

## **REVIEW**

by Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor,  
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on the qualification thesis of **Wu QI** on the topic:

“Economic inequality of the PRC as an imperative for the formation of social  
stratification of the population”,

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of knowledge  
29 “International Relations” in specialty 292 “International Economic Relations”

**Relevance of the qualification thesis topic.** Economic inequality in the People’s Republic of China has become one of the key factors shaping the processes of social stratification, particularly under the conditions of rapid economic growth, urbanization, and the market reforms launched in the late 1970s. The country’s transition from a planned to a socialist market economy transformed China into the world’s second-largest economy; however, this process was accompanied by deepening disparities in the distribution of income, wealth, and opportunities. These inequalities are manifested in the significant gap between urban and rural areas, regional imbalances between coastal and inland provinces, as well as class-based differences that determine access to education, healthcare, and social mobility.

The study of the relationship between economic inequality and social stratification is particularly relevant in the context of China’s dual objectives – achieving “common prosperity” and addressing global challenges such as trade tensions, technological shifts, and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic inequality serves as a fundamental determinant in shaping social stratification, as it defines individuals’ positions within the social hierarchy, influences intergenerational mobility, and transforms power relations. Measures aimed at income redistribution, including progressive taxation and social welfare programs, are crucial for reducing social disparities and ensuring social harmony, which underscores the practical significance of this issue for public policy.

The study of economic inequality as an imperative of social stratification in the PRC is of exceptional importance, as this issue directly affects social stability, political legitimacy, and the prospects for sustainable development. The deepening of inequality in the context of China's pursuit of high-quality growth highlights the need to analyze the processes through which it is transformed into stable social hierarchies, from the formation of the middle class to the emergence of marginalized groups.

**Connection to scientific programs, plans, and topics.** The research was carried out in accordance with the research plans of the West Ukrainian National University, in particular: the fundamental scientific research on the topic "The Concept of Recovery and Green Reconstruction of Ukraine" (state registration number 0124U000003); the implementation of the international project (Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module) on the topic "European Inclusive Circular Economy: Post-War and Post-Pandemic Module for Ukraine" (registration number 101085640); the contractual scientific research on the topic "Formation of the Ecological Brand of the Company in Foreign Markets" (Agreement No. MEV-37-2024 dated 25.04.2024). The results of the research were used by the logistics company Yumen Shunte Logistics Co., Ltd. (Certificate JUI No. 22 dated 08.05.2025) and the media agency Gansu ZOSE Culture Advertising Media Co., Ltd. (Certificate JUI No. 24 dated 09.05.2025), which contain the author's proposals regarding the reduction of economic inequality and the mechanism of inclusive economic development in the PRC.

**Personal contribution of the author to the scientific results.** The qualification thesis is an independently conducted scientific study in which the applicant personally proposed a conceptual model for reducing economic inequality in the PRC, integrating three key components: income redistribution, inclusive growth, and regional balance. The applicant is the author of the scientific ideas of the study, the theoretical developments and generalizations, the choice of research methods, the conclusions and recommendations, as well as the practical implementation of the research results. The applicant's contribution to jointly published works is specified in the list of publications; the dissertation includes only those ideas that personally belong to the author. The personal contribution of the applicant is sufficient.

**Degree of justification of scientific propositions, conclusions, and recommendations.** The qualification thesis is characterized by a logical structure, the

reliability and validity of the formulated conclusions and recommendations, as well as the comprehensive use of bibliographic sources, scientific works of leading economists, statistical data and analytical materials of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the National Bureau of Statistics of China, other international organizations and analytical centers, national development strategies, legislative acts in the field of social equality, scientific articles and monographs, as well as materials from open Internet sources. The author's use of information sources is essential for confirming the reliability of the scientific hypotheses formulated and the applied research tasks addressed. The reliability of the conducted study is ensured by the application of general philosophical and general scientific methods of understanding phenomena and processes.

The purpose of the research corresponds to the topic of the qualification thesis. The object and subject of the study are sufficiently disclosed in the structure and content of the dissertation. Familiarization with its content and structure demonstrates a comprehensive approach to the research conducted by the author, aimed at solving an important scientific task, which consists in examining the impact of economic inequality in the PRC on the formation and transformation of social stratification, identifying its structural mechanisms and consequences for social stability, as well as developing strategic recommendations aimed at reducing inequality and promoting inclusive socio-economic development.

The validity and reliability of the obtained scientific results, conclusions, and recommendations are confirmed by a sufficient number of publications on the topic of the dissertation in periodical editions, as well as by the discussion of the obtained results at international and national scientific-practical conferences. The author's scientific works adequately reflect her personal contribution to solving theoretical and applied problems of the development of the genesis of economic inequality and social stratification of the population.

Thus, the content and structure of the thesis fully correspond to its title, purpose, and research objectives. The scientific statements are presented consistently and logically, while the conclusions and recommendations are based on the results of the author's research, which have been properly tested and rely on a variety of information sources.

**Degree of scientific novelty of the qualification thesis results.** The most significant results, which reveal the personal contribution of the applicant to the development of the researched topic and characterize its novelty, consist of a set of interrelated scientific developments and proposals. Familiarization with the content of the dissertation, as well as the author's main scientific works, allowed the identification of the most important theoretical and methodological positions, conclusions, and recommendations that demonstrate scientific novelty, reflect the author's scientific contribution to solving the research task concerning the study of the impact of economic inequality in the PRC on the formation and transformation of social stratification, the identification of its structural mechanisms and consequences for social stability, as well as the development of strategic recommendations aimed at reducing inequality and promoting inclusive socio-economic development.

The applicant formulated a number of scientific and practical tasks in accordance with the chosen purpose of the dissertation, which consists in studying the impact of economic inequality in the PRC on the formation and transformation of social stratification, identifying its structural mechanisms and consequences for social stability, as well as developing strategic recommendations aimed at reducing disparities and promoting inclusive socio-economic development. The implementation of these tasks made it possible to obtain results presented in the author's proposals and recommendations, which demonstrate scientific novelty and have practical significance. The achievement of the formulated tasks was facilitated by the use of a broad scientific and methodological toolkit, which allowed the conclusions of the dissertation to be scientifically substantiated and confirmed their applicability in future research and practical activities.

The scientific results aimed at improving theoretical and methodological positions and developing scientific and practical recommendations for reducing inequality and promoting inclusive socio-economic development in the PRC include:

1. Developed the conceptual model of income redistribution, inclusive growth and regional balance for the PRC; which redistributes income through vertical instruments and horizontal transfers; ensures inclusive growth through access to employment, human capital, inclusive infrastructure, support for entrepreneurship, innovation and a green economy; provides regional balance through fiscal equalization

mechanisms, regional development programs, connectivity infrastructure, local capacity development, and local interventions; and ensures increased local incomes and access to services, reduced inequality (urban-rural, regional), enhanced fiscal capacity and legitimacy, and sustainable, equitable growth dynamics.

2. Improved the mechanism for inclusive economic development in the PRC which includes instruments for strengthening social safety nets and targeted welfare programs that in combination with instruments for improving the progressiveness of the tax system give the ways for expanding access to quality education and vocational training and are focused on the institutional reform of the Hukou system to reduce urban-rural gaps and enhancing participation of vulnerable groups in economic activities.

3. Improved the roadmap for strategic reforms to reduce stratification in Chinese society that addresses short-, medium-, and long-term policy priorities for the purpose of coordinating regional policy and inter-provincial resource equalisation which involves digital transformation and smart governance to improve service delivery which contains a system for monitoring and evaluation system for anti-inequality initiatives which aims at international cooperation and adaptation of best practices in inequality reduction.

4. Improved the methodics to assessment of state policies and institutional responses to economic inequality; performed cluster analysis of economic inequality across countries, using indicators such as tax-to-GDP ratios, revenue composition, and social spending, that positioning China among moderate-inequality economies alongside the U.S., Mexico, and Turkey; done regression analysis of GDP growth to the Gini Index which revealed a moderate negative correlation according to which higher growth tends to reduce inequality, but not decisively; performed comparative analysis of crisis measures and inequality impact emphasized that growth alone is insufficient to ensure equity, instead, proactive redistributive measures are essential for achieving inclusive development and addressing long-term structural disparities; established that the PRC relies heavily on consumption-based taxation, primarily VAT, and substantial social security contributions, which fund large-scale infrastructure and targeted social programs but this system is less redistributive than welfare-state models in advanced economies.



5. Further development of the research analysis of dynamics and structure of income and wealth inequality in the PRC in particular China's transformation from an agrarian economy into a global industrial and technological hub combined with persistent disparities across regions, urban and rural areas, occupations, education levels, and gender; evaluated poverty reduction programs and their effect on inequality in the PRC including the "Go West" strategy, the New Socialist Countryside program, and "Common Prosperity" agenda, aimed at mitigating socioeconomic imbalances.

6. Further development of the research of empirical indicators and trends of social stratification of Chinese society; traced the evolution of social structure from politically defined categories in Maoist China to economically based strata following Deng Xiaoping's reforms; established socio-economic characteristics and trends, in particular the access to education, health services, and housing by social strata in PRC; proved that Chinese society is characterized by elites, a growing middle class, and vulnerable lower groups such as migrants and informal workers; and established that middle class has become a driver of consumption-led growth but remains highly dependent on property wealth and exposed to market fluctuations.

7. Further development of the conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of economic inequality, in particular a typology of economic inequality, including income, wealth, opportunity, regional, global, intergenerational, gender and social group disparities; analysis of key economic theories that explain the origins and persistence of inequality; research of indicators and indices for measuring inequality as essential instruments for empirical research.

8. Further development of the theoretical approaches to social stratification in the context of economic inequality; established causal mechanisms linking economic inequality and stratification: access to education, labor market segmentation, spatial segregation, political power, cultural reproduction, and health disparities; researched social mobility and barriers to upward movement in stratified societies caused by structural and cultural factors.

9. Further development of the institutional and structural determinants of inequality in the PRC; assessed the role of globalisation and the reconfiguration of Chinese stratification in particular influence of globalization and technological change on economic dynamism and deepen stratification through the creation of new forms of

exclusion; described regional disparities and government policies of “balanced development” in the PRC, in particular analyzed the inequality across multiple dimensions – sectoral, regional, and socio-demographic.

Thus, the main scientific provisions, results, and conclusions of Wu QI’s qualification thesis demonstrate significant scientific novelty and a sufficient degree of justification, the reliability of which has been confirmed by the researcher.

### **Completeness of publication of the main provisions of the qualification thesis.**

Wu QI’s qualification thesis is an independent, comprehensive, and substantive scientific research. The main provisions and results of the dissertation are presented in 8 scientific papers with a total volume of 2,63 printed sheets, including 3 articles in Ukrainian scientific editions, 1 article in a foreign periodical, and 4 papers of approbation nature.

The dissertation’s provisions, which constitute its scientific novelty, have been fully presented and discussed at 4 international and national scientific-practical conferences. The qualification thesis is an independently conducted scientific study, in which the author personally developed theoretical and methodological provisions as well as practical recommendations aimed at reducing inequality and promoting inclusive socio-economic development in the PRC. The scientific ideas, theoretical developments and generalizations, conclusions, and recommendations submitted for defense by the candidate, which are also reflected in her publications, belong personally to her.

**Theoretical and practical significance of the results and recommendations for their use.** The theoretical research conducted provides a methodological foundation for examining economic inequality, social stratification of the population, and potential political measures aimed at reducing economic disparities. The main theoretical provisions of the qualification thesis have been developed to the level of methodological guidelines, which can be applied in the practical activities of state authorities and local self-government bodies.

The practical significance lies in the proposals concerning the development of a conceptual model for reducing economic inequality; the elaboration of a mechanism for inclusive economic development; and the formulation of a roadmap for strategic reforms aimed at lowering the level of stratification in Chinese society.

The scientific results of the research, developed into practical findings and recommendations, are confirmed by the certificate of implementation certificate issued by Yumen Shunte Logistics Co., Ltd. (Certificate JIU No. 22 from May 08, 2025) and by Gansu ZOSE Culture Advertising Media Co., Ltd. (Certificate JIU No. 24 from May 09, 2025).

**Assessment of the dissertation structure.** Wu QI's qualification thesis is characterized by a coherent, logical, and comprehensive structure. All sections are interconnected, ensuring a holistic understanding of the researched problem and allowing for the evaluation of the author's scientific contribution and the extent to which the formulated tasks have been addressed in relation to the topic, goal, and objectives of the research.

The formatting of the thesis fully complies with the requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for qualification scientific theses for obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy degree, according to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine's Order dated January 12, 2017, No. 40 "On approval of Requirements to design of dissertation".

The qualification thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, a list of references, and annexes. The total volume of the thesis is 200 pages. The thesis includes 10 tables, 23 figures, and 2 annexes on 4 pages. The reference list contains 194 sources.

From a content perspective, the dissertation is a completed scientific work, with results that are both scientifically significant and practically valuable. The conclusions, proposals, and recommendations formulated by the applicant based on the dissertation contain elements of scientific novelty and are valuable for the development of theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of economic inequality, social stratification of the population, and avenues for policy adjustments aimed at reducing economic inequality.

**Language and style of presentation.** Wu QI's's qualification thesis is prepared in formal English, based on general scientific and economic terminology. The style of the text is scientific due to the use of linguistic compression, the logical sequence in presenting the content of the dissertation's paragraphs and chapters, the unambiguous interpretation of definitions and categories, the semantic interconnection of tasks,



scientific novelty, final provisions and conclusions, the objectivity in comparing conducted scientific studies, and the formation of the author's position in the field of international economic relations, particularly regarding the study of economic inequality, social stratification of the population, and avenues for policy adjustments aimed at reducing economic inequality.

**Compliance of the qualification thesis with the specialty passport.** The qualification thesis by Wu QI on the topic “Economic inequality of the PRC as an imperative for the formation of social stratification of the population” fully meets the established requirements of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, specifically: 1) Specialty Passport 292 – “International Economic Relations”, the field of knowledge 29 – “International Relations”; 2) the requirements established by the “On the Approval of the Procedure for Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Cancellation of the Decision of a One-time Specialized Academic Council of a Higher Education Institution, Research Institution on Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy” accepted by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated January 12, 2022, No. 44; 3) the fundamental requirements for the design of qualification thesis.

**Absence (presence) of academic integrity violations.** The scientific results of the dissertation were obtained personally by the author. From the scientific works published individually, only those ideas and provisions that were personally developed by the author have been used in the dissertation.

No violations of academic integrity have been found in Wu QI's dissertation. The dissertation contains references to the relevant sources of information, provides reliable information about the methods used and the results of the conducted research, and complies with the legislation on copyright and related rights. The qualification thesis has successfully passed a check for textual borrowings using the StrikePlagiarism online service. All of this allows us to conclude that the author has adhered to the requirements and rules of academic integrity in the preparation of the qualification thesis.

**Critical remarks to the dissertation.** Alongside the important scientific achievements, the positive evaluation of the content, and the formatting of the

qualification thesis, it is necessary to note certain remarks and debatable points, in particular:

1. The study of the institutional determinants of inequality in the PRC (pp. 47-50) highlights the effectiveness of the “Hukou” system; however, the assessment of its evolution after the 2014 reforms is insufficiently in-depth, and the data do not fully reflect the current efforts toward urban integration. This temporal gap may overlook the long-term effects of the system on mobility, ignoring local variations in government policy. Consequently, the institutional analysis appears more static and less relevant to contemporary challenges.

2. The structural determinants of inequality in the PRC (pp. 55-63) are well articulated; however, the analysis does not sufficiently integrate environmental factors, such as climate-induced resource disparities affecting rural populations in the PRC. This gap reduces the comprehensive view of structural impacts, which is particularly relevant given China’s vulnerability to environmental challenges. The conclusions drawn from the analysis could have highlighted these interconnections and strengthened the author’s core arguments.

3. The dissertation provides a qualitative assessment of the PRC’s government policy from the perspective of institutionalism’s impact on economic inequality (pp. 98-105); however, it overlooks the shortcomings and obstacles in implementing poverty alleviation programs, in particular the factor of corruption. As a result, the analysis lacks a balanced view regarding the potential overestimation of the effectiveness of government policy. This analysis could be strengthened by including governance indicators for a comprehensive evaluation of institutional barriers.

4. The dissertation develops a conceptual model for reducing economic inequality in the PRC (pp. 117-125), which is quite innovative; however, it overlooks the role of the private sector in public-private partnerships. As a result, the narrow focus on government initiatives may ignore the synergy of market participants, limiting the practical applicability of the model. Expanding the conceptual model by incorporating hybrid mechanisms could enhance its practical implementation.

These remarks are of a discursive nature and do not diminish the value of the qualification thesis regarding economic inequality in the PRC as an imperative for the formation of social stratification of the population.

**General evaluation of the qualification thesis its compliance with established requirements.** Wu QI's qualification thesis on the topic "Economic inequality of the PRC as an imperative for the formation of social stratification of the population", submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, represents a complete independent study containing novel, scientifically grounded theoretical and applied results in the field of economic inequality in the PRC as an imperative for shaping social stratification. The results obtained by the researcher, as well as the proposed new solutions, recommendations, and conclusions, are reliable and comprehensively substantiated. The dissertation has been executed at a high professional level, and its content corresponds to the chosen research topic and the profile of specialty 292 – International Economic Relations.

In terms of scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance of the results obtained, structure, language, and style of presentation, Wu QI's qualification thesis on the topic "Economic inequality of the PRC as an imperative for the formation of social stratification of the population" meets the requirements of "On the Approval of the Procedure for Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy and the Cancellation of the Decision of a One-time Specialized Academic Council of a Higher Education Institution, Research Institution on Awarding the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy" approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated January 12, 2022, No. 44 and the requirements of the Order of Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine "On approval of requirements for dissertation design" No. 40 of January 12, 2017 (with amendments from May 31, 2019). The author, Wu QI, deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 292 "International Economic Relations" in the field of knowledge 29 "International Relations".

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