OPINION

on the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "PhD Doctor"
at D.A. Tsenov Academy – Svishtov

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Basis for preparing the opinion: *Order No. 1318/03.12.2025 of the Rector of D.A. Tsenov Academy – Svishtov on the composition of the Scientific jury*

Author of the dissertation: *Jingxin Hu*

Topic of the dissertation: *Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Bulgaria within the Frameworks of the "16+1 Cooperation" and "One belt, one road"*

I. General Presentation of the Dissertation

The dissertation titled "*Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Bulgaria within the Frameworks of the "16+1 Cooperation" and "One belt, one road*" comprises 221 pages and exhibits a logically substantiated and balanced structure across three chapters. The first chapter, "Theoretical and historical foundations of China-Bulgaria economic cooperation" is divided into three sections; the second, "Empirical analysis of China-Bulgaria economic cooperation" also spans three sections; and the third addresses " Challenges, prospects, and policy recommendations" similarly structured in three sections. The bibliography encompasses 168 sources in diverse languages, aiming to construct a comprehensive analytical framework for China-Bulgarian economic and trade cooperation under the One Belt and One Road Initiative and 16+1 mechanism.

To achieve this objective, three sub-goals are delineated: systematizing the literature review, examining trade indicators, and formulating recommendations for long-term partnerships. The research tasks 1, 2, 3, and 6 align fully with these sub-goals. The central thesis posits low intra-industry trade, evidenced by a subdued trade complementarity index (TCI), ameliorable through enhanced infrastructure, efficient logistics, and harmonized standards. No explicit hypotheses are advanced, consonant with the thesis's broader formulation. Overall, the dissertation's structure and content conform to regulatory requirements.

II. Assessment of Form and Content

Structurally, the dissertation demonstrates robust logical progression, purposiveness, and symmetry among chapters, employing comprehensible scientific language and effective graphical presentation. The exposition is concise, volumetrically appropriate, and evinces requisite research rigor, with the study period spanning 2008–2023, a sufficiently extensive temporal scope. Methodologically, it integrates data analysis, case studies, econometric modeling (Tweedie GLM), and machine learning techniques (Random Forest, XGBoost, SHAP), acknowledging limitations such as lack of micro-data, proxy indicators, and literature source overlaps, which constrain causal validation.

Key results include: Chapter One establishes historical context for Bulgarian-Chinese external economic relations within One belt, One road initiative and 16+1 framework, positioning Bulgaria as an EU member, leveraging global value chain theory, regional integration theory, comparative advantage theory, and endogenous growth theory for FDI attraction. It identifies three preconditions for political compatibility: developmental priorities, infrastructural congruence, and institutional flexibility. Chapter Two yields empirical insights via Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) and TCI indices (SITC-classified, 2015–2023), revealing technological orientation and structural complementarity; a Trade Integration Index (TII) underscores narrow specialization and asymmetry. A dual empirical approach (gravity model and machine learning) analyzes trade deviations and factors, including economic and infrastructural variables, with nonlinear forecasts aiding EU FDI intentions in China. Chapter Three synthesizes findings into forecasts and recommendations on trade structure, logistics connectivity, regulatory challenges, and FDI, targeted at business and policymakers.

The 46-page abstract faithfully mirrors the dissertation. Plagiarism check from the department of International economic relations at D.A. Tsenov Academy – Svishtov during the PhD thesis discussion (06.11.2025) confirms the originality of the text. Four English-language publications meet minimum requirements. The PhD thesis is timely done and comprehensive as a scientific text.

III. Scientific and Applied Contributions

The five scientific and scientific-applied contributions are endorsed, with particular emphasis on contribution No. 4, which bridges theory and empirical research by delineating three pivotal trade impediments between China and Bulgaria: vertical trade and supply structures, logistical limitations, and legislative challenges.

IV. Questions on the Dissertation

My question to PhD candidate Hu is: Given the low Grubel-Lloyd index for China-Bulgaria trade and inter-industry exchange dominance, how have recent global supply chain disruptions (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, the war between Russia and Ukraine, Suez Canal crises etc.) impacted Bulgarian export specialization? Which scenarios could be proposed illustrating product diversification opportunities and transport connectivity enhancements to deepen Bulgaria's integration into these supply chains?

V. Overall Evaluation and Conclusion

Candidate Jingxin Hu's dissertation exemplifies a holistic, autonomous scientific inquiry with avowed authorship. The PhD thesis entitled " *Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Bulgaria within the Frameworks of the "16+1 Cooperation" and "One belt, one road"* satisfies all conditions for awarding the degree of "PhD Doctor" in the "World Economy and International Economic Relations" doctoral program.

Accordingly, a **positive evaluation** is tendered, I recommend that the Esteemed Scientific jury to endorse a "**YES**" decision and to confirm upon candidate *Jingxin Hu* the educational and scientific degree of "*PhD Doctor*" in the "*World Economy and International Economic Relations*" doctoral program.

20.01.2026, Varna

Prepared by: ..
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