



Former Slovenian president: a confident China offers partnerships the world needs in volatile times

Descrizione

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The government work report has set China's growth target for 2026 at 4.5 to 5% - the first year of the 15th Five-Year Plan period. The new blueprint, covering 2026 through 2030, marks a critical stage on China's path toward socialist modernization by 2035.

For Danilo Türk, former president of Slovenia and a seasoned diplomat with deep expertise in international affairs, this target deserves closer reading. "Given the magnitude of China's economy, 5% growth (for 2025), based on many high-growth-rate years in the past, is really very impressive," Türk observes. "So to have a global figure of 4.5 to 5% means that the plan is really very ambitious."

Three pillars of China's development approach

What enables such ambition? Türk points to three distinctive features of China's governance model. "China has a long-term vision of development, and that's very important, because it doesn't follow market changes from one year to another, but is following a long-term vision of development." This strategic continuity is embodied in the five-year plan mechanism itself - a hallmark of Chinese governance that has guided the world's second-largest economy through multiple cycles of global turbulence.

This long-term perspective is complemented by a global outlook. "China has now, for a couple of decades already, worked on the basis of a global outlook, meaning the Belt and Road Initiative and other ways of engaging with the world have expanded the scope of possibilities for development." Today, China is the largest trading partner for over 120 economies worldwide - a network that provides both resilience and reach.

The third element is execution. That's very important because, in addition to long-term and global visions, it also has a very meticulous way of working on a day-to-day basis within an annual program of development. All these three factors together produce really a very impressive result.

Technology and green transition as growth drivers

The 15th Five-Year Plan places significant emphasis on frontier industries—quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, embodied AI, and 6G among them. These are not abstract aspirations; they represent targeted bets on sectors where global competition remains wide open. Tark sees this as consistent with China's demonstrated capacity to adapt. China has demonstrated its ability to adjust development needs to technological opportunities.

Green development, in particular, represents both a necessity and an opportunity. China has recently placed a great deal of emphasis on rational consumption of energy and focusing on making China beautiful, as they say, so as to preserve the natural environment. Now that also is a development opportunity. With a commitment to peak carbon emissions before 2030, China is accelerating its green transition through smart grids, hydrogen energy, and green fuel industries—areas that are already attracting global partners.

Domestic consumption patterns are evolving in tandem. China has reached a high level of development in a short period of time, and the patterns of consumption are also changing. Official data shows final consumption expenditure contributed 52% of economic growth in 2025, up five percentage points from the previous year—a shift that reduces exposure to external volatility while unlocking the potential of a 1.4 billion-strong market.

Trade resilience amid tariff pressures

Despite escalating trade barriers from the United States, China's export performance in 2025 remained robust. Total goods trade reached a record 45.47 trillion yuan, with technology product exports, including electric vehicles, integrated circuits, and semiconductors, surging 13.2% year-on-year.

Tark is measured in his assessment. The figures of 2025 showed that irrespective of the tariff hikes, China did pretty well with exports. The obstacles that were placed last year were not all that harmful. They were harmful, but they were manageable also.

This resilience reflects a deeper structural shift. As international institutions warn of trade tensions and geopolitical friction constraining global activity, China's trading relationships have diversified. The Global South—economies growing at around 5% annually—now accounts for a growing share of China's trade, reducing dependence on any single market.

The diversification is visible in the evolving geography of China's cooperation. So far, I think the Belt and Road Initiative has demonstrated that China is able to cooperate not only with the most obvious partners in Western Europe, but there are some other partners who have become really quite innovative and leading in this new development.

Tšrk cites specific examples: Hungary's deepening ties with China, a bridge built by Chinese companies in Croatia. "Once you have this kind of successful project in places other than Western Europe, then you can expand more."

Growing international interest amid volatility

The global landscape is increasingly uncertain. "We find ourselves in a situation where the United States is imposing tariffs here and there without any plan, without any organized system, and all that creates obstacles," Tšrk notes. Yet paradoxically, this volatility is generating renewed interest in engagement with China.

"You have on the one hand, this whole uncertainty about tariffs and other destabilizing elements, but at the same time, you have a lot of interest from major countries actually strengthened to expand their relations with China." Multiple European leaders have visited in recent months, accompanied by major corporate delegations. Germany's recent high-level visit included 30 of the country's largest firms, many with long histories in China. Tšrk expects this trend to continue. "The interest in cooperating with China and also investing in China is growing."

For Tšrk, China's response to this moment carries strategic weight. "In this kind of volatile circumstances, I think a very self-assured, self-confident posture of China will be important, because everybody will be looking for partnerships. There will be a lot of interest, and the first visits from Europe have already demonstrated that, and there will be more of that coming."

The 4.5 to 5% target, in this context, is not merely a number. Anchored in the principle of "seeking progress while maintaining stability," it signals continuity, ambition, and the confidence to pursue long-term goals amid short-term turbulence.

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