

CHINA GAVE 5 DIFFERENT EXPLANATIONS FOR TROOP BUILDUP AT LAC: JAISHANKAR

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NEW DELHI : China offered five different explanations for amassing armed troops along the border with India, foreign minister [S. Jaishankar](#) said on Wednesday, and added that ties between the Asian neighbours has been "very significantly damaged" by the move.

Speaking at an event organized by Australia's Lowy Institute, Jaishankar said ties between the two nations are currently at their "most difficult phase", referring to the relations after a violent clash between the two armies in June, which led to the death of 20 Indian and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers.

Ties worsened since May when New Delhi detected intrusions by Chinese troops into Indian territory. The two countries share an undemarcated border, seen as the reason for differing perceptions on where the border lies. Even after several rounds of talks, the two countries have not yet reached a solution to the border dispute, though it was largely deemed as peaceful, until tensions rose after the Chinese intrusions.

Responding to a question about India's cooperation with China without giving in to Chinese coercion and demands, Jaishankar said over the past three-to-four decades, the last time the two countries had casualties on the border prior to June was in 1975.

Since 1988, when then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Beijing, the direction of the ties had been broadly positive, he said, with an increase in trade and tourism among other types of engagement.

"All this was posited on the fact that while we were trying to solve the boundary question, we would maintain peace and tranquillity at the border ... You never had a major breach of this understanding," he said referring to a series of agreements since 1993 between the two countries to ensure normalcy at the borders.

The death of the 20 Indian soldiers "completely changed the national sentiment" vis-à-vis China, he said, and added: "How we get the relationship back on track, is a very big issue."

"The relationship this year has been very significantly damaged. We are very clear that maintaining peace and stability along the LAC is the basis for the rest of the relationship to progress."

On the rise of Chinese president Xi Jinping and China's influence globally, Jaishankar said: "You have today a China whose engagement with the world is very different from the way it used to be 20 years ago. You could argue that it is natural that as a country goes up the power hierarchy, its behavioural pattern would change. I reserve comment on it. But no question, you have a more nationalistic China and that is expressed in a variety of ways and often in policies as well."

On the ascent of Chinese president Xi Jinping up the power ladder and China's rise in the world, Jaishankar said that "there has been an evolution in China."

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to be conducted 20 years ago. You could argue that it is natural that as a country goes up the power hierarchy its behavioural pattern would change. I reserve comment on it. But clearly no question, you have a more nationalistic China and that is expressed down the line in a variety of ways and often in policies as well," he said.

On India-Australia ties, the Indian minister said that in the current context of a multi polar world, countries needed to look "beyond old habits and established structures."

"There is a requirement today of a lot of other countries with more capabilities to contribute to the shaping of the global order to ensure the global good, to secure the global commons," he said in the context of what India and Australia could do together bilaterally and multilaterally like in the Quad group that brings together Japan and the US as well.

Countries with converging interests and shared values who relate to each other in various ways could do a lot together not only between themselves but also in their respective regions and the rest of the world, he said.

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