

## CHINA – GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS

### Summary

The text below provides a brief overview of some comparative public opinion data derived from recent global surveys, conducted by Gallup International Association (in cooperation with WIN) in more than 60 countries worldwide and among more than 60 000 people. Details about Gallup International Association and the methodology of the global comparative surveys – see on [www.gallup-international.com](http://www.gallup-international.com).

Observations are described, hypotheses are stated and discussion is initiated. The text only serves as a hypothetical explanation – without attempts of more profound reasoning. Waves of survey revised here show a relevant picture. Still, forthcoming waves are to confirm or reject main findings here.

**Key words:** Gallup International, China, Economic role of China, public opinion

### ECONOMIC ROLE OF CHINA. SOME PERCEPTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

What is the mass evaluation of the role of China in the international economy? Is it significant and how does the world population perceives it when it comes to everyday life? As expected, it is clear that the majority of the world population sees the economic role of China as very important for their country. Most of the countries in all regions seem to believe that. The question “Does China play an important role in the economy of your country? How important?” creates no doubt around the world.

The map below reveals clearly that for the majority of the world the answer is easy. So, the dark red means evaluation of importance over 80%, red represents responses pointing importance between 70 and 79%, the light red means importance between 60 and 69%.

The blue part of the map does not mean “not important”, but stands for a relatively low percentage of the answer “important”. It looks low compared to the red side of the map, but in fact the blue part represents the perceived importance of around 50%. Blue is only used for contrast – as a significant share of automatic responses are expected throughout the world, the exceptions deserve a special stress and some more consideration.

So, it turns out that the importance of China in terms of economics is rather unquestionable globally, but still, there are “blue” spots. Where? Predominantly some of the neighbouring countries and regional competi-

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tors. Thus, a hypothesis becomes valid of some political reflections or even potential fear facing China influence – that lead to some neglecting of the role of China as an economic power. These are some of the very brief possible explanations. Of course, a possible low China’s economic activity in some of the countries remains a basic predictor.

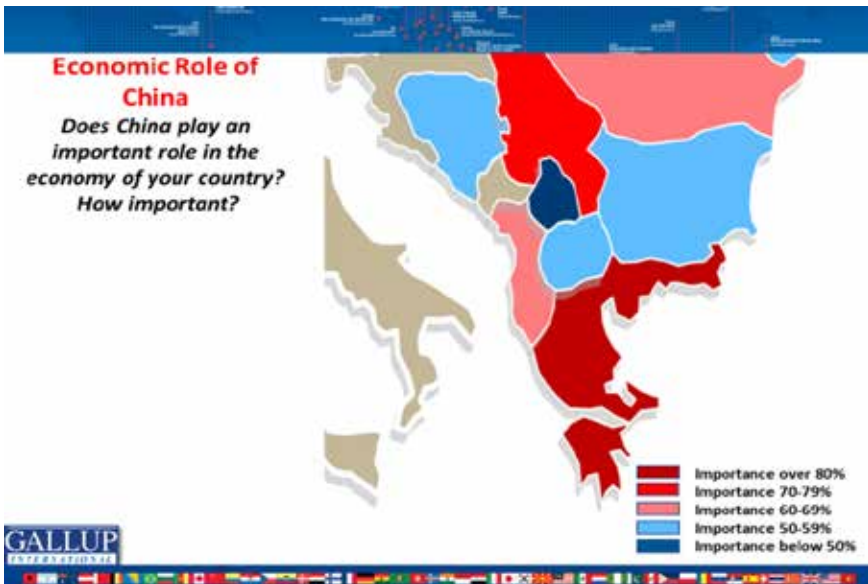


If we take a look around the European continent red is still predominant. Nevertheless, some exclusions are to be found here too. For example, in some East European countries like Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Czech Republic, etc. the role of China in the national economy is evaluated relatively low.

Is the importance of the economic role of China low or underestimated here? Or another reason is valid? Yes it may be due to some political reasons (for instance with the higher role of China is Serbia and Greece, Kosovo is on the opposite side; situation with Ukraine could be similar (as Chinese-Russian forms of partnership are establishing).

Beyond all some pure economic reasons could serve as a good reason too – people say it is low because it is low. Bulgaria could be a good example.

The reason for the so called “underestimation” may be due to the high levels of disinformation and unawareness when it comes to China. Or when it comes to international politics and economy as a whole.



## ECONOMIC ROLE OF CHINA – GOOD OR BAD FOR YOUR COUNTRY?

Is the economic role of China positive or negative according to mass perceptions? Predominantly positive as you can see on the picture below. It shows all the countries in which the survey was conducted and their attitudes towards the economic impact of China. This time the red means “bad” (the dark red = “very bad”) and respectively the green means “good” and the dark green represents the “very good” sector.

There is also an additional fifth category representing countries where public opinion is rather ambiguous or polarised and there is no significant majority evaluating the impact of China as good or bad.

As noticeable, some of the neighbouring states are more prone to believe that the economic role of China is bad for their country. This group includes Japan, Vietnam, India and Mongolia and also South Korea and Indonesia. This may be due to the fear for the own economy, especially when the neighbour is one of the world's international superpowers and also one of the biggest producers of goods of any kind worldwide.

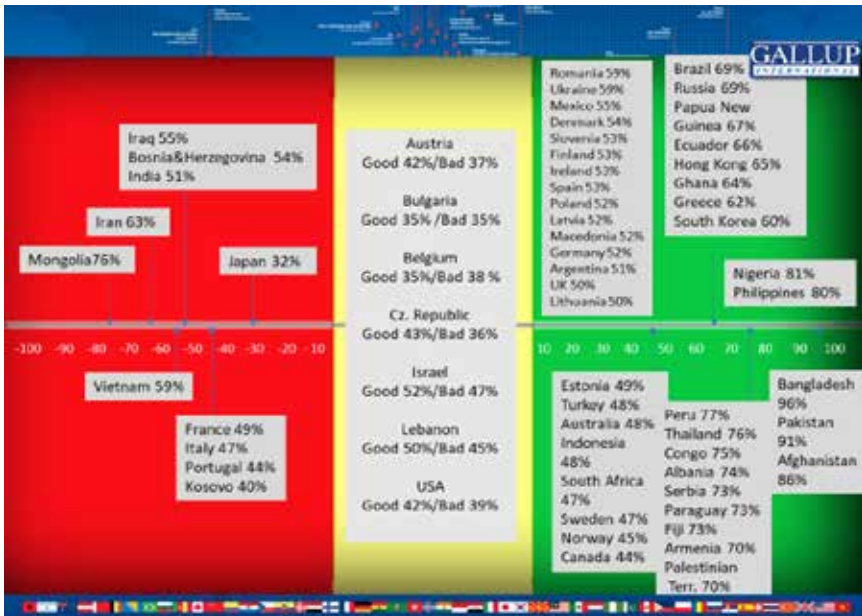
On the other hand (related to the previous and strongly possible as well), the reason may be again political. Some of the countries mentioned are either historical or current regional or even global competitors of China. Or represent Western democracies. The latter is the potentially plausible explanation about the controversial attitudes in some of the countries in Europe, for example.

On the Balkans, for instance, there are some countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo that also perceive the economic role of China as bad for their country. This time again the political explanation is more likely to be fruitful – possibly due to the specific role China plays in Serbia. Kosovo and part of Bosnia and Herzegovina are actually constantly experiencing tensions towards Serbia.

So, what is the attitude towards China's economic role in the countries in the middle group? In such countries public opinion is divided into two equal parts between those who think that the economic role of China is rather good for their country and those who share the opposite opinion. The reason for the absence of clear mass opinion in the states in the "yellow" area may be different. In countries like Bulgaria for instance the society is not quite familiar with the international role of China and with China as a whole. Thus, there is no significant evaluation of Chinese role as a positive or a negative influence for the national economy.

In countries like USA on the other hand the explanation for the controversial public image of China may be different – for instance, due to trade competition, American stress on democracy, etc.

Nevertheless, the impact of the Chinese economy is perceived predominately positively worldwide. As it can be seen below the majority of the countries are positioned in the green corner of the graphic. Attitudes concerning China and the economics are rather favourable.



## CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL POLICY – STABILIZING OR DESTABILIZING FOR THE WORLD?

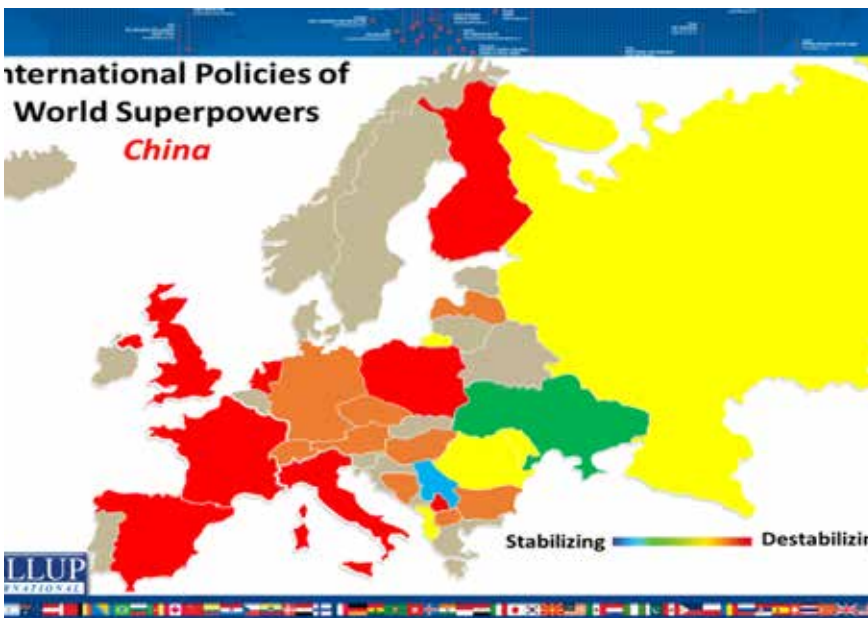
In another survey, conducted by Gallup International Association at the end of 2018, a question was asked whether societies regard the international role of China as stabilizing or destabilizing for the world.

As obvious in the graph below when talking about international policy of China there is no single dominant opinion around the world. In the Middle East, Russia, Africa and West Asia people seem to be more inclined to think that China international policy is rather stabilizing for the world. In Australia and New Zealand, East Asia and EU, on the other hand, the majority finds that the international policy of China is rather destabilizing for the world. The largest share of the population that claims that China has a rather destabilizing policy is in Australia and New Zealand and also East Asia – both regions with 56% of the respondents there declaring that China is actually destabilizing for world.

In India the share of those who think of international policy of China as destabilizing is also larger than the share of those who share the opposite option. However, the largest share there is formed by those who do not know how to answer - which sounds like a vast level of uncertainty rather than of clear unfavourable opinion.

In Non-EU Europe some societies are practically divided – as some of them like Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are more likely to believe that China is destabilizing the world, while countries like Serbia and Ukraine on the other hand are more likely to believe that China is stabilizing power for the world. These differences may be a direct effect of the political orientation of those countries, as already mentioned in the review so far.

In conclusion, does China help stabilizing the world? The Western world (with Australia being in some “eastern part of the West”) along with India say: rather not. Economic and political images of China are apparently different, but the pattern remains the same – western democracies have their concerns due to political reasons, neighbouring countries share some worries and some of the economic competitors remain anxious.



## КИТАЙ – ГЛОБАЛНИ ВЪЗПРИЯТИЯ

### Резюме

Текстът представя кратък преглед на някои сравнителни данни на общественото мнение, получени от последните глобални проучвания, проведени от световната асоциация „Галъп интернешънъл“ (в сътрудничество с УИН) в повече от 60 държави по света и сред повече от 60 000 души. Подробности за световната асоциация “Галъп интернешънъл”, както и методологията на глобалните сравнителни проучвания - вижте на [www.gallup-international.com](http://www.gallup-international.com).

Описани са наблюдения, посочени са хипотези и е зададено началото на дебат по темата. Текстът служи само като хипотетично обяснение - без опити за по-задълбочени анализи. Вълните на изследвания, показани тук, служат за надеждна илюстрация. И все пак, последващи вълни трябва да потвърдят или отхвърлят основните констатации.

**Ключови думи:** Галъп интернешънъл, Китай, икономическата роля на Китай, общественото мнение.