclear how some of the tables and figures were compiled. For instance, figure 5 page 46 - Wilson Matrix: according to what criteria were the drivers of change placed in the matrix? Is this the same distribution as in Pillkahn 2008? In either case, this should have been

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clearly explained. Or in figure 6 - morphological box - how did the student proceed to select the patterns of the different scenarios? It is clear how the range of diverse scenarios was narrowed down but not how the various elements were combined together.

Overall, an excellent dissertation.

### **Reviewer 2**

I see that I have come to the same conclusion as the first examiner of this IMSIS dissertation which was one of the most stimulating PGT dissertations I have read at Glasgow.

It is well-structured, based on extensive literature, although given the title I am surprised not to find any references to Nicholas Nassim Taleb's bestseller on the subject of predictions, and indeed more skeptical literature on prediction.

It is also a bit sad that all Russian views are only received second hand - it is thus an echo not of Russian views, but of Western views of Russian views... At least the literature is so copious that one cannot fault the student on economy of reading.

It is nevertheless well thought through and extremely well argued and presented.

Some areas are outside my own expertise such as Wilson Matrices and Pillkahn distributions or the morphological box. Nor am I sure that one really needed these, as the descriptions in simple prose are perfectly comprehensible and plausible without resorting to these complicated additional ways of explaining what the author is trying to say. But that is my own predilection for prose over anything else.

More importantly, this predilection on my part is no reason for me to disagree with the overall verdict of the first examiner or with the mark.

A2/21.