

REVIEW

of the reviewer **Sokhatskyi Oleksandr Yuriiovych**,
PhD, Associate Professor of the Department of International Economic Relations of
the West Ukrainian National University,
on the qualification thesis of **Wang YONGSHUN** on the topic:
“One Belt One Road as Global Inclusive Growth Strategy of PRC”, submitted for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in specialty 292 “International Economic Relations”

Relevance of the topic of the qualification thesis

The relevance of topic lies in the fact that the “One Belt One Road” Initiative has become one of the most ambitious strategies of nowadays, shaping a new model of international economic cooperation. For China, it serves as a key instrument for advancing economic expansion, strengthening geopolitical influence, and ensuring long-term inclusive growth. Through infrastructure development, expansion of trade routes, and investment flows, China seeks not only to stimulate its own economy, but also to reduce internal imbalances between regions, integrate remote provinces into global markets, and strengthen its role as a center of global development.

For participating countries, the relevance of this research stems from the opportunities to access investment, advanced technologies, and new markets. The “One Belt One Road” Initiative has the potential to foster modernization of transport, energy, and digital infrastructure, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. At the same time, it is essential for many nations to understand the associated risks, including financial dependency, debt burdens, China’s political influence, and the environmental impact of large-scale projects.

Thus, researching the “One Belt One Road” Initiative as a global strategy for inclusive growth is crucial for both sides: for China, it provides an analysis of a tool to build a new economic architecture and strengthen competitiveness; for participating countries, it enables the assessment of opportunities and challenges associated with integrating into this development model. This makes the research topic highly relevant in the context of creating a balanced and equitable system of international economic relations.

In this light, Wang Yongshun's qualification work, which aims to provide a scientific and practical exploration of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative, is relevant and important for understanding pathways to address global disparities.

The submitted dissertation is part of the research conducted at West Ukrainian National University, specifically: the fundamental state-funded research project "Concept of Recovery and Green Reconstruction of Ukraine" (state registration number 0124U000003); and the implementation of the international project (Jean Monnet Module, Erasmus+) on the topic "European Inclusive Circular Economy: Post-War and Post-Pandemic Module for Ukraine (registration number 101085640).

Degree of justification of the scientific provisions, conclusions, and recommendations formulated in the qualification thesis

The dissertation is characterized by a clear structure, well-defined objectives and tasks, and a substantiated methodological foundation for their implementation. The conclusions and recommendations, formulated based on the analysis of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative, are well-supported by evidence and hold practical value.

The author skillfully integrates general scientific and specialized methods, including theoretical analysis, historical comparisons, empirical research, and content analysis, which facilitate the achievement of all set objectives. The methodological framework of the study is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative tools to investigate inclusive mechanisms of global development.

Key methods include content analysis of official Chinese policy documents, such as white papers, government speeches, agreements, and reports from leading institutions (notably the NDRC and the Ministry of Commerce of China), as well as data from the official BRI-portal. This approach enabled the identification of the Initiative's core principles and institutional mechanisms. Additionally, thematic case studies from regions such as Central Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe allow for an examination of the Initiative's varied impacts across different geographical contexts.

Regression analysis was allowed to quantitatively assess the relationship between trade relations with China and the Human Development Index in selected

countries. Economic indicators from international sources, including the World Bank, UNCTAD, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, were also analyzed.

The high level of scientific elaboration of the topic, the complexity of the analysis and the interdisciplinary approach allow us to conclude that the topic is well-developed. The scientific results were approved at scientific conferences in Ukraine and abroad, and were also published in Ukrainian and foreign scientific journals. Wang Yongshun's dissertation demonstrates the applicant's thorough preparation and his ability to conduct independent research on relevant international topics, and also meets the requirements for scientific qualification and can be positively assessed.

Structure and volume of the qualification thesis

The qualification thesis is written in business English, contains annotations in Ukrainian and English, an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, a list of sources used and appendices.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, the "One Belt One Road" Initiative is examined within the broader context of globalization and regional economic integration, emphasizing its role as a mechanism for promoting cross-border cooperation and policy coordination. The chapter analyzes the core connotations of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative, including its focus on openness, mutual benefit, and shared development. It also discusses the alignment of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative with existing global development frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, reinforcing the argument that the "One Belt One Road" Initiative serves as both a complement and an alternative to traditional development models.

This chapter further provides a comprehensive third-party analysis of the institutional architecture of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative, highlighting its multilevel governance model that integrates centralized strategic coordination with regional cooperation frameworks and adaptive implementation mechanisms.

Overall, the chapter establishes a conceptual lens through which to understand the inclusive ambitions of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative. It lays the intellectual groundwork necessary for evaluating the Initiative's practical operations, setting the

stage for the empirical and policy-oriented discussions in subsequent chapters. By establishing a theoretical link between the “One Belt One Road” Initiative and inclusive growth, the chapter frames the Initiative not only as a geopolitical or economic endeavor but also as a normative model for global cooperation in the XXI century.

The second chapter of the dissertation provides a critical assessment of the risks and challenges encountered during the implementation of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative. A significant issue is the uneven distribution of global resources, which complicates efforts to achieve inclusive outcomes. The chapter also discusses how some countries adopt hedging strategies to navigate competing global influences, balancing relations with China and other major powers. The resurgence of geopolitical tensions and cultural differences adds further layers of complexity to cooperative efforts. Additionally, economic risks, including potential investment instability and financial fragility, pose significant challenges to the sustainability of “One Belt One Road” Initiative projects. Environmental concerns are increasingly prominent, as large-scale infrastructure development often intersects with sensitive ecosystems, necessitating careful management to avoid adverse impacts. These interconnected challenges underscore the need for comprehensive, forward-looking strategies that prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and sustainability.

By integrating China’s domestic policies, regional case studies, quantitative regression outcomes, and risk analysis, this chapter constructs a detailed picture of the operational realities of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative. It emphasizes that while the Initiative presents significant opportunities for fostering inclusive development and connectivity, realizing its full potential depends on navigating complex, context-specific conditions and effectively managing a broad spectrum of challenges.

The chapter highlights the diversity of national conditions, development objectives, and governance capacities among “One Belt One Road” Initiative participating countries, underscoring the need for localized cooperation models and flexible implementation mechanisms. It includes a regression analysis of selected “One Belt One Road” Initiative participating countries, examining the correlation between

trade volumes with China and changes in Human Development Index indicators over the past decade.

The third chapter of the dissertation explores the future of inclusive growth within the “One Belt One Road” Initiative framework, focusing on its economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Enhancing infrastructure connectivity is deemed critical for expanding equitable economic opportunities by facilitating trade and investment flows. Social inclusion is achieved through improved access to education, employment, and healthcare, aimed at reducing inequality and promoting human development. Environmental inclusivity involves advancing green infrastructure projects that prioritize ecological sustainability. The chapter also addresses the growing role of the digital economy, emphasizing how expanded access to digital technologies can unlock new growth potential in Initiative countries-members.

Thus, this chapter offers a comprehensive and forward-looking analysis of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative’s strategic impact and prospective development. It underscores the necessity of adaptive governance structures, environmental responsibility, prudent financial management, and social justice as foundational elements for transforming the Initiative into a sustainable and inclusive platform that significantly contributes to global sustainable development in the coming years.

The totality of the scientific propositions, conclusions, and recommendations presented in the qualification work, along with their practical significance, supports the conclusion that Wang Yongshun’s dissertation is complete, coherent, and well-structured.

Assessment of the scientific novelty of the provisions and results obtained in the qualification thesis

The results substantiated in the qualification work hold both theoretical and practical significance, contributing to the scientific novelty of the dissertation. These include:

- for the first time developed the model of inclusive development of the PRC within the framework of the implementation of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative, which is based on the strategic correction of the future trajectory of economic

development in accordance with the change in the vectors of inclusive growth, with an emphasis on multilateral governance, green development, debt sustainability, development of the digital economy, social inclusion and coordination with the global sustainable development goals;

- improved the empirical benchmark of the concept of economic development through an in-depth study of the trajectory of the PRC's domestic inclusive development, with an emphasis on poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability and evolution in the conditions of the “new normal”, which allowed to strengthen the understanding of inclusive growth in conditions of uncertainty;

- improved the structured roadmap for the future development trajectory of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative by strengthening the focus on “green” development, multilateral governance and digital transformation, which allowed to outline the mechanism for benefit distribution and the strategic toolkit of state policy in the context of sustainable and inclusive global development;

- improved the methodology for analyzing inclusive growth by conducting interregional assessments of the countries participating in the “One Belt One Road” Initiative using econometric regression and case studies, which helped to identify the heterogeneity of development problems and develop a practical understanding of regional adaptation mechanisms and the framework for their cooperation;

- further developed the ideological and structural connotations of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative by deepening the theoretical foundations within the framework of globalization and regional integration, which allowed to narrow the theoretical categorization of the initiative in the global economic discourse;

- further developed the comprehensive risk assessment system by categorizing key threats, including resource imbalances, financial instability, geopolitical backlash and pressures on resilience, which made it possible to substantiate the importance of the strategy of inclusive growth within the framework of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative;

- further developed the geopolitical foundations of “economic corridors”, by analyzing them as institutionalized channels of transnational communication and strategic cooperation, which made it possible to rethink these corridors not only as

logistical routes, but also as tools of global economic governance and regional integration.

Significance of the research results for science and practice

The theoretical value of the qualification work lies in the development of key scientific approaches that can serve as a foundation for formulating practical recommendations to enhance the sustainability of project implementation, ensure equitable benefit distribution, and foster effective institutional interaction in both China and partner countries.

The practical significance of Wang Yongshun's dissertation lies in the potential application of its conclusions and recommendations to establish more equitable, transparent, and balanced formats of cooperation within the framework of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative, involving government entities, the academic community, and international organizations.

The research findings, developed into practical outcomes and recommendations, are utilized in scientific research, educational processes, and the institutional environment of research institutions, and are supported by certificates of implementation issued by Jiuquan Yuanda Agriculture Co., Ltd. (Certificate JIU No. 17, dated April 28, 2025) and the Jiuquan Vocational and Technical University. These (Certificate JIU No. 27, dated April 27, 2025).

Completeness of the presentation of scientific provisions, conclusions, and recommendations formulated in the dissertation in published papers relevant to the dissertation topic.

The main provisions of the qualification thesis, which have scientific novelty, are substantively and convincingly revealed in the published papers. Based on the main results of the dissertation, 11 scientific papers have been published, including 3 articles – in scientific professional editions of Ukraine, 2 articles – in foreign scientific periodical journals; and 6 publications have been published in other publications of an

approbatory nature based on conference materials. The quantity and volume of the edited papers grant the author the right to publicly defend the dissertation.

Assessment of the structure of the qualification thesis, language and style of presentation of the material

The content of the qualification thesis corresponds to the defined purpose and objectives of the research, reveals the topic of the thesis, indicates its integrity and completeness. The qualification thesis is written in English in compliance with all the requirements for its scientific style.

Absence (presence) of violations of academic integrity

All scientific contributions presented in the qualification thesis were independently developed by the author. From co-authored publications, only those conclusions and ideas directly attributable to the researcher were included in the text. The evaluation of adherence to academic integrity principles in Wang Yongshun's thesis revealed no violations: all sources used are properly cited, research methods and results are presented truthfully, and the requirements of copyright and related rights legislation have been fully met. Thus, it can be affirmed that the researcher has adhered to all standards of academic integrity. The dissertation was checked for unauthorized textual borrowing using the Turnitin Similarity service, and the results confirmed its originality.

Discussion points and remarks on the dissertation

Wang Yongshun's qualification thesis is executed at a sufficiently high scientific level, however, there are some comments that are debatable:

1. the thesis shows the aspiration of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative to balance the inequality of global social inclusive development and ensure multidimensional inclusive growth. However, the paper has limited integration of institutional economics (pp. 26-29), in particular, the theoretical part focuses mainly on human capital and inclusive growth models, but hardly takes into account

institutional economics approaches. As a result, without taking into account the quality of institutions, the explanation of the greater benefits received by some countries participating in the “One Belt One Road” Initiative compared to others is not deep enough;

2. in subchapter 1.3, a geopolitical assessment of economic corridors is carried out within the framework of the theory of global economic relations. However, the analysis of economic corridors (pp. 48-58) focuses on the geopolitical role and does not focus on empirical examples of successful and unsuccessful projects, which makes the conclusions more theoretical and less practical;

3. the thesis analyzes the inclusive development of the countries participating in the “One Belt One Road” Initiative, in particular, a regression analysis is made between trade and HDI indicators over the last decade. However, the author does not take into account the dynamic modeling of long-term effects (pp. 86-91), in particular, dynamic effects and time lags are not taken into account, which misses the effect of infrastructure investments, which often have a delayed and cumulative impact on human development indicators;

4. exploring the ways of the future development of the “One Belt One Road” Initiative, the thesis analyzes the interaction of geopolitical and financial risks (pp. 142-146), in particular, the author focuses on risk management and project quality control, as well as solving the problems of debt risks and fiscal sustainability. However, the risk analysis considers debt sustainability and geopolitical challenges separately, without taking into account their interaction. In reality, political tensions can directly affect the cost of borrowing, credit ratings, and the ability of countries to meet their debt obligations.

Overall, despite certain shortcomings, the dissertation demonstrates a high level of analytical maturity, a comprehensive approach, and significant scientific merit. The issues raised are of considerable importance for further research in the fields of international economic relations and global development.

General conclusion and evaluation of the qualification thesis

Wang Yongshun's dissertation on the topic "One Belt One Road as Global Inclusive Growth Strategy of PRC" is a complete result of scientific research, in which the "One Belt One Road" Initiative is seen as a multifaceted implementation model that adapts the direction of China's economic development in line with the trends of inclusive growth.

In terms of content and professional orientation, the qualification thesis corresponds to the specialty 292 "International Economic Relations" in the field of knowledge 29 "International Relations", and in terms of quality and level of theoretical and practical developments, it meets the requirements for a PhD thesis.

In general, the Wang Yongshun's dissertation on the topic "One Belt One Road as Global Inclusive Growth Strategy of PRC" meets the requirements of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated January 12, 2022, No. 44 "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" in terms of content, level of scientific novelty, substantiation of scientific provisions and recommendations. The author, Wang Yongshun, deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 292 "International Economic Relations".

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