

"Each country's First Lady has her own style and flare, and the thing that the world loves is color and diversity," says Tsinghua University political scientist Tang Xiaoyang.

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As Peng and President Xi embark on their trip to Moscow, Tanzania, South Africa and the Republic of Congo, the outing is the president's first opportunity to shape his image as China's new leader before foreign audiences.

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In Russia, China's president will focus on strengthening long steady bilateral ties and boosting already booming cooperation in fields such as energy, aviation, space and technology.

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Renmin University journalism professor Zhong Xin says there are high expectations that Peng will help her husband convey a friendly image of China.

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"Mrs. Peng is beautiful and popular and because this is the first time she will be unveiled in her new public role, she will have a good influence," she said, explaining that the new First Lady will not only shed a positive light on herself, but the president and the entire country. Peng is expected to engage in some public activities with other first ladies, and media reports indicate she may even deliver a speech during next week's BRICS summit.

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According to Zhong, such high-profile events for a Chinese first lady represent a departure from the past. "China doesn't have a tradition of a First Lady following the president like in the West," says Zhong.

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