



CHINA TALKIES:

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Reading Chinese Signals on QUAD Foreign Ministers' Meeting

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China's response to the 2025 QUAD Foreign Ministers' Meeting is layered: official silence masks deep unease, while state media and netizens highlight divisions within the QUAD and question its cohesion. The discourse strategy appears to downplay the grouping's unity, casting it as a fragile coalition driven by US interests, while warning against overestimating its impact on China's regional ambitions.

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by Dokku Nagamalleswara Rao

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

The Event in Brief

The QUAD [四方安全对话: *Sifāng Ānquán Duìhuà*] Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Washington, D.C. on July 1, 2025, [culminated](#) in a joint statement but also sparked debate regarding the depth of strategic partnership and the element of trust among the member countries. For both the US and India, these high-profile discussions served to clarify certain policy objectives and were perceived as steps toward deeper strategic coordination.

Given the central focus of the QUAD agenda, Beijing has closely monitored these developments. Although Chinese officials have remained “absolutely silent”, state-run English-language media have consistently voiced Beijing's concerns, stressing that such forums should not be used to target a “third country”. In contrast to the official silence, reactions on mainland China's digital platforms have been notably more varied and often satirical. Commentators have highlighted “differences, divisions and a lack of consensus”, drawing attention to Japan's absence from the recent NATO summit as a point of reference. This mixture of restrained official response and lively public commentary offers a revealing window into how China may be processing and responding to the evolving dynamics of US-driven security mechanisms.

Chinese Discourse on QUAD: Between Cautious Optimism and Satire

Chinese reactions to the recent QUAD meeting have taken on an unexpectedly positive tone, although the forum is often perceived as a counterweight to Beijing's influence. Beneath this surface silence, however, Chinese commentators are quick to highlight the gap between promises and initiatives. There is a prevailing sense that these changes are “forced”, driven more by shared anxieties than by genuine unity, and that the ambitious rhetoric often outpaces real delivery. This critical perspective underscores scepticism about the effectiveness and sincerity of the QUAD's strategic ambitions.

Regarding the QUAD Foreign Ministers' meeting, political satire remains prevalent within Chinese digital spaces. Commentators observe that while Japan and Australia are preoccupied with their domestic concerns regarding tariffs, and the US continues to stay fixated on China, the QUAD as a whole would do better to focus on practical cooperation—such as resource mining—rather than endless discussion. This mixture of cautious optimism and wry humour reveals a nuanced Chinese viewpoint on the evolving dynamics of these security formats, reflecting both scepticism and a pragmatic recognition of the challenges facing the grouping.

China's Reactions to the QUAD Meeting: A Layered Approach

- *Zhongnanhai's Signals*

China has **refrained from issuing any official comment**—neither from its Foreign Ministry nor its Defence Ministry spokesperson—regarding the QUAD Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Despite the meeting's sharper statements on the South and East China Seas (SSC and ECS). Perhaps QUAD's not naming China may have influenced Beijing to maintain public silence on the proceedings. This official silence, combined with indirect messaging through state media, reflects a nuanced approach that signals unease with the Quad's initiatives while carefully managing diplomatic optics.

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

Examining China's state-owned English-language media provides further insight into this layered response. On July 2, *Global Times* published three articles within two hours, each reflecting different perspectives on the QUAD. One article [questioned](#) whether the QUAD is a “cornerstone of the ‘Indo-Pacific Strategy’, or merely a ‘platform for diplomacy’?” Another [highlighted](#) internal fractures, noting the meeting took place “amid deepening division, suspicion over US’ unilateral policies”. The third article [pointed](#) to economic challenges, stating that the “critical minerals pact faces uncertainties due to high cost, trade rifts”. Meanwhile, *Xinhua News*, China's largest media network, took a different tack by [only \(one article\)](#) focusing on North Korea's (DPRK) response, referring to the statement of a “unilateral coercive act” rather than addressing the QUAD directly.

Selected Domestic Commentary Behind the Firewall

Inside China's domestic online space, the tone surrounding the QUAD remains sharply critical, highlighting divisions in non-Chinese partnerships. 阿斯卡里德 [Ā Sī Kǎ Lǐ Dé] [writes](#), "*The United States is trying to 'show leadership' by wooing its allies ... but in reality it wants to contain China. Australia is seeking a show, India is trying to save face, and Japan is dreaming of a militaristic country. Their ulterior motives are not likely to make a difference*". The article questions, "*Do you think such security dialogues can produce any 'substantial results'? Don't be naive. A few people 'talking so much' at the table may not actually change the regional situation*". The writer concludes, QUAD "*desperately pretending to be 'united', but in fact they are afraid of being led by China and afraid that China will become stronger*".

On the eve of the Quad meeting, 康将路李奥环 2B (Kāng Jiāng Lù Lǐ Āo Huán 2B) [notes](#), "*India and China unexpectedly reached a border agreement. The divergent interests among allies and the strategic vacillation of the US made this meeting full of variables. Will Rubio's tough stance loosen? Are there new waves hidden under the surface calm?*" The commentary asks, "*Can the division of camps promote long-term stability and prosperity?*". Liu Lanchang [observes](#), "*meeting will test the true joint efforts of*" ... QUAD members "*to deal with China's Rise—strategic differences are hidden under the surface unity*". Liu also highlight the same differences among members above and offers a policy prescription to the US: "*If the Quad is to truly become an effective tool to deal with China's Rise, the US must handle its relations with its allies while safeguarding its own interests and avoid strategic isolation caused by over-reliance on unilateralism*".

The domestic discourse further extends to the India-US-China triangle, with Liu Bai [commenting](#) on India's statement: "*Jaishankar said that simplifying the India-US relationship to 'reflecting the position on China' is a 'serious oversimplification' and even 'misleading' statement*". This is compared with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi's remark that "*only when the dragon and the elephant dance together can there be a win-win situation*". Both emphasise a consensus to "*bring development opportunities for each other and not pose a threat to each other and bring partners rather than competitors*". This reflects a cautious but hopeful outlook on bilateral and trilateral relations amid complex geopolitical dynamics.

Chinese Netizens' Reactions to the QUAD: Strategic Scepticism, Resource Calculations, and Calls for Self-Reliance

A comment summarises the limits of QUAD cooperation: *“A broken mirror cannot be mended. No matter how we (one) talk, chips and rare earths will never go back to the past. This includes energy and food, these fundamental things. It depends on who can be the first to stop asking for help from each other”*.

1. The QUAD's Fragile Unity and Geopolitical Chess: Chinese netizens express deep scepticism about the QUAD's cohesion and strategic intentions, often describing it as a fragile coalition driven by external manipulation rather than genuine unity. Many see the member countries as pawns in a geopolitical chess game orchestrated by the US. As one commenter states, *“These countries are in the same boat because of the so-called common imaginary enemy, but they are not a monolithic entity and have inherent bugs. Obviously, Japan and India are just pawns and chess pieces to be used by the US to cause trouble for China on both the east and west sides”*. Japan is viewed as trapped by geography and history, while India is criticized bluntly: *“The most ridiculous thing is that India is indeed not smart enough... India is the kind of country that is sold out and still rushes to pay money”*. Australia is dismissed as a marginal player, *“just full and has nothing to do, waving flags without real geopolitical conflict with China”*. The overall sentiment is summed up harshly: *“The US, Japan, India and Australia = evil spirits!”*

2. India: Rival, Pawn, or Potential Ally? Some see the relationship as fundamentally transactional and superficial: *“Even if China wants to be India's ally, India will not accept it. But India will not take advantage of the US. India knows that if China is finished, the US will come next to it, so India will only do some superficial work on China for the US to see, but will not really provoke China and let itself become the scapegoat of the US”*. On economic and technological ties, the Chinese advice to Beijing is clear: *“In terms of India's economy, China should not invest in, transfer technology to, participate in infrastructure construction, or export core key technology equipment and rare earths”*. On border issues the policy advocacy is, *“China should maintain disputes and low- to medium-intensity confrontations to contain and consume India's national strength. In terms of diplomacy, China should continue to promote political, economic and defence ties with countries surrounding India and continue to squeeze India's geostrategic space”*. One commenter explains the ongoing stalemate: *“India recently stated on the border dispute that it wants to permanently resolve the territorial issue with*

China... Only war can resolve it. By the way, Taiwan can only be unified by force". Another sums up the scepticism about cooperation: "A dance between a dragon and an elephant? That can't happen..."

India's role within the QUAD is seen by the Chinese as a focal point of distrust and debate. Some netizens see India as a rival or pawn rather than a potential ally. One comment asserts, *"India's core goal is to work with the evil forces of the US and Israel, and cooperate with China and Russia, more to gain more benefits"*. Another warns, *"India is a stumbling block on China's road to rejuvenation and is definitely not an ally... We (China) should be more vigilant"*. The idea of alliance is dismissed with caution: *"Not only that, if a country like India becomes an ally, it would probably be more terrifying than if India becomes an opponent"*.

3. Leverage and Caution on Rare Earths and Strategic Resources: Resource competition, especially around rare earths and strategic materials, dominates many discussions. Netizens dissect the QUAD members' strengths in political satire: *"The United States has money, Australia has mines, India has people, and Japan has ambitions"*. While some dismiss the QUAD's ability to challenge China's dominance—*"If these four countries come together, it will be no problem to produce rare earths in three months. You can do it yourself!"*—there is also advised caution: *"Don't urge China to export rare earths, we don't even have enough for ourselves!"*. Environmental risks of rare earth extraction are highlighted: *"The risk of rare earth extraction is very high, because the waste residue contains both heavy metals and radioactivity, which is extremely polluting"*.

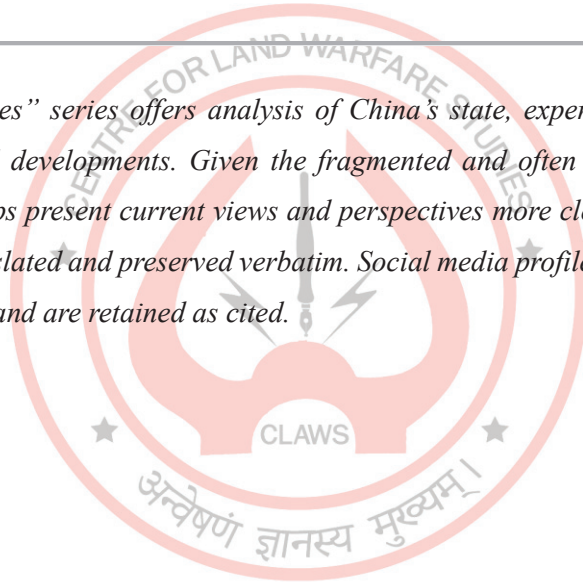
Comments note that China previously refined waste residue sent from abroad, making it harmless, and suggest China could stop importing such waste for exports to QUAD, forcing it to face the consequences. Technological competition is seen as a strategic contest: *"Rare earth extraction technology and process are only a strategic means for China... If it is well controlled, this time will take about 30 years... But if it is not well controlled, they may catch up in ten years"*. Another advises a flexible approach: *"Rare earths are not the goal but a tool for countermeasures or even restrictions... tighten and loosen them from time to time to make them feel caught in a dilemma"*.

4. Strategic Patience: Amidst the geopolitical tensions, many netizens advocate for self-reliance and patience. One comment states, *"Only you can protect yourself. It is better to rely on yourself than on others. Rely on the United States? It is better to rely on yourself"*. There is a focus on economic development and practical action: *"This is a good thing! Let's focus on*

the economy!". This mix of strategic scepticism, resource calculation, and calls for self-reliance captures the complex and multifaceted Chinese netizen response to the QUAD.

What does the QUAD Foreign Ministers Summit mean for China? This layered Chinese response—combining official silence, media nuance, and popular strategic scepticism—reflects Beijing's complex calculus amid evolving geopolitical dynamics. The QUAD's emphasis on maritime security, economic resilience, and technological cooperation poses a multifaceted challenge to China's regional ambitions. At the same time, Chinese discourse underscores internal divisions within the QUAD and cautions against overestimating its cohesion or impact. For China, the QUAD summit is both a diplomatic signal and a strategic puzzle, requiring careful management of international optics and domestic narratives as the Indo-Pacific's security architecture continues to shift.

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

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