

CHINA'S FOURTH PLENUM 2025: FIVE-YEAR PLAN PROPOSED AMIDST UNPRECEDENTED PURGES

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The Fourth Plenum delivered a stark message: China is entering its next five-year cycle without a headline growth target and with a sharply narrowed leadership bench. The omission of a gross domestic product (GDP) number—long a fixture of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) planning—alongside sweeping purges, particularly in the military, signals a pivot from growth maximisation to political control, technological self-reliance and national security amid mounting uncertainty.

Convened in October 2025, the 20th Central Committee unveiled the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) with no explicit growth number, recasting priorities towards technology self-reliance, industrial upgrading, stronger domestic demand and modernisation of traditional industries while elevating strategic sectors such as artificial intelligence and new energy. Growth is framed around quality, resilience and security.

Politically, the plenum was marked by the absence of 37 Central Committee members, including 27 from the military, amid ongoing anti-corruption investigations. Fourteen full and alternate members were expelled and key leadership roles were reshuffled, reinforcing loyalty and discipline ahead of the 2027–2028 leadership transition. The result is a dual strategy of tightening political control while adapting economic policy to tighter constraints.

(Click on the link to read the above in [Chinese](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#))

Chinese:

中国 2025 年四中全会：在前所未有的整肃中提出五年规划

四中全会释放出鲜明信号：在未设定“头条式”增长目标、且领导层可用人选显著收窄的情况下，中国将步入下一个五年周期。长期作为中共规划标配的国内生产总值（GDP）增速指标被取消，与之并行的是范围广泛的整肃，特别是在军队系统。这表明政策正从追求最大化增长转向在不确定性上升背景下强调政治控制、科技自立与国家安全。

二十届中央委员会于 2025 年 10 月召开会议，提出《第十四个五年规划（2026—2030 年）》，未给出明确增长数值；规划将重点重塑为科技自立、产业升级、扩大内需、传统产业现代化，并提升人工智能、新能源等战略性行业的地位。增长被定位为强调质量、韧性与安全。

在政治层面，本次全会有 37 名中央委员缺席，其中 27 人来自军队系统，正值反腐调查持续推进之际。14 名正式与候补委员被除名，关键领导岗位亦作调整，为 2027—2028 年领导层更替前强化忠诚与纪律。由此形成一套双重策略：在收紧政治控制的同时，使经济政策更好适应更严的约束条件。

French:

QUATRIÈME PLÉNUM 2025: PROPOSITION DE PLAN QUINQUENNAL SUR FOND DE PURGES SANS PRÉCÉDENT

Quatrième plénum a délivré un message clair : la Chine entame son prochain cycle quinquennal sans objectif de croissance phare et avec un réservoir de dirigeants fortement réduits. L'absence d'objectif chiffré de produit intérieur brut (PIB) — longtemps un élément central de la planification du Parti communiste chinois (PCC) —, conjuguée à de vastes purges, en particulier au sein de l'armée, signale un changement : celui de la croissance à tout prix vers le contrôle politique, l'autonomie technologique et la sécurité nationale dans un contexte d'incertitudes croissantes.

Réuni en octobre 2025, le 20e Comité central a dévoilé le quinzième Plan quinquennal (2026–2030) sans chiffre explicite de croissance. Celui-ci annonce une reconfiguration des priorités vers l'autonomie technologique, la montée en gamme industrielle, le renforcement de la demande intérieure et la modernisation des industries traditionnelles, tout en mettant à l'honneur des secteurs stratégiques tels que l'intelligence artificielle et les nouvelles énergies. La croissance est désormais définie autour de la qualité, de la résilience et de la sécurité.

Sur le plan politique, le plénum a été marqué par l'absence de 37 membres du Comité central, dont 27 issus de l'armée, sur fond d'enquêtes anticorruption. Quatorze membres titulaires et suppléants ont été expulsés et des postes clés de direction ont été remaniés, afin de renforcer la loyauté et la discipline à l'approche de la transition de leadership de 2027–2028. Il en résulte une stratégie duale consistant à resserrer le contrôle politique tout en adaptant la politique économique à des contraintes plus strictes.

Spanish:

CUARTO PLENO DE CHINA 2025: PLAN QUINQUENAL PROPUESTO EN MEDIO DE DEPURACIONES SIN PRECEDENTES

El Cuarto Pleno envió un mensaje contundente: China entra en su próximo ciclo quinquenal sin una meta principal de crecimiento y con una cúpula dirigente notablemente reducida. La omisión de una cifra de producto interno bruto (PIB)—durante mucho tiempo un elemento fijo de la planificación del Partido Comunista de China (PCCh)—junto con amplias depuraciones, especialmente en el ámbito militar, señala un giro desde la maximización del crecimiento hacia el control político, la autosuficiencia tecnológica y la seguridad nacional en medio de una incertidumbre creciente.

Reunido en octubre de 2025, el XX Comité Central presentó el 15.º Plan Quinquenal (2026–2030) sin un objetivo explícito de crecimiento, reorientando las prioridades hacia la autosuficiencia tecnológica, la modernización industrial, el fortalecimiento de la demanda interna y la modernización de las industrias tradicionales, al tiempo que eleva sectores estratégicos como la inteligencia artificial y las nuevas energías. El crecimiento se enmarca en torno a la calidad, la resiliencia y la seguridad.

En el plano político, el pleno estuvo marcado por la ausencia de 37 miembros del Comité Central, incluidos 27 del ámbito militar, en medio de investigaciones anticorrupción en curso. Catorce miembros titulares y suplentes fueron expulsados y se reconfiguraron cargos clave de liderazgo, reforzando la lealtad y la disciplina de cara a la transición de liderazgo de 2027–2028. El resultado es una estrategia dual de endurecimiento del control político mientras se adapta la política económica a restricciones más estrictas.

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CHEN Gang & SHI Haoqi*

New Five-Year Plan Ditches Growth Target

1. The 20th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) held its Fourth plenary session in Beijing from 20 to 23 October 2025, approving the proposal for the 15th Five-Year Plan (15th FYP, 2026-2030). Most notably, the draft omits an explicit annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth target, focusing on tech self-reliance and expansion of domestic demand.
2. Although economists estimate an annual 4-5% growth necessary for achieving long-term development goals, the absence of a target signals reduced leadership confidence amid reform bottlenecks and mounting headwinds.
3. Typically, the Fourth Plenum focuses on Party governance while the fifth plenum is on the new FYP (Table 5). This cycle shifted after a nine-month delay of the Third Plenum to July 2024, pushing the Fourth Plenum into the new FYP window. The timing and agenda of the next Fifth Plenum remain unclear.
4. Of 205 members and 171 alternate members, 168 members and 147 alternate members attended, with absence rates of about 18% and 14% respectively, the highest since 1978.¹ The low turnout rates underscore intensified purges among Party elites.
5. Of the 37 absentees, 10 were civilian officials and 27 from the military, an unprecedented 63% of the 42-military Central Committee members (Table 1). The

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¹ <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/articles/c24lq1r208lo/simp>, accessed 9 November 2025.

surge in military absences highlights Xi's military purges which have brought down three of seven Central Military Commission (CMC) members since the 20th Party Congress in 2022.²

TABLE 1 LIST OF ABSENTEES FROM THE FOURTH PLENUM IN THE CCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Category	Total Members	Absentees	Absence Rate	Details of Absentees
Civilian Central Committee Full Members	163	10	6%	<p>Deceased (1): Yu Jianhua (俞建华)</p> <p>Officially Announced Fallen and Expelled from the Party (2): Jin Xiangjun (金湘军) and Tang Renjian (唐仁健)</p> <p>Officially Announced Fallen but Yet to be Expelled (3): Wang Lixia (王莉霞), Yi Huiman (易会满) and Lan Tianli (蓝天立)</p> <p>Missing (3): Liu Jianchao (刘建超), Jin Zhuanglong (金壮龙) and Lei Fanpei (雷凡培)</p> <p>Reason for Absence Unknown (1): Zou Jiayi (邹加怡)</p>
Military Central Committee Full Members	42	27	63%	<p>Officially Announced Fallen and Expelled from the Party (8): He Weidong (何卫东), Miao Hua (苗华), Wang Xiubin (王秀斌), Wang Chunning (王春宁), He Hongjun (何宏军), Lin Xiangyang (林向阳), Qin Shutong (秦树桐) and Yuan Huazhi (袁华智)</p> <p>Officially Announced Fallen but Yet to be Expelled (1): Zhang Lin (张林)</p> <p>Other Absent Military Members (18): Wang Peng (王鹏), Wang Renhua (王仁华), Ju Qiansheng (巨乾生), Liu Faqing (刘发庆), Liu Qingsong (刘青松), Xu Xueqiang (许学强), Li Wei (李伟), Li Qiaoming (李桥铭), Yang Cheng (杨诚), Wu Yanan (吴亚男), Wang Haijiang (汪海江), Zhang Hongbing (张红兵), Zhao Xiaozhe (赵晓哲), Hu Zhongming (胡中明), Xu Xisheng (徐西盛), Xu Zhongbo (徐忠波), Xu Deqing (徐德清) and Huang Ming (黄铭)</p>

Source: Authors' compilation.

² The three disgraced CMC members include former Defence Minister Li Shangfu, former CMC Vice-Chairman He Weidong and former director of the CMC Political Work Department.

15th FYP Aims for Industrial Modernisation

6. The Fourth Plenum set the stage for the 15th FYP (2026-2030), prioritising a “modern industrial system” through tech self-reliance, upgrading traditional sectors (machinery, chemicals) and fostering future industries (quantum, biomanufacturing, new energy, AI/6G) (Table 2).

TABLE 2 MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE 15TH FYP

No.	Objective
1	Building a Modernised Industrial System and Reinforcing the Foundations of the Real Economy
2	Achieving Greater Self-Reliance and Strength in Science and Technology and Steering the Development of New Quality Productive Forces
3	Building a Robust Domestic Market and Fostering a New Pattern of Development
4	Developing a High-Standard Socialist Market Economy and Boosting the Momentum for High-Quality Development
5	Promoting High-Standard Opening Up and Creating New Horizons for Mutually Beneficial Cooperation
6	Accelerating Agricultural and Rural Modernisation and Advancing All-Around Rural Revitalisation
7	Refining the Regional Economic Layout and Promoting Coordinated Regional Development
8	Inspiring the Cultural Creativity of the Nation and Fostering a Thriving Socialist Culture
9	Ensuring and Improving Public Wellbeing and Promoting Common Prosperity for All
10	Accelerating the Green Transition across the Board and Building a Beautiful China
11	Modernising China’s National Security System and Capacity and Building a Peaceful China
12	Achieving the Centenary Goals of the People’s Liberation Army and Modernising National Defence and the Armed Forces

Source: Authors’ compilation.

7. Acknowledging the accomplishment of major objectives and tasks of the 14th FYP (Table 3),³ the Plenum’s communique promised more efforts to expand domestic demand and improve people’s livelihoods – long-standing goals that in recent years have witnessed limited progress.
8. While 15th FYP builds on the previous 14th FYP’s innovation-driven growth, it is now shifting from science and technology breakthroughs to deployment, applying innovation to the existing industries and building a modernised industrial system. This sustains competitiveness in traditional manufacturing while cultivating strengths in emerging sectors.

³ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xw/zxw/202510/t20251023_11739505.html, accessed 1 December 2025.

TABLE 3 FULFILMENT OF MAJOR TARGETS OF CHINA 14TH FYP

	2025 Targets	Fulfilment as of the latest data
GDP (trillion)	-	-
Urbanisation rate (%)	65	67
Number of high-value invention patents per 10,000 people	12	15.3
The share of the added value of core digital economy industries in GDP (%)	10	9.9 in 2023
Average years of education among the working-age population (year)	11.3	11.21
Forestation (%)	24.1	Exceeded 25
Overall energy production capacity (billion tons of standard coal equivalent)	> 46	49.8

Source: Authors' compilation.

9. Externally, geopolitical rivalry shapes plan-making. For example, the United States' push to reshore manufacturing reinforces China's commitment to strong traditional manufacturing, while US technology controls intensify China's drive for more scientific breakthroughs and innovation-driven growth.
10. Heightened geopolitical risk binds economic security and opening up more tightly. Rather than chasing volume, the plan prioritises targeted opening and deeper cooperation in specific regions and industries, reflecting global de-risking and diversification that reshape how interdependence is managed.⁴
11. The 15th FYP sets no explicit GDP target. Official guides indicate around 4.17% average growth to meet the 2035 benchmark (others estimate 4.5%–4.7% under different assumptions). Hence the CCP shifts from quantity to quality of growth.
12. Xi Jinping oversaw the drafting committee, while Li Qiang, Wang Huning, Cai Qi and Ding Xuexiang serve as deputies,⁵ signalling top-level centralisation of economic policymaking. Executive Vice-Premier Ding, the youngest, is positioned as a potential future premier, indicating ongoing succession grooming.

⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/10/how-china-s-15th-five-year-plan-signals-a-new-phase-of-strategic-adaptation/>, accessed 12 November 2025.

⁵ <https://jhsjk.people.cn/article/40591921?isindex=1>, accessed 13 November 2025.

Personnel Changes

13. The Fourth Plenum saw the promotion of 11 alternate members to full Central Committee membership (Table 4A), while 14 full and alternate Central Committee members were expelled from the Party (Table 4B), both record high. Among the expelled were nine senior military officers, including commanders and political commissars from the army, navy and armed police, removed in October for duty-related crimes and serious disciplinary violations. The probes created top-level vacancies and trust deficit in the military, which the leadership moved to address through reshuffles and promotions at and after the Plenum.

TABLE 4A NEWLY PROMOTED CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

No.	Name	Status Before Plenum	New Position
1	Yu Huiwen (于会文)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
2	Ma Hancheng (马汉成)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
3	Wang Jian (王健)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
4	Wang Xi (王曦)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
5	Wang Yonghong (王永红)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
6	Wang Tingkai (王庭凯)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
7	Wang Xinwei (王新伟)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
8	Wei Tao (韦韬)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
9	Deng Yiwu (邓亦武)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
10	Deng Xiuming (邓修明)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee
11	Lu Hong (卢红)	Alternate Member	Full Member of the Central Committee

Source: Authors' compilation.

TABLE 4B MEMBERS EXPELLED FROM THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA

No.	Name	Background	Reason
1	He Weidong (何卫东)	Military (CMC Vice-Chairman)	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
2	Miao Hua (苗华)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
3	He Hongjun (何宏军)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
4	Wang Xiubin (王秀斌)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
5	Lin Xiangyang (林向阳)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
6	Qin Shutong (秦树桐)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
7	Yuan Huazhi (袁华智)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
8	Wang Chunning (王春宁)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
9	Zhang Fengzhong (张凤中)	Military	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
10	Tang Renjian (唐仁健)	Civilian (Minister of Agriculture)	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
11	Jin Xiangjun (金湘军)	Civilian (Provincial-level official)	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
12	Li Shisong (李石松)	Civilian	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
13	Yang Fasen (杨发森)	Civilian	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws
14	Zhu Zhisong (朱芝松)	Civilian	Grave violations of Party discipline and state laws

Source: *China Daily*.⁶

14. Several replacements stem from earlier disciplinary actions and disappearances in 2025. He Weidong, CMC vice-chair and Politburo member, had disappeared from public scene since March and was expelled in October for “suspicion of serious misconduct linked to corruption” involving large sums. Miao Hua, former head of the CMC’s Political Work Department, was investigated in early 2024 and ultimately removed, triggering further concerns about loyalty and oversight within the military leadership.
15. Zhang Shengmin (张升民) was named CMC vice-chair, replacing He Weidong, leaving a streamlined CMC: Chairman Xi Jinping; Vice-Chairs Zhang Youxia and Zhang Shengmin; and Chief of Staff Liu Zhenli.⁷

⁶ https://subsites.chinadaily.com.cn/npc/2025-10/23/c_1134963.htm, accessed 13 November 2025.

⁷ https://www.gov.cn/guoqing/202210/content_6934783.htm, accessed 13 November 2025.

16. Zhang Shengmin, a career officer in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Rocket Force and Secretary of the CMC's Commission for Discipline Inspection since 2017,⁸ brings a strong anti-corruption profile, signalling purges will continue unabated post-Plenum.
17. Beyond the Central Committee and CMC, 2025 saw discreet but consequential shifts in key Party departments. In an unusual job swap, Politburo members Shi Taifeng and Li Ganjie traded posts: Shi now leads the Organisation Department (personnel control), while Li heads the United Front Work Department.⁹
18. In September 2025, the CCP unexpectedly appointed Liu Haixing to lead the international department, replacing Liu Jianchao, who is reportedly under disciplinary investigation.
19. Collectively, these moves reshaped leadership of the Organisation Department, United Front work and International Department, all of which are critical for the Party's united front and elite selection process.
20. The personnel shifts underscore a continued emphasis on discipline and political reliability, especially in the military. Replacing senior generals and several Central Committee members signals a priority on “cleansing” units deemed disloyal or problematic.
21. The rapid turnover atop the PLA and CMC is double-edged; it can be stabilising if the new appointees are viewed as loyal and firmly aligned with the central leadership, reinforcing control and cohesion. Yet it is also disruptive in the near term, unsettling command chains and injecting operational uncertainty.
22. The Fourth Plenum's adjustments likely serve succession preparation for 2027 and 2028; by promoting politically reliable cadres into key positions within the Central

⁸ <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3330061/china-makes-anti-graft-chief-zhang-shengmin-vice-chair-central-military-commission>, accessed 13 November 2025.

⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/two-top-chinese-politicians-swap-jobs-state-media-say-2025-04-02/>, accessed 13 November 2025.

Committee, Xi is curating the candidate pool of candidates for future Politburo and its Standing Committee, ensuring ideological alignment, proven loyalty and a more manageable leadership succession.

Plenums as CCP's Decision-making Platforms

23. According to the CCP charter, the five-year Central Committee is the CCP's highest authority between Party Congresses. It typically holds seven plenary sessions per term (Table 5) where important policy lines and power reshuffles are deliberated.

TABLE 5 AGENDA OF EACH FIVE-YEAR TERM PARTY INTERIM

Plenum	Agendas
1st Plenum	Electing members of the Political Bureau, its Standing Committee and the CCP general secretary immediately after the Party Congress
2nd Plenum	Proposing a list of candidates for the leadership of the state government and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (China's top political advisory body) to the National People's Congress
3rd Plenum	Introducing the new leadership's broad socioeconomic and political reforms
4th Plenum	Discussing further improvements to the CCP's governing capacity
5th Plenum	Introducing the next FYP for China's social and economic development
6th Plenum	Discussing ideological, social and cultural issues
7th Plenum	Discussing the work report drafted by the Political Bureau and setting a date for the next CCP Party Congress

Source: Authors' compilation.

24. Most plenums are held in the final quarter, with ensuing legislation carried out at the March National People's Congress.

25. The first two plenums of the Central Committee typically coincide with the Party Congress. The third plenum is the traditional venue for major economic reform, especially amid leadership transitions.¹⁰

26. In Xi's second term as Party general secretary, the second (January 2018) and third (February 2018) plenums broke convention. The second plenum proposed constitutional amendments, including the removal of the two-term limit of the paramount leader, creation of supervisory commissions, elevation of ecological

¹⁰ "Introduction to China's Plenary Sessions and the CPC Central Committee", China Briefing, 11 November 2013.

governance, expansion of local legislative power and imposition of stronger ethnic policy guidance.

27. The third plenum, held about eight months ahead of schedule, approved a sweeping Party-state institutional merger, strengthening the Party's grip over administrative, military and parliamentary apparatus.
28. Post-third plenum, the Party absorbed functions of six State Council institutions (civil service, the press and publication, film sector, ethnic affairs, religious affairs, overseas Chinese affairs, computer network and information security). Four central leading groups (1) deepening overall reform, (2) cyberspace affairs, (3) financial and economic affairs and (4) foreign affairs were embedded at the Central Committee level, reflecting priority portfolios.
29. Plenums took a pause till October 2019 when the fourth plenum returned to the theme of governing capacity (Table 2) and signalled groundwork for a Hong Kong national security law.
30. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and intensified US tensions, the fifth plenum in October 2020 approved proposals to formulate China's 14th FYP and a 2035 vision, emphasising indigenous innovation and other domestic capabilities. As fifth plenums were often used to shed light on power succession, a succession void signalled Xi's continuity beyond the 20th Party Congress in 2022.
31. The sixth plenum in November 2021 adopted a key resolution elevating Xi Jinping's core status on par with Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. The seventh plenum was held in October 2022 in preparation for the 20th Party Congress. It adopted Xi's political report and Charter amendments.
32. In Xi's third term, the Second Plenum (2023) approved the previously recommended candidate list for state leadership positions and the *Plan for Reforming Party and State Institutions* (《党和国家机构改革方案》). The Third Plenum, held in 2024, subsequently proposed more than 300 reforms to be completed by 2029.

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