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SINO-INDIAN WAR - 1962

The Sino-Indian War also known as the Sino-Indian Border Conflict was a war between China and India that happened in 1962. There were a number of reasons why China attacked India. In 1959, Indian Prime Minister had met Chinese Prime Minister and said Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai. Yet China decided to betray our trust and made a surprise attack.



Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- describe the border dispute between China and India;
- Identify the key issues between India and China which led to the 1962 conflict and
- list the course of events of Sino-Indian war in 1962

17.1 Genesis of the Problem between India and China

What was the problem between India and China?

- When we got independence, our leaders declared a foreign policy that said India and China are two equal and great powers of Asia. China did not agree and wanted to be the only power. Therefore, it first captured Tibet and made it part of China in 1950. In 1959 because of atrocities on the Tibetan people and Dalai Lama (religious head of Tibetan people) fled Tibet, India gave refuge to Dalai Lama and his followers in India.
- From military point of view, the border between India and China in Arunachal Pradesh, was drawn by a British shown by Sir Henry McMahon line in 1914. It was accepted by Tibet. But China did not agree and said Tibet was not an independent country and could not make border agreements.

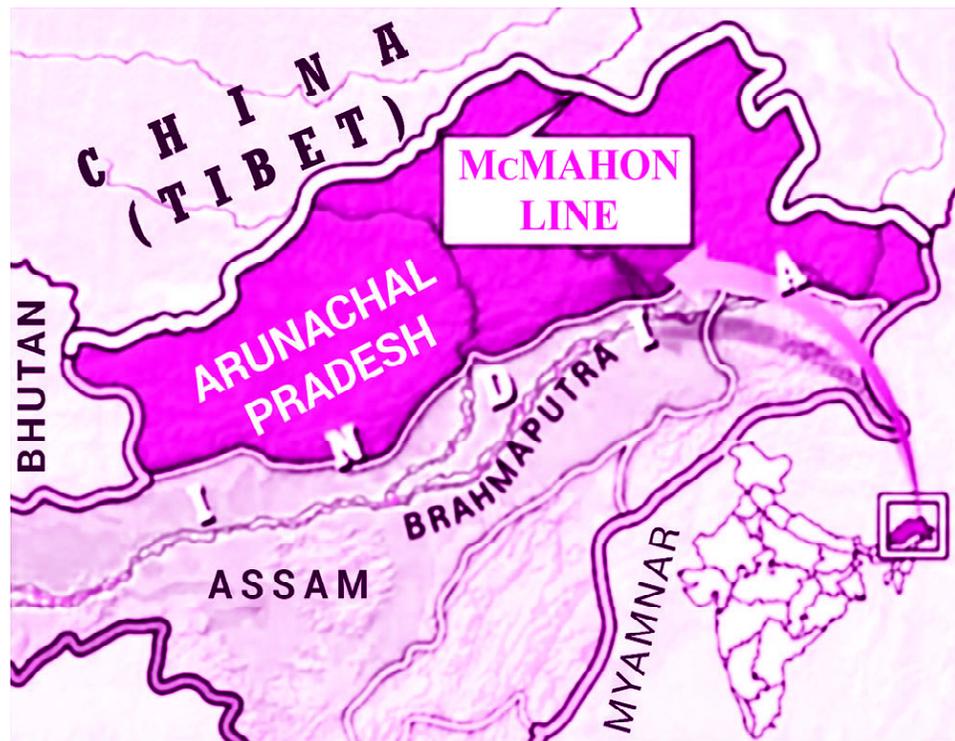
Major Wars Post Independence



Note

- Similarly in Ladakh region, the border between India and China was drawn by a British named Johnson in 1865. This was also not accepted by China.
- Under Chairman Mao, China wanted to take settle the border dispute by force in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore this problem of the border became a reason to have a war.

The Sino-Indian border (See Map 17.1) problem came into focus during the early part of this century. The status of Tibet has been contested by china for long historically, India has border with Tibet. But after the Chinese ennexed Tibet forcibly this border became the Sino-Indian border.



Map 17.1 Mc Mahon Line that demarcates the Sino-India Border



Intext Questions

17.1

1. Who made the first border between India and China in 1914?
2. In which state of India was the McMahon line drawn?

17.2 Events that Led to the War

17.2.1 Borders with China

Before we see the events that led to the war of 1961, let us see where all our borders lie with China.



Note



Map 17.2: Indo- China Borders



Activity

17.1

See a map of the Indo-China borders and write down which states of India have borders with China.

17.2.2 : Events of Sino-Indian War

Now let us see the events that led to the 1962 Sino-Indian war:

- **Chinese maps** showed 50,000 sq miles of Indian Territory in Aksai Chin as part of China. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru objected and mentioned it to Chou en Lai the Prime Minister of China during his official visit. China promised to resolve it but did not do so.
- The construction of roads by China passing through Aksai Chin since 1956 was considered by India as Chinese aggression over India territory.

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Note

- Additional check posts were established in Aksai Chin by the Indian Army in response to Chinese presence and the road built by the Chinese in Aksai Chin.
- In July 1958 China violated Ladakh territory near Khurnak Fort. Similar events took place in summer of 1959 in Migyitui and Pangyong lake area in Ladakh.
- 23rd January 1959, China officially disputed the boundaries in Aksai Chin and called them as it a wrong marking.
- 1959 Khampa rebellion in Tibet and Dalai Lama fled to India. Dalai Lama was welcomed in India and the Chinese settled boundary dispute have always felt threatened by it.
- Chinese government Myanmar with based on McMahon line of those countries but has not recognised. This with India. This meant violation of the agreement of 1954 and laying claim to 50,000 sq miles.
- 1961 India's foreign policy followed the concept of 'Forward Policy' and deployed troops accordingly.



Intext Questions

17.2

1. What was the name of the place in Ladakh where there was a border dispute between India and China?
2. Who was the leader of Tibet who fled to India in 1959?
3. With which country the Chinese Government signed border treaties?

17.3 Overview of the 1962 Sino-Indian War

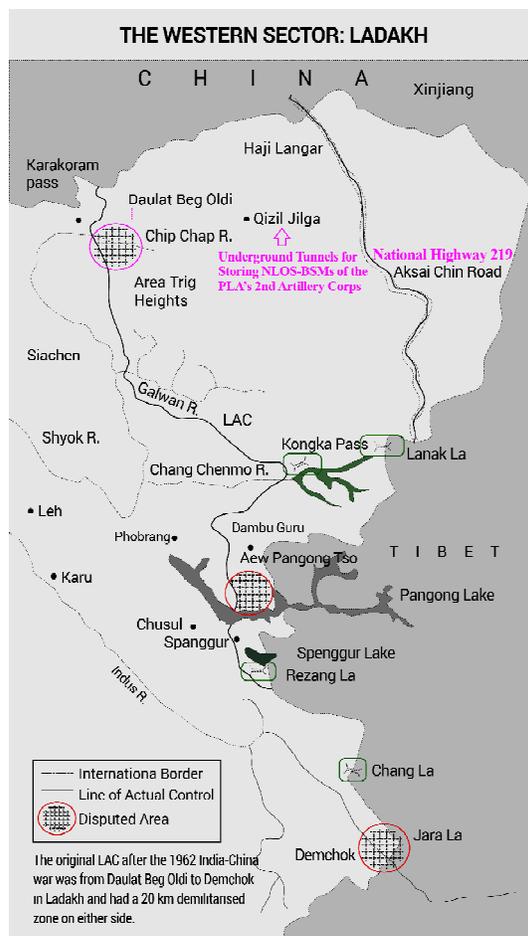
On 20th October 1962, the first group of the Chinese People's Liberation Army launched a well-planned assault across the Thagla Ridge, in India's province of Assam. Arunachal Pradesh was formed much later and therefore this area was considered as part of Assam. The war of 1962 happened in two regions, one was in Ladakh in the area of Aksai Chin and the second in Arunachal Pradesh. These can be called two sectors of operations. In military words, the word 'Sectors' are also called 'Theatres' of operations. You have studied about it in the lesson on World War II.

17.3.1 The Western Sector

India was facing a three front attack. The three fronts were Aksai Chin in Ladakh, Thag La in Assam (now Arunachal Pradesh) and at Walong on the China-Burma (Myanmar) - India border. India faced a critical shortage of troops, ammunition and supplies. The winter clothing for High altitude areas was critically short of the requirement. Above all there were no roads to move troops. The Chinese came in massive strength. They started building roads to support the attack. In the Western sector the attack came at Daulat Beg Oldi, Chushul and Demchok. The Chinese captured areas which they said belonged to them. A detailed map showing exact areas in Ladakh where the battle took place is given in Map 17.3.



Note



Map 17.3: Area of Operation in the Western Sector

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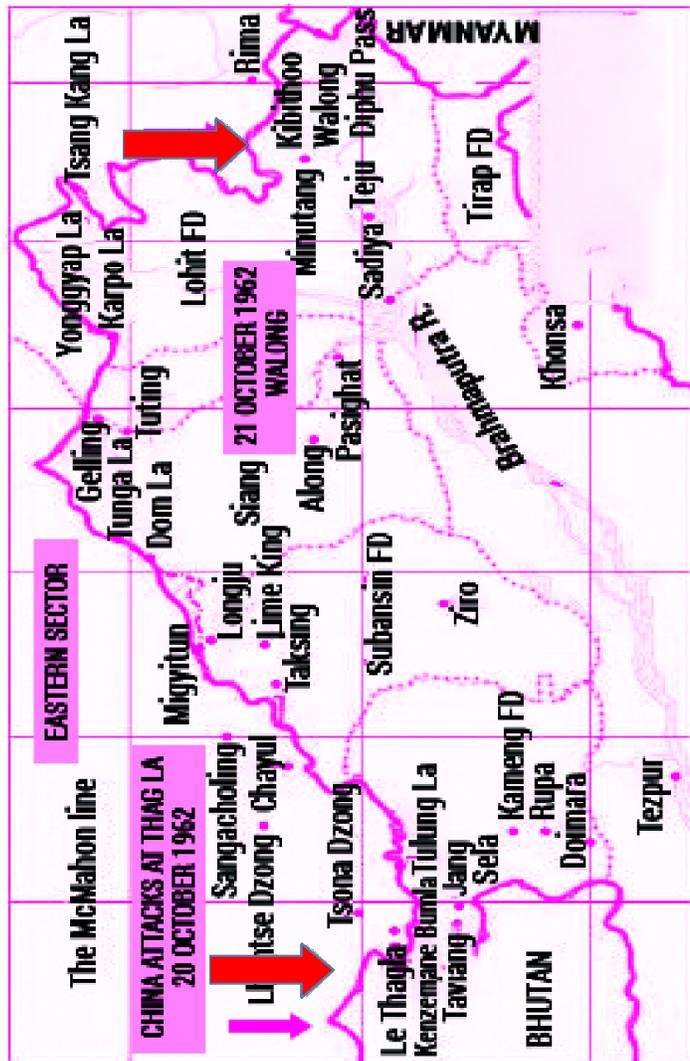


Note

13 Kumaon Rezang La is a mountain pass on the south-eastern approach to Chushul Valley in Ladakh, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India. It is approx. 3,000 meters long and 2,000 meters wide, with an average height of 16,000 feet. La means a mountain pass in Tibetan language. The Chinese attacked Rezang La at 5am on 18 November 1962. A Company of 13 KUMAON led by Major Shaitan Singh defended the post with 123 men. The Chinese attacked with hundreds of soldiers, but our jawans opened accurate fire and killed many of them. A second attack was launched at 5.40 am by 350 soldiers. They were also beaten back and many died. Repeated attacks from the rear of the defences left many dead and wounded on both sides. The Kumaon fought so well that 114 men died out of the 123 in that post. Major Shaitan Singh was awarded the highest gallantry award of Param Vir Chakra (Posthumously). A memorial has been built in Chushul in honour of the brave soldiers.

17.3.2 The Eastern Sector

In Assam, the Chinese forces attacked Thag La on 20 October and Walong on 21 October 1962. With their large number of troops and heavy artillery firing, they could capture Thag La and portions of Walong. Indian army was ill equipped and forced shortage of troops. The Chinese made an offer to negotiate a ceasefire on 24th October, the fourth day of fighting itself, if both sides withdrew equal distances from the current line-of-control. India refused. See Map 17.4 to get an idea of the places where the Chinese attacked in Assam (now Arunachal Pradesh).



Map 17.4: Eastern Sector

By the end of the first week of November, China had completely routed the India. The PLA controlled large part of Arunachal Pradesh. India requested emergency military aid from the United States. The United States, Great Britain and Canada took seriously Nehru's fear that China was attempting to cut off Indian north east region, and developed a joint plan that began to provide emergency military supplies to India on 3rd November. By this time, the PLA controlled a portion of India equal in area to Great Britain. However, in the north-east area of Walong, the situation proved to be quite different, Indian forces counter attacked on 13th November at Walong, but a concerted Chinese attack displaced them from this hard-won position, and the nearby garrison had to retreat down the Lohit valley. By 18th November, the Chinese had penetrated close to the outskirts of Tezpur, which was a major frontier town. The Chinese stopped their advance at that point and declared ceasefire. The two armies are now deployed on the line of actual control.



Note



Activity

17.2

Find the names of Param Veer Chakra winner of Sino-India war of 1962. Write a short story on their bravery showed at the front.

17.3.3 Causes of Failure on the Border War

1962 Indo-China war is considered as a defeat for the Indian Armed Forces. However, there were praise worthy instances of bravery shown by our soldiers. What made the Indian Army lose the war with China? Important reasons in brief are as follows:-

- Numerical and tactical superiority of the Chinese Armed forces over the Indian Armed Forces. Chinese came in thousands and attacked. They had better equipments and weapons.
- No air support for the Indian Army fighting the Chinese troops.
- Poor clothing and vintage personal weapons for the Indian troops fighting in high altitudes.



Intext Questions

17.3

1. When did the Chinese Army launch its attack on India?
2. Which three places did the Chinese attack in Ladakh in 1962?
3. Which Western Nations supported India during the 1962 Sino-Indian War?



What You Have Learnt

- The background of the problem between India and China.

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Note

- The various events leading to the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- Effects of India's Forward Policy.
- Overview of the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- The various causes for India's defeat in the War.



Terminal Exercises

1. Explain the origin of problems between India and China.
2. Which Indian State has boundaries with China?
3. List out the course of events that led to the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
4. What were the major reasons for India's defeat in the 1962 War.



Answers to Intext Questions

17.1

1. Sir Henry McMahon
2. Arunachal Pradesh.

17.2

1. Aksai Chin in Ladakh.
2. Dalai Lama.
3. Pakistan and Myanmar.

17.3

1. 20th October 1962
2. Daulat-Beg oldi, Chushul and Demchok.
3. United States of America, United Kingdom and Canada.