



REPORT

Seminar on

Understanding the significance of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on 15th Five-Year Plan

December 31, 2025 | 11:00 am to 1:00 pm | SBT 002, BNU

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Introduction:

The 14th Five-Year Plan of Peoples Republic of China concluded with quantifiable gains: GDP reached USD 19.3 trillion; China contributed roughly 30 percent to average annual global economic growth; the country entered the top ten of the Global Innovation Index; renewable energy accounted for about 60 percent of total installed capacity; new-energy vehicle ownership reached 31.4 million; 12 million new urban jobs were created; and defense-related technological advances accelerated. These indicators demonstrate the structural significance of the Five-Year Plan system in China's development trajectory.

The planning cycle, initiated in 1953 under Mao Zedong, established a durable mechanism for coordinated industrialization and national growth. It provided political leadership and society with a long-term roadmap that maintained direction during periods of economic or geopolitical strain. The continued use of Five-Year Plans reflects China's institutional preference for sustained, goal-oriented governance anchored in defined objectives for present and future generations.

China has now entered its 15th Five-Year Plan with defined priorities: advancing shared global development, improving well-being of its people, expanding international cooperation, and accelerating technological innovation. The seminar titled "Understanding the Significance of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the 15th Five-Year Plan," held on 31 December 2025, examined the plan's developmental basis, the outcomes previous plans has produced for China, and the practical lessons this offers to developing countries.



Ambassador Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Director BCPR, moderated the discussion. The panel comprised Dr. Ghulam Ghaus, Associate Professor of Economics at BNU; Commodore Ehsan Ahmed, Deputy President of the Maritime Centre for Excellence, Pakistan Navy War College; and Cao Ke, Deputy Consul General of China in Lahore.

The Discussion:

Ambassador Mansoor Ahmad characterized China's 15th five-year plan as clear, focused and comprehensive. He stated that the plan clearly articulates development goals, implementation strategies, and expected outcomes, ensuring minimal interpretive ambiguity for policymakers and authorities. The structure, in his assessment, creates conditions for measurable evaluation at each plan's end. He linked the plan to the broader ideological line of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," noting continuity from the Deng Xiaoping reform era to Xi Jinping's consolidation of a culturally and socially rooted modernization model. He underscored that external development goals and plans cannot be applied mutatis mutanda everywhere and argued that countries such as Pakistan must align imported development models with domestic cultural, social, and institutional realities.

He identified scientific and technological capability, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and innovation, as the core of China's modernization trajectory. For him, the lesson is straightforward: long-term resilience is generated by domestic market strength rather than dependence on imports or external economic shifts. He highlighted China's integrated approach to rural, urban, and regional development, emphasizing coordination as a structural feature rather than an accessory component. He judged public well-being as the plan's strongest pillar and described national security as the necessary precondition for any durable development agenda. He also noted the centrality of the green transition in the plan's priorities. His conclusion was direct: national development requires coherent and effective planning, achievable realistic targets, and strong implementation mechanisms, and China's five-year planning system demonstrates how these elements function in practice.



Dr. Ghulam Ghaus emphasized the plan's orientation toward high-quality development, arguing that it offers a more substantive metric than GDP-based assessments alone. He noted that the integration of human development, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and climate resilience provides a multidimensional view of progress. In his assessment, conventional growth indicators often mask underlying social outcomes, whereas sustained investments in education, health, and income generation more accurately capture the actual welfare of a population. He identified political stability as a decisive factor in a country's economic performance. He endorsed the focus on domestic market stability, framing scientific research, technological upgrading, and innovation ecosystems as essential to industrial strength. He argued that development plans gain the capacity to absorb external shocks, conflict, global economic volatility, or supply-chain disruptions, when they are anchored in centralized coordination, adaptive policy mechanisms, and long-term continuity, all of which he attributed to China's five-year planning system.

Commodore Ehsan Ahmad examined the plan through its strategic, ideological, and civilizational dimensions. He argued that nations rebuild strength by converting historical experience into disciplined, long-range planning. The feature that, in his view, most clearly defined the document was its assertive but controlled tone: the consistent use of terms such as "ensure" and "will" signaled leadership confidence and institutional commitment. He also noted the document's deliberate modesty despite China's substantial technological and economic capabilities, showing the resolve of a committed nation. The plan remains primarily inward-oriented, prioritizing self-strengthening, resilience, and calibrated outward engagement.

He identified adaptability as a defining element of China's development approach in the "new era." Linking this to Xi Jinping thought on "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", he underscored the balance between maintaining ideological continuity with earlier leadership and updating it in response to contemporary needs. He delineated the core pillars as leadership centrality, people-centered development, modernization under the rule of law, anti-corruption, national unity, and comprehensive progress across economic, social, cultural, and ecological sectors. He highlighted the plan's explicit identification of constraints and bottlenecks,



characterizing this diagnostic candor as an institutional strength rather than a weakness. Such realism, he argued, underpins reform and policy refinement and aligns with long-term objectives, including the Second Century Goal of building a prosperous, strong, democratic, and culturally advanced China by 2049.

On domestic industrial capability, he pointed to China's shipbuilding sector, noting that it accounts for 53.3 percent of global capacity and that a single shipyard reportedly produced more output in 2024 than the combined peak production of major World War II shipyards. He referenced the C919 aircraft program as evidence of rising competition with Airbus and Boeing; the China-Europe freight network of 110,000 trains connecting 227 Chinese cities with over 100 European destinations and moving approximately USD 450 billion in goods under the Belt and Road Initiative; and China's position as the world's largest grain producer with an output of 700 million tons. He concluded by underscoring China's performance in education, the green transition, and civil-military integration as further indicators of systemic capacity.

His Excellency Cao Ke stated that the international system is undergoing structural change, bringing both challenges and opportunities that countries must navigate and take advantage of. He framed China's long-term planning not only as an instrument of national development but also as a contribution to a more stable and inclusive global order. He outlined the historical origins of China's planning system, noting that the first Five-Year Plan was launched in 1953 after the consolidation of sovereignty in the aftermath of the Korean War. He stressed that security and development have remained interlinked throughout China's experience and that contemporary planning continues to integrate security imperatives with economic and social objectives amid heightened geopolitical volatility.

He argued that Pakistan faces a favorable window of opportunity in the coming years, particularly through regional connectivity generated by the Belt and Road Initiative. He identified Pakistan's geographic position as a potential conduit linking China to South Asia and wider regions, and maintained that trade, people-to-people ties, and economic integration can expand through improved regional relations. He reiterated that China's development approach is open and non-



exclusive. He referenced China's technological expansion, electric-vehicle exports, and industrial growth, and noted intended Chinese investment in multiple Pakistani industrial sectors, highlighting Punjab as a forthcoming recipient of initiatives aimed at job creation and skills development.

He stated that China's current focus is on improving living standards rather than engaging in conflict, and that modernization with Chinese characteristics retains a people-centered orientation. In his concluding remarks, he underscored the importance of policy stability, governance quality, and youth engagement in Pakistan, emphasizing the role of young professionals in national development. He expressed confidence that expanded China-Pakistan cooperation in agriculture, industry, technology, and education will underpin a shared developmental trajectory.

Conclusion:

China's emergence as a major economic and political power is the cumulative result of long-term strategic clarity, adherence to the ideological foundations laid by earlier leadership, institutional adaptability, policy continuity, a consistent balance between security and development, and disciplined implementation. Its resilience amid global uncertainty has been built on a strong domestic market, sustained technological advancement, and the expansion of industrial capacity. These foundations have enabled China to improve living standards while meeting successive development benchmarks.

The 15th Five-Year Plan positions China's development trajectory within a framework of shared global prosperity. It prioritizes technological innovation, the green transition, systemic stability, and people-centered development. For Pakistan and other developing countries, the plan's practical lessons include; the need to strengthen domestic markets, cultivate adaptability, confront structural constraints directly, coordinate rural, urban and regional development, prioritize public welfare, integrate civilian and military capacities where relevant, and maintain stability as a prerequisite for economic progress. Clear objectives combined with coherent implementation provide a credible path toward sustained national development.