IMSISS Dissertation Feedback & Mark Sheet

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Dissertation Title	Social Media Use of Far-Right Political Parties and Right-Wing Extremist Movements: A Comparative Mixed Methods Research on Twitter

INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION GRADING

Reviewer 1 Initial Grade For internal use only	*Reviewer 2 Initial Grade* For internal use only	*Late Submission Penalty* no penalty
Word Count Penalty *(1 UofG grade point per 500 words below/above the min/max word limit +/- 10%)* **Word Count:** 21,978 **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:** B2 [16]　　　　**After Penalty:** B2 [16]

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*	Very Good
• *Coherent set of research questions and/or hypothesis identified*	Excellent
• *Appropriate methodology and evidence of effective organisation of work*	Very Good
• *Logically structured argument and flow of ideas reflecting research questions*	Excellent
• *Application of theory and/or concepts*	Excellent
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*	Very Good
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*	Very Good
• *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)*	Yes

• *Appropriate word count*	Yes

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Reviewer 1

The dissertation deals with right-wing political parties and extreme-right movements focusing on the diffrences in their usage of social media. It's a solid piece of research that is very well designed and executed. I highly appreciate the methodological depth as well as relevant conceptual anchoring. Further, it should be noted that all three parts of the dissertation (theoretical, conceptual, and emprical) draw on a rich source base. That said, I would like to raise the following critical points, which, however, should not undermine the overall excellent appraisal of the dissertation. First, the proposed dependency between the independent and dependent variables is largely unsustainable due to tying together incongruent phenomena. As a result, however laudable, the statistical analysis cannot fully assume the supposed role withing the proposed research design. The qualitative part appears to be more convincing, however, I would argue that the method should be framed more as thematic analysis than CDA (as there's no critical aspect present). Overall, this is an outstanding thesis also providing an counterintuitive anwers the the posited research questions.

Reviewer 2

This dissertation develops an interesting research topic into a clear and well-defined research question. The adoption of the mixed-methods approach is highly appropriate for the research question. The research design is clearly developed and explained. Perhaps the most commendable aspect of the dissertation is the impressive data collection - and coding - effort. There are, however, several critical points - especially around the rigour and analysis - that limit the dissertation and, indeed, raise questions about the findings:

•   Concepts: the core concepts underlying the dissertation are not thoroughly developed and, as such, are unclear in their application. The distinctions between movements, parties, institutions, etc tend to be somewhat flexible, leading to a lack of clarity in what is being examined. And whilst the dissertation notes issues in chapter 1 that 'far-right' is difficult to define and does attempt to clarify this, the concept is still somewhat fluid throughout the dissertation, especially in the qualitative analysis sections. In the discussion of political power in chapter 1, my sense is that the author is referring to institutionalised political power, but does not recognise or discuss the other forms of political powers. Indeed, the 'movements' must have some degree of some sort of political power, otherwise the examination is less relevant and interesting. In general, the conceptual discussion jumps from topic to topic.

•   The case selection is explicitly ad hoc and driven by the author's linguistic abilities. At this level (PGT) of work, that seems fine and could be defensible. However, the justification of UKIP is contains several (substantial) errors. UKIP had 2 MPs several years ago. It never had a member in the House of Lords. UKIP did not have (and did not have for several years) an MP at the time of the analysis. On the other hand, the author could point out that it did do quite well in the last European elections (but that undermines the point made that the party has struggled to stay relevant since the Brexit Referendum. The descriptions of UKIP provided both note that UKIP used significant anti-immigrant rhetoric, but then asserts UKIP mainly focused on anti-elite rhetoric. There is an inconsistency here.

•   Dates of the study: surely the impending European Elections would influence some of the online rhetoric. The assertion that the 29 March 2019 cut-off date makes the election irrelevant does not pass the face validity criterion.

- The data are highly skewed. I was surprised that this was not addressed more directly. This would raise some issues for the statistical analysis.
- Coding: I would have expected to see a more clearly defined coding frame, perhaps in an appendix. As it is, the descriptions of how the coding was carried out, and the frames used, are rather thin and lacking in detail, especially the specific Twitter feeds used, which raises the next point.
- Data integrity: I am not convinced that the data collected are what is represented in the dissertation's description. In the qualitative analysis (pg 62) a Tweet from the PVV party is quoted. The Twitter handle cited is '@geertwilderspvv'. A quick look at Twitter reveals that this seems to be the Twitter feed for Geert Wilders, not the PVV party. Yes, Wilders is the party leader, but that is distinct from the official party Twitter feed as described in the dissertation. To be comparable, the dissertation should be examining, say, Nigel Farage's Twitter feed instead of the official UKIP feed. Similarly, in a quotation for the EDL, the Twitter handle '@EDLLondon' is cited. Again, a look at Twitter reveals that this seems to be the Twitter feed of an EDL supporter. There are also Twitter feeds called, for example, @EDLLuton and looking at the EDL website does not reveal or confirm an official Twitter feed for the group. Thus, there seems to be a mixture of data sources used: official party Twitter feeds (e.g., UKIP), party leader's Twitter feed (e.g., Geert Wilders), official group feeds (e.g., Pegida ?) and unofficial group supporter feed (e.g., EDLLondon). This, unfortunately, would seem to undermine the analysis as there is not a like for like comparison.