

REVIEW

of the opponent **Yatsenko Olha Mykolaivna**,

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor, Professor of International Trade and
Marketing Department, Kyiv National Economic University
named after Vadym Hetman.,

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

In the context of profound transformations of the world order, the topic of this study, which considers the “One Belt One Road” initiative as a strategy for global inclusive growth, acquires both theoretical and practical significance. Growing inequality in the level of well-being both between and within countries has become a key challenge to global stability. Global supply chains, long considered efficient and reliable, have proven vulnerable and unstable in the face of pandemics, geopolitical conflicts and climate shocks.

Against this background, China’s rapid and sustained economic growth stands as a compelling alternative to Western-centered development models. China’s experience offers other approaches to modernization, infrastructure development and cross-border cooperation. The combination of these trends underlines the urgency of rethinking global development strategies through the prism of inclusivity, sustainability and long-term viability.

One of the most worrying consequences of these processes is the persistent and growing regional underdevelopment. The benefits of global economic growth remain unevenly distributed, with many countries in the Global South remaining on the periphery of global value chains. A key driver of this inequality is the chronic lack of infrastructure in many parts of the world. Underdeveloped transport networks, outdated

logistics systems and limited digital connectivity make it difficult for less developed countries to fully participate in international trade.

Weak physical infrastructure has directly led to the formation of fragile and unstable supply chains that are particularly vulnerable to disruptions caused by pandemics, natural disasters and geopolitical conflicts. Countries with underdeveloped infrastructure have suffered disproportionate losses during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they have been unable to provide medical supplies, support agricultural exports or transition to digital economic models.

Given the above, we can conclude that qualification work, the purpose of which is to scientifically substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations of one belt one road initiative as global inclusive growth strategy of PRC and the development its multi-faceted implementation model that amend the future economic development trajectory based on changes in the inclusive growth vector, was carried out on a relevant topic.

The dissertation submitted for defense is part of the scientific research of the Western Ukrainian National University, in particular: fundamental state budget funding research “Concept of recovery and green reconstruction of Ukraine” (state registration number 0124U000003); implementation of the international project (Erasmus+ Module Jean Monnet) “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 qualification thesis of Wang Yongshun is logically structured, contains clearly defined goals and objectives and methodologically sound approaches to their implementation. All conclusions and recommendations of the study on the empirical analysis of the “One Belt One Road” initiative are well-founded and have a practical focus.

The dissertation uses a variety of general scientific and special research methods, a set of research methods (theoretical, historical, empirical and others), the unity of

which made it possible to fulfill all the outlined tasks. This study uses a multidisciplinary methodological approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the “One Belt One Road” initiative as a global strategy for inclusive development. The study relies mainly on policy analysis, comparative case studies and document-based content analysis, which is supported by the selective use of descriptive statistics and geoeconomic indicators where appropriate. The first methodological direction includes thematic content analysis of official Chinese policy documents, such as white papers, speeches, bilateral agreements and reports of institutions, including the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the Ministry of Commerce and the “One Belt One Road” Portal. These primary materials are examined to identify the regulatory framework, strategic objectives and institutional logic underlying the “One Belt One Road” initiative. Second, the study uses comparative case study analysis to assess the implementation of the “One Belt One Road” initiative in different regions, including Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. This approach helps to identify the opportunities, challenges, and development outcomes specific to each region, thereby highlighting the differentiated impact of the Initiative on partner countries. In addition, regression analysis is used to assess the relationship between China’s trade participation and changes in the Human Development Index in selected countries in the Global South, which increases the empirical depth of the study. In addition, to interpret relevant economic and development indicators (e.g., foreign direct investment flows, infrastructure investment, trade volume), data are obtained from international databases such as the World Bank, UNCTAD, and AIIB.

The main theoretical and applied provisions of Wang Yongshun’s dissertation received favorable reviews at Ukrainian and international conferences and were published in Ukrainian and international scientific publications.

Thus, all of the above allows us to draw a positive conclusion regarding the scientific level, the reliability of the presented material, the theoretical justifications and arguments put forward in defense of the provisions, the practical significance of the conclusions and recommendations arising from Wang Yongshun’s dissertation.

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.

The first chapter of this dissertation lays the theoretical foundation for understanding the concept of global inclusive growth by examining the “One Belt One Road” initiative in the context of both classical and contemporary development discourses (pp. 30-35). Through a detailed review of theories, including the logic of inclusive growth, human capital theory, and multidimensional development models, the chapter illustrates how the “One Belt One Road” initiative embraces and promotes inclusive growth as both a guiding principle and a practical goal. It emphasizes the initiative’s dual mission: to promote economic efficiency while ensuring social justice, in particular by addressing development disparities between and within countries.

This chapter highlights how the “One Belt One Road” initiative is helping to bridge global and regional divides through policy coordination and cross-border cooperation, and its strategy for inclusive growth encompasses not only material well-being but also institutional capacity-building and environmental sustainability. A notable addition to this chapter is the theoretical and geopolitical analysis of economic corridors, which act as spatial embodiments of international cooperation (pp. 48-53). Economic corridors are seen as zones of enhanced connectivity and functional interdependence, combining infrastructure investment with broader patterns of trade, finance, and diplomacy. These corridors are seen not only as practical mechanisms for development, but also as reflections of geopolitical strategy and economic influence. By integrating the construction of economic corridors into the theory of international economic relations, the chapter highlights the dual role that these corridors play: promoting inclusive growth and transforming the geopolitical landscape.

The second chapter of the dissertation explores the operational mechanisms and dynamics of the “One Belt One Road” initiative, with a particular focus on how the principles of inclusive development are being put into practice in both China and its partner countries (pp. 69-71). Starting from China’s own development trajectory, the study examines how the country has chosen a distinctive path of inclusive growth that

integrates poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and social justice into its broader modernization strategy. It finds that rather than relying solely on economic growth, China's approach embraces a multidimensional model that promotes equitable access to education, healthcare, employment, and infrastructure, and incorporates regional coordination and digital transformation as vital foundations of its national development system.

This chapter identifies poverty reduction as a fundamental driver of strategy formulation, and analyses how China's environmental policies and the emergence of the "New Normal" have shifted the country's growth focus towards innovation and environmental sustainability. Expanding the scope of the "One Belt One Road" initiative, the chapter presents a comparative study of the outcomes of inclusive development across regions. The "One Belt One Road" initiative promotes connectivity and economic cooperation across regions, taking into account local conditions. For example, in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Africa, the focus is on energy, transport, regional integration and infrastructure development; in Europe, it focuses on cautious participation and market diversification. This chapter highlights the diversity of national conditions, development objectives and governance capacities of the "One Belt One Road" initiative participants, highlighting the need for localized models of cooperation and flexible implementation mechanisms. The chapter provides a regression analysis of selected countries participating in the "One Belt One Road" initiative, examining the correlation between trade volume with China and changes in human development indicators over the past decade. In considering the risks and challenges associated with the implementation of the "One Belt One Road" initiative, the research offers a balanced assessment that takes into account geopolitical, economic, environmental and social aspects (pp. 107-112). These challenges are not seen as insurmountable obstacles, but as areas where adaptive governance, multilateral coordination and risk reduction mechanisms can play a vital role in strengthening the long-term viability of the "One Belt One Road" initiative. The paper examines Ukraine's participation in the "One Belt One Road" initiative and describes its positioning as a Eurasian transport hub and its orientation towards Chinese investment (pp. 104-106).

The third section of the dissertation explores the broader strategic implications of the “One Belt One Road” initiative and considers how it shapes the future architecture of global development and governance (pp. 124-126). The chapter begins by assessing the contribution of the “One Belt One Road” initiative to fostering more inclusive institutional systems, in particular in terms of providing additional platforms for dialogue, policy-making and international coordination. The initiative is seen as strengthening the institutional framework for inclusive growth by encouraging norms of participation, mutual benefit and shared responsibility. It also plays a role in enhancing regional governance capacities, enabling countries, particularly in the Global South, to engage more confidently and effectively in international economic cooperation. As a result, the “One Belt One Road” initiative supports a more pluralistic and balanced global governance structure that favours cooperative solutions and regional initiative.

The collection of scientific provisions, conclusions, and recommendations presented in the qualification thesis, along with their practical significance, allow for the conclusion about the completeness, coherence, and structured nature of Wang Yongshun’s qualification thesis.

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

The results that have been substantiated in the qualification thesis, which have theoretical and practical significance, and define the scientific novelty of the dissertation, are as follows:

- 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 significance of the qualification work lies in the fact that the main theoretical propositions provide practically meaningful recommendations for stakeholders in China and partner countries to enhance inclusive development and sustainability of project implementation, equitable benefit sharing, and institutional coordination.

The practical significance of the results of Wang Yongshun's dissertation is that the results obtained can be useful for forming more balanced, transparent and mutually beneficial models of cooperation within the framework of the "One Belt One Road" initiative for government bodies, scientists and international organizations.

The presented research results, brought to the level of practical developments and recommendations, are confirmed by the implementation certificate provided by Jiuquan Yuanda Agriculture Co., Ltd. in the company's development strategy and national international economic strategy deployment (Certificate JIU No. 17 from April 28, 2025). The main results of the research were used in teaching subjects and conducting scientific research by Jiuquan Vocational and Technical University (Certificate JIU No. 27 from 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 article – in a foreign scientific periodical edition 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

The scientific results of the dissertation were obtained personally by the author. In the co-authored scientific papers, only those ideas and provisions that were personally acquired by the author were used in the dissertation. No violations of academic integrity have been detected in Wang Yongshun's dissertation. The dissertation includes references to relevant sources of information, provides accurate information about the methods used and the results of the research conducted, and complies with copyright and related rights legislation. This allows for the conclusion that the author of the dissertation has adhered to the requirements and rules of academic integrity. The qualification thesis was successfully verified for text similarity using the Turnitin Similarity online service.

Discussion points and remarks on the dissertation

Wang Yongshun's qualification thesis is carried out at a sufficiently high scientific level, but there are some remarks that can be made as a basis for discussion during the defense:

- 1) the author successfully positions the "One Belt One Road" initiative within the framework of a global policy of inclusive development (pp. 21-23) and argues that the "One Belt One Road" initiative is consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals, but empirical and comparative data only partially support this. In addition, the author uses a vague definition of the term "sustainable development" (pp. 122, 142): the term is used frequently but without specific qualifiers;

- 2) the thesis analyzes the challenges of African infrastructure development and the benefits of European countries' participation in the "One Belt One Road" initiative (pp. 95-98), but the analysis of Southeast Asia remains largely descriptive, and key comparative indicators, such as infrastructure density or the ratio of investment to output, are missing;
- 3) the author justifies the creation of mechanisms for localization and benefit sharing (pp. 147-148), but the mechanisms of local benefits are not sufficiently defined. Thus, the justification of localization strategies requires the use of more specific political channels or a clearer mapping of stakeholders;
- 4) the thesis justifies the factor of cooperation that promotes sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as the responsibility of the Chinese government and member states in the framework of action "One Belt One Road" initiative (pp. 152-154). However, the idea of reproducing the Chinese education/employment model is discussed without taking into account the institutional differences between the participants of the "One Belt One Road" initiative.

The mentioned remarks indicate some controversial aspects of the research. However, they generally reflect the relevance, complexity, and multifaceted nature of the chosen topic, its practical significance, and do not significantly affect the qualitative characteristics of the qualification thesis.

General conclusion and evaluation of the qualification thesis

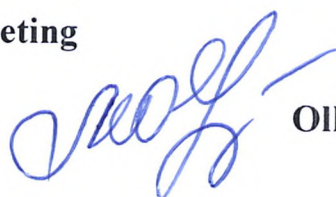
Wang Yongshun's qualification thesis on the topic "One Belt One Road as Global Inclusive Growth Strategy of PRC" is a completed scientific study, the result of which is the formation of scientifically based proposals for the development of theory, methodology and practical implementation of inclusive development of the PRC within the framework of the implementation of the "One Belt One Road" Initiative.

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 qualification thesis 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, substantiation of scientific provisions and recommendations, and level of scientific novelty. The author, Wang Yongshun, deserves to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the specialty 292 "International Economic Relations".

Official Opponent:

**Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor,
Professor of International Trade and Marketing
Department, Kyiv National Economic
University named after Vadym Hetman**



Olha YATSENKO



Лусенко О.
ЗАСВІДЧУЮ
Заступник начальника відділу кадрів
**Київський національний
економічний університет
імені Вадима Гетьмана**
Григорівська Т.
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