



CHINA TALKIES:

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Interpreting Chinese Voices on the NATO Summit

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The Event in Brief

China has been closely observing the recent shifts in the United States' approach to NATO, particularly following the June 2025 summit in The Hague, which reflected changes in Europe's defence priorities. While Chinese officials and state media have expressed concern over NATO potentially targeting third countries, such as China, public discourse on the mainland has often been more satirical, pointing out divisions within the alliance. This contrast between official caution and popular humour highlights China's nuanced response to evolving US-led security dynamics.

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Insights into Beijing's Official Reactions, Expert Opinions, and Public Commentary

The Event in Brief

Recent shifts in the United States (US) approach to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) [北大西洋公约组织: *Běi Dà Xī Yáng Gōng Yuē Zǔ Zhī*] have not gone unnoticed in China. The recent NATO Summit, held in The Hague from June 24–25, 2025, signalled a [recalibration](#) of Europe's defence and security priorities. Washington's evolving diplomatic posture—marked by new rhetoric and policy moves—has sparked considerable interest among China's officials, experts, and the public alike.

Unsurprisingly, such developments, given the core agenda of the NATO format, have drawn close scrutiny from Beijing. Government officials and state-owned English-language media have consistently underscored Beijing's reservations, noting that such forums should not be used to target a “third country.” President Donald Trump's ambiguous engagement with traditional defence allies, in particular, has generated a range of interpretations and reactions.

On mainland digital space, however, the tone has often been more light-hearted—even satirical—with commentators highlighting differences, divisions, and a lack of consensus. This blend of official caution and popular humour provides a revealing window into how China is processing and responding to the dynamics of the US-driven security alliance.

Why Chinese Discourse on NATO Has Turned Surprisingly Upbeat

Chinese reactions to the recent NATO Summit have taken on an unexpectedly positive tone, even though the forum is often viewed as expanding its outreach towards the East—particularly China. Adding to this upbeat mood is speculation around President Trump's plans to visit China. While one Chinese article [mistakenly reported](#) that Trump would be in Beijing on July 2, the broader focus remains on the anticipation of improved relations—hopes to “get along well,” potential adjustments to Chinese overseas technology operations, the visiting US business delegation, and the possibility of tariff reductions and a new trade deal. Many in China interpret this new energy and urgency from the West as a sign of desperation: more money being pledged, more calls for collaboration, and a heightened sense of purpose, all of which are seen as reactions to a shifting global order. Yet, beneath the surface optimism, Chinese commentators are quick to point out the gap between promises and initiatives.

China's Reactions – Layer by Layer

Zhongnanhai's Signals

- **Ministry of National Defense (MND) (June 26):**

When enquired about NATO's remarks, Senior Colonel Zhang Xiaogang, MND spokesperson, responded strongly. The (Mandarin to Translated Text) [transcript](#) states:

Reporter: “It is reported that NATO held a summit accusing China of providing key support to Russia in the Russia-Ukraine conflict and expressing concerns about the South China Sea, East China Sea and Taiwan Strait issues. The NATO Secretary-General recently said that China is significantly

increasing its military power, building the world's largest navy and expanding its nuclear arsenal. NATO needs to strengthen the Indo-Pacific partnership to respond to China's military challenges. What comments does the spokesperson have?"

Zhang Xiaogang: *"China adheres to the path of peaceful development and pursues a defensive national defence policy. The development of military power is entirely for the purpose of safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests. The cooperation between China and Russia is neither directed against any third party nor affected by any third-party interference".*

"NATO is a product of the Cold War and the world's largest military alliance. It is a veritable "war machine" that stirs up trouble and provokes war everywhere. In recent years, NATO has expanded its power beyond the geographical scope stipulated in its own treaty, which has aroused high vigilance among regional countries. We firmly oppose NATO's "eastward expansion into the Asia-Pacific" under the pretext of China, and call on NATO to reflect on itself, change its course, and do more good things for world security and stability".

- **Ministry of Commerce:**

The ministry spokesperson [responded](#) to reports that President Trump intends to bring a business delegation when he visits China:

He Yongqian: *"I have no information to provide on this issue, but China's attitude is consistent and clear. We hope that the US and China will meet each other halfway, under the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, in the spirit of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, continuously enhance consensus, reduce misunderstandings, strengthen cooperation, and jointly promote the healthy, stable and sustainable development of China-US economic and trade relations".*

- **China's State-owned English Language Coverage:**

Regardless of the outlet or its particular editorial slant, the consensus is clear and remarkably consistent: the summit's outcomes are largely symbolic and unlikely to translate into meaningful action. The prevailing narrative is that NATO member states went to extraordinary lengths to [please](#) President Trump, especially in light of his threats to withhold protection for allies.

The People's Liberation Army Daily, the official military newspaper, zeroed in on the [internal divisions and crises](#) that surfaced during the NATO Summit, highlighting the alliance's fragility. Meanwhile, the Chinese edition of the Global Times—known for its focus on shaping international perceptions—[described](#) the summit as leaving a "bitter taste".

Xinhua – China's largest news agency took a more satirical approach, [branding](#) the summit an "international joke", particularly in reference to the widely discussed "Dad" controversy involving Trump. This response of critical voices underscores Beijing's broader strategy: to cast doubt on the cohesion and credibility of the US security alliances, while subtly reinforcing China's own narrative of stability and pragmatism on the world stage.

Selected Domestic Commentary: Voices from the Blogosphere Behind the Firewall

Inside China's domestic online space, the tone around the NATO Summit often echoes official narratives that highlight division and dysfunction among Western alliances. *"The Hague Summit fully demonstrates NATO's division and decline"*, notes a blog by China News Network, which [draws a pointed comparison](#) between last year's "38-paragraph Washington Summit Declaration" and this year's "five-paragraph Hague declaration". Earlier, in Ukraine, there

were 6 paragraphs; now one sentence. The blog further argues, *“The ‘Trump shock’ phenomenon has led to a general expectation that NATO’s future performance will be unfavourable”*. It contends that the new “5% of GDP” military spending target is “very difficult to actually achieve”, pointing out that *“Spain has made it clear that it is difficult to achieve this goal and has obtained ‘exceptional’ treatment approved by NATO”*. The absence of South Korea, Japan, and Australia is interpreted as proof that *“NATO’s extension of its reach into the Asia-Pacific region is widely questioned”*. The analysis concludes, *“NATO has placed the key to its ‘survival’ on ‘alliance’ actions that create confrontations among major powers and force countries to choose sides”*.

A Global Network article by Feng Yaren and Qing Mu Wenyuan [emphasises](#), *“Meeting Trump’s demands, but unable to hide differences among member states, NATO summit passes ‘5% military spending target’”*. It notes the summit agenda was “tailor-made for Trump” and highlights the ambiguity in Washington’s commitment: *“The Hague that Washington’s commitment to NATO’s collective defence clause ‘depends on your definition’”*. The article adds, *“The US president is unpredictable”*, and recounts how *“Trump threw a ‘grenade’ while riding on Air Force One to attend the meeting on the 24th. ‘It depends on your definition. There are many definitions of Article 5’”*.

Xu Ruojie focuses on similar themes, [stating](#), *“The Hague Summit cannot hide NATO’s internal and external difficulties. At present, NATO is in a turbulent period with a complex and severe external security environment and surging internal divisions and contradictions”*. The article adds, *“The alliance’s internal relations are fraught with a ‘loosening’ crisis”* and criticises the *“disregard for European interests under the principle of ‘America First’”*.

Qilu Evening News’ official account [observes](#), *“From G7 to NATO, the two summits are the same ‘face and heart are not in harmony’”*. The commentary quotes a protester: *“NATO should be tried in The Hague instead of holding a summit”*. It describes the Western “small circles” as “full of ‘discord in spirit’”. The blog post further notes, *“Trump reiterated that excluding Russia from the G7 was ‘a very big mistake’, and his statement was not ‘echoed’ by other G7 leaders”*. The piece also recalls Trump’s public criticism of NATO’s European allies for “free-riding” on security and defence.

Beijing Evening News Online [highlights](#) the gap between rhetoric and reality: *“Sending text messages and calling daddy cannot cover up the fact that NATO is in name only! A show that pandered to Trump”*. The post also calls the absence of Japan, South Korea, and Australia “voting with their feet” and describes the “Dad” incident as “absurd comedy”. It adds, *“When the US regards its allies as ‘cash machines’ and when Europe chooses to ‘rise up in rebellion’, a NATO with many internal contradictions and declining cohesion will eventually fall into decline and disintegrate”*.

Lai Jiaqi [observes](#), *“Are tariffs and defence differences causing the US and its allies to fall out? Experts warn: The essence of the fight against China has not changed, and we must not let our guard down”*. Lei Yiou [noted](#), *“Today, the US has once again returned its focus to Asia, with its spearhead pointed directly at China. However, under Trump’s ‘tariff stick’, the allies have long been divided and have their own agendas”*.

How China's Content Creators Frame the NATO Summit?

Domestic Video Commentary:

Domestic video commentators have offered a range of perspectives on the recent NATO developments, often blending satire with pointed analysis. *“Trump becomes a father again, South Korea and Japan are nowhere to be seen, and the trend of ‘de-Sinicisation’ of NATO summit has become a reality”*, [remarks](#) 瞩望云霄 (Zhǔwàng Yúnxīāo), a prominent military intelligence content creator. *“Transformation is a systematic law of things. Once something is transformed, it almost becomes a relatively solidified law. The connotation of ‘de-Sinicisation’ is too broad It is easier to understand than ‘removing the texts related to China from the joint statement’. Besides, it is just a statement of a meeting, and there is no ‘transformation’ to speak of”*.

Another military affairs content creator, 李莉 (Lǐ Lì), [noted](#) that the 2025 NATO Summit concludes major changes worth noting – pay for security, differences and losing the battle before fighting. Meanwhile, 邬话不说 (Wū Huà Bù Shuō), who [focuses](#) on international relations, described the event as, *“This may be the most important summit in NATO’s history”*. Dr. Xiaojin’s [analysis](#) of the NATO summit was direct: *“West targets China and Russia, highlights worth paying attention to, Macron is the only one standing firm”*.

How Chinese Comment Sections Reflect Popular Sentiment:

1. NATO as a Target of Scorn and Distrust: Comments convey focused political humour since Trump – strong leaders are admired, Chinese (Qin) philosophy lessons: chaos brings opportunities; thus, they prescribe policy suggestions. A recurring theme in Chinese comment sections is strong condemnation of NATO and scepticism about Western military alliances. Many users express the view that *“NATO should have been dissolved long ago. Many NATO member states can withdraw from NATO they can save a lot of money every year to develop their own economy ... withdrawing from NATO and becoming a neutral country can avoid all the ties brought by war ... establish friendly and cooperative relations freely ... they can see more clearly the conspiracy of the US, which wants to use the NATO brand to waste the manpower and financial resources of various countries. Therefore, the sooner you withdraw, the easier it will be and the sooner you will be free”*. Other comments are even more pointed, calling NATO a “rogue bandit group”, “a gangster organisation, a gang of bullies”, and “essentially an evil organisation! It should be disbanded as soon as possible! Let the world be at peace!”.

Some users draw a direct comparison between alliances, stating, *“The Sino-Russian military alliance completely defeated the NATO terrorist organisation group”*, while others criticise NATO’s role in Ukraine: *“NATO’s 30 countries have been pushing Ukraine to fight a war for three years, and they have been defeated for three years, but they continue to push Ukraine and won’t let it stop”*. The historical critique is also present: *“What is NATO? It is a gang built by the descendants of European pirates who traded in slaves and opium and continued the crimes of their ancestors. When necessary, they can fight against the Eagle Sauce. They hold the Bible in one hand and wield the sword in the other. They are openly armed, robbing, bullying the weak, speaking sweet words but harbouring evil intentions, and either stealing or robbing”*. Finally, some comments mock the alliance’s future: *“NATO meetings are like class reunions, with fewer and fewer people and the words becoming more and more empty”* and *“Europe’s long-term good days should be over!”*.

2. China–US and China–West Relations: Hostility and Defiance: Another prominent thread is the perception of deep-seated hostility between China and the West, especially the US. As one commenter puts it, *“The nature of the confrontation with China has not changed, and we must not let down our guard”*. Another expands on the adversarial dynamic: *“The essence of the relationship between China and the US (including the West) is hostile. They are almost mortal enemies. The only thing between them is victory or defeat. Even if at some historical moment in the future we overthrow the hegemony of the US and the West and defeat them, this hostile relationship will be difficult to eliminate for a considerable period of history.”*

Some comments reflect a sense of national pride and resilience: *“China's refusal to kneel has set a dilemma for countries around the world. China has the confidence to not kneel”*. Others see the US as having conceded ground: *“The agreement reached between China and the US is a statement by the US that there is no kneeling or not kneeling between us brothers ... This actually shows that the US has knelt to China, because it has raised the tariff stick high, and the speed of putting it down is also amazing”*. The contrast with other countries is clear: *“European countries, the European Union, Japan, South Korea, India, Canada and other countries and organizations are tightly controlled by Trump. Kneeling is their only choice because the United States is their boss, and some even call it their father. So they must kneel to survive. But China... can not kneel, so why should my country kneel?”*.

3. Trump, US Strategy, and Western Politics: Cynicism and Calculation: Commenters also focus on Trump’s personality and the shifting strategies of the US and its allies. Some are dismissive: *“Trump is irrational, but not stupid. NATO, Japan, South Korea and Australia want to form an alliance but they don't want to pay, so Trump won't do it”*. Others are more supportive, with remarks like *“Comrade Trump, come on! MAGA!”* and *“It’s different if you change the president”*.

There is a sense that Trump’s approach is transactional: *“Trump said that we can support NATO allies in spirit, but the amount of support depends on how much American arms and goods you buy”*. Some believe that *“The US needs China. Trump will definitely ask China to help the US overcome difficulties in the next step”*. Others comment on Trump’s character: *“Trump values personal interests, despises national honour, cares about his own face, and does not care about the international situation. Our country must grasp Trump’s personality traits in order to deal with him”*. Trade and technology wars are also a focus: *“The trade war is not over, and the technology war is still going on ... What bargaining chips did the US give? The story of Trump’s visit to China during his first term to sign a big deal has ended. Copying the menu as it is a thing of the past”*.

There is also a touch of sarcasm and cultural critique looking at joint statement and differences in NATO: *“Where is the ‘Indo-Pacific’? Has Asia-Pacific landed on the moon? Cultural invasion is really subtle and silent! Multipolarity is ‘officially’ formed!”* and a note of strategic patience: *“Don’t be chaotic, because chaos will only confuse the enemy! I fully agree that there is a conflict between them, which will eventually be resolved. Even if it cannot be completely resolved, it will be largely resolved”*.

Notes: The “China Talkies” series offers analysis of China’s state, expert, and public discourse in response to international developments. Given the fragmented and often opaque nature of Chinese narratives, the series helps present current views and perspectives more clearly. All quotes, including critical remarks, are translated and preserved verbatim. Social media profile names are user-generated phrases, not real names, and are retained as cited.

About the Author

Dokku Nagamalleswara Rao is currently serving as a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi. His research focuses primarily on China and East Asia. Rao is pursuing his Doctoral studies at Shandong University, China, specializing in China-related strategic and geopolitical issues. Prior to joining CLAWS, he completed an M.Phil. in Chinese Studies from the Centre for East Asian Studies (CEAS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. He also holds a Master's degree in Politics and International Relations from the Department of Politics and International Studies (DPIS), Pondicherry University, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. With a strong academic foundation and a focus on contemporary regional dynamics, Rao brings analytical depth to his work on China's foreign policy, security issues, and strategic affairs in the Indo-Pacific region.



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