GDELT China-Military Tone As A Geopolitical-Stress Signal For Gold

Why GDELT daily media tone on China-military activity maps to gold safe-haven regimes; the 2015 South-China-Sea artificial-island construction window as archetype.

David Stendahl · Market Lab Analytics · November 5, 2026

What this signal is

China-military tension has been a recurring safe-haven driver for gold. The 2015 South-China-Sea artificial-island construction, the 2022-2023 Taiwan-Strait tension series, and multiple PLA modernization reporting windows have all coincided with institutional reallocation toward safe-haven assets.

This signal reads GDELT daily global media tone on the China-Military theme, z-scores on a rolling window, and bounds through tanh with polarity set so elevated tension reads positive composite. A composite near plus one is sustained China-military tension stress. A composite near minus one is tone-calm. Coverage runs from March 2015 forward.

On June 8, 2015 the composite reached its series maximum plus 0.9951 during the artificial-island construction window. GDELT China-Military tone deteriorated sharply as the geopolitical implications of the construction program became clear. On February 28, 2017 the composite reached its series minimum minus 0.9951 during the post-Trump-election diplomacy normalization window.

Today the composite reads near minus 0.88, in tone-calm territory.

Here is what the engine data says. Spearman IC is plus 0.03, near zero on daily basis. State-conditional means: tone-stress plus 1.81 percent; Normal plus 1.90 percent; tone-calm plus 1.66 percent. A 15-basis-point spread. The signal is a filter rather than a strong directional trigger.

• • •

How the inputs compose

GDELT catalogs global news at 15-minute cadence and computes tone scores on sentiment analysis. The China-Military theme covers PLA activity, South-China-Sea developments, Taiwan-Strait reporting, and related military-themed China news.

The engine pulls daily tone values, z-scores on a rolling 252-day window with 126-day minimum population, and passes the z-score through tanh with scale 1.5. The polarity is set so elevated tension reads positive composite.

The engine also computes four confirming features: five-day composite velocity, 60-day volatility regime, 60-day correlation with gold daily returns, and 63-day lag-1 autocorrelation.

• • •

What the state-conditional returns have actually done

The gold forward-60-day return baseline (unconditional) is mean plus 1.78 percent, median plus 1.49 percent. Standard deviation 6.07 percent. Percent negative 39.1 percent.

> **Reference baseline (2,868 gold-aligned forward-60-day windows from March 2015 through November 2026)**
>
> Gold forward-60-day return baseline: mean plus 1.78 percent, median plus 1.49 percent. Phase 0 source: Z10519 engine parquet joined with COMEX gold back-adjusted continuous closes.

Tone-stress state (Phase +1), 1,026 trading days, delivered mean plus 1.81 percent. Normal (Phase 0), 790 days, plus 1.90 percent. Tone-calm (Phase –1), 1,112 days, plus 1.66 percent. The 15-basis-point spread is modest; use as filter.

• • •

Three cases that frame how to read the signal

Case 1: June 2015 South-China-Sea artificial-island construction series maximum

Series max plus 0.9951 on June 8 2015 as GDELT China-Military tone deteriorated during the artificial-island construction window. Gold forward response was modest as the broader macro regime was the mid-decade commodity bust.

Case 2: February 2017 post-election normalization series minimum

Series min minus 0.9951 on February 28 2017 during the post-Trump-election diplomacy normalization window. GDELT tone improved sharply.

Case 3: 2024 through 2025 stable moderate regime

Composite oscillated in moderate ranges as China-military tone shifted around Taiwan-Strait reporting and PLA modernization. No single extreme defined the period.

• • •

How to use the signal today

This is a geopolitical-stress filter on a 60-day forward horizon. Updates daily from GDELT release.

Three best uses. First, as a geopolitical-tone regime filter. Second, as a cross-check against direction signals. Third, as a complacency warning when tone-calm readings are sustained near minus one.

Methodology notes

Tanh of 252-day z-score of GDELT China-Military daily tone, polarity set so stress reads positive. Spearman IC plus 0.03 across 2,868 days. The March 2015 start reflects reliable GDELT theme coverage onset.

What this signal does not cover

Daily IC is near zero. GDELT tone is a proxy for sentiment. 11-year sample window is modest. Theme is fixed.

Not investment advice. Signal readings and empirical statistics are derived from publicly available data (GDELT Project daily tone-weighted themes; COMEX end-of-day gold back-adjusted continuous settles). (c) 2026 David Stendahl.