

Think tank report explores profound shift in global perceptions of China; country could be most aspired-to major economy by 2050

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Think tank report explores profound shift in global perceptions of China; country could be most aspired-to major economy by 2050

Foreign tourists enjoy themselves at Tiantan in Beijing. Photo: VCG

Global perceptions of China are undergoing their most profound structural shift since the end of the Cold War, and China is expected to become the major economy that people around the world most aspire to by 2050, according to a new think tank report released in Beijing on Wednesday.

The report, titled "Global perceptions in profound transition: China toward 2050 and long-term trends in how the world views China" was released at an international symposium on shifting global perceptions and China's future development held by the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at the Renmin University of China on Wednesday. Attendees included former government officials, experts, scholars and diplomats based in China from 17 countries, including the US, Russia, the UK, Canada, Australia, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia and others.

Drawing on polling by the Pew Research Center, Gallup and other sources, as well as long-term trends in China's development, the report examines how the world views China, why those perceptions are changing and how China's development could shape global transformation toward 2050. The report said that global perceptions of China are undergoing their most profound structural shift since the end of the Cold War.

The report said there is a shift in the spatial dimension. It cited a Pew poll in July which showed that in 27 of the 36 countries and regions surveyed, China enjoyed higher public favorability than the US, with a median favorability rating of 46 percent, compared with 36 percent for the US.

Also, a survey by the Global Times Institute found that 69 percent of international respondents held favorable views of China. The figure exceeded 70 percent in the Middle East and ASEAN countries and approached or surpassed 80 percent in BRICS and African countries, while positive assessments of China's economic growth reached 86 percent.

These regional differences suggest that global views of China are becoming more diverse and less shaped by a single, generalized image, with countries increasingly judging China through the lens of their own development priorities and practical interests, the report said.

The report noted that global perceptions of China are undergoing a generational shift, with people aged 18 to 34 worldwide significantly more favorable toward China than those aged 50 and above.

The expansion of the evaluation criteria constitutes the third shift. International assessments of China are moving from impression-based preferences toward integrated judgements of its developmental capacity and values as a partner.

The report also cited the 2025 Global Times Institute survey, which showed that more than 80 percent of respondents positively assessed China's economic growth in 2025, nearly 90 percent expressed confidence in its economy over the coming decade. At the same time, nearly 70 percent wanted China to play a greater role in international affairs.

The report said these trends show that global assessments of China are moving beyond simple favorability toward broader judgments about its development capacity, value as a partner and international responsibility.

Global perceptions of China and the broader framework through which major powers are assessed are undergoing a profound structural transformation, ushering in a new era of changing global perceptions, said Wang Wen, dean of the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

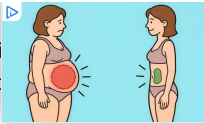
Wang told the Global Times that the core drivers of these shifts lie in the development dividends China continues to generate and its increasingly regular and in-depth engagement with the world.

Looking ahead to 2050, the report projects that China is expected to become the major economy that people around the world most aspire to by 2050. The report said China could increasingly be seen as a world-class center of growth, a major source of global demand, a hub of industrial resilience and a leading source of frontier innovation. Toward 2050, China will also solidify the foundation for global peace and cooperation, and make contributions to the international order.

Some speakers from other countries offered their views on the reasons behind the shift in global perceptions. Danilo Türk, former president of Slovenia and former chair of the Club de Madrid, praised China's path of peaceful development, saying it is development-oriented, which he believes people around the world fully appreciate. He described China's approach as highly cooperative and important for international cooperation, not only through the Belt and Road Initiative but more broadly.



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Edemilson Parana, professor of the University College Dublin in Ireland, who has visited many cities in China, told the Global Times new technologies, infrastructure projects and development and the intensive transformation they have brought, not only within China but also regionally and globally, are significantly shaping China's image in the Global South as a reliable and potential partner in different initiatives.

Parana noted that the "China travel" trend is contributing to changes in global perceptions. "People who come here and travel can experience how well things work, how convenient life can be, the country's achievements, how friendly people are, how good the food is, as well as China's beautiful scenery and many tourist attractions.

"I think this open-door policy toward tourism is benefiting China's image worldwide and will do so even more as more people come and experience the country firsthand," said Parana, noting that more people are going to see that China is also becoming cooler.