

SINO INDIAN WAR 20 October 1962

On 20 October 1962, the Sino-Indian war started with simultaneous Chinese offensives in Ladakh and along the McMahon Line. The war ended with a Chinese ceasefire a month later and a defeat for India.

Sino-Indian War (1962 War with China)

- The Himalayan border dispute was the chief pretext of the war. China claimed the Aksai Chin area in Ladakh, Kashmir and the Tawang area in Arunachal Pradesh as its own (Aksai Chin as part of its Xingjiang and Tawang as part of Tibet).
- The Aksai Chin is a desert of salt flats that is about 5000 m above sea level. The eastern front where the war took place, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous region having many peaks above 7000 m over sea level. So, the war was fought under extreme harsh conditions of terrain and freezing climate. Many soldiers died due to these conditions as well.
- After independence, India maintained a cordial relationship with its northern neighbour which is also a country with which India has had historical and cultural ties for centuries.
- In 1954, the Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was signed between India and China. India even supported China in international representation. However, things took a turn for the worse when China announced its occupation of Tibet. India proposed negotiations on the Tibet issue. After the 1959 Tibet uprising, India had given asylum to the Dalai Lama and this obviously did not go down well with the Chinese. China perceived India as a threat to its rule over Tibet and this was also a major reason for the war. Mao Zedong even went on to state that the uprising in Lhasa, Tibet was caused by Indians.
- In 1960, the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai suggested that if India gave up its claim over Aksai Chin, China would drop its claim in Arunachal Pradesh (then called the North Eastern Frontier Agency). But Nehru rejected this outright saying China had no legitimate claims over both the areas.
- Throughout the summer of 1962, there were skirmishes along with the border areas between troops of both countries.
- The Indian side was confident war would not be triggered and made preparations. India had only two divisions of troops in the

region of conflict. In August 1962, Brigadier D. K. Palit claimed that a war with China in the near future could be ruled out. Even in September 1962, when Indian troops were ordered to "expel the Chinese" from Thag La, Maj. General J. S. Dhillon expressed the opinion that "experience in Ladakh had shown that a few rounds fired at the Chinese would cause them to run away." Because of this, the Indian army was completely unprepared when the attack at Yumtso La occurred.

- Declassified CIA documents which were compiled at the time reveal that India's estimates of Chinese capabilities made them neglect their military in favour of economic growth. It is claimed that if a more military-minded man had been in place instead of Nehru, India would have been more likely to have been ready for the threat of a counter-attack from China.
- On 6 October 1962, the Chinese leadership convened. Lin Biao reported that PLA intelligence units had determined that Indian units might assault Chinese positions at Thag La on 10 October (Operation Leghorn). The Chinese leadership and the Central Military Council decided upon war to launch a large-scale attack to punish perceived military aggression from India. In Beijing, a larger meeting of Chinese military was convened in order to plan for the coming conflict.
- Mao and the Chinese leadership issued a directive laying out the objectives for the war. A main assault would be launched in the eastern sector, which would be coordinated with a smaller assault in the western sector. All Indian troops within China's claimed territories in the eastern sector would be expelled, and the war would be ended with a unilateral Chinese ceasefire and withdrawal, followed by a return to the negotiating table. India led the Non-Aligned Movement, Nehru enjoyed international prestige, and China, with a larger military, would be portrayed as an aggressor. He said that a well-fought war "will guarantee at least thirty years of peace" with India, and determined the benefits to offset the costs.
- China also reportedly bought a significant amount of Indian rupee currency from Hong Kong, supposedly to distribute amongst its soldiers in preparation for the war.
- On 8 October, additional veteran and elite divisions were ordered to prepare to move into Tibet from the Chengdu and Lanzhou military regions.

- On 12 October, Nehru declared that he had ordered the Indian army to "clear Indian territory in the NEFA of Chinese invaders" and personally met with Kaul, issuing instructions to him.
- On 14 October, an editorial on *People's Daily* issued China's final warning to India: "So it seems that Mr. Nehru has made up his mind to attack the Chinese frontier guards on an even bigger scale. It is high time to shout to Mr. Nehru that the heroic Chinese troops, with the glorious tradition of resisting foreign aggression, can never be cleared by anyone from their own territory ... If there are still some maniacs who are reckless enough to ignore our well-intentioned advice and insist on having another try, well, let them do so. History will pronounce its inexorable verdict ... At this critical moment ... we still want to appeal once more to Mr. Nehru: better rein in at the edge of the precipice and do not use the lives of Indian troops as stakes in your gamble."
- Marshal Liu Bocheng headed a group to determine the strategy for the war. He concluded that the opposing Indian troops were among India's best, and to achieve victory would require deploying crack troops and relying on force concentration to achieve decisive victory. On 16 October, this war plan was approved, and on the 18th, the final approval was given by the Politburo for a "self-defensive counter-attack", scheduled for 20 October.
- India started following a 'Forward Policy' where it began to send troops and patrols to disputed border areas. Some of these troops even went beyond the Indian borders. This move deteriorated relations between both nations.
- Also, the Indian leadership did not believe that China would attack. The army was also ill-prepared for any major war. Indian soldiers were heavily outnumbered by Chinese troops. Indian planning was shoddy before it sent troops to the disputed areas.
- In the fighting that went on for a month in both the western and eastern fronts, nearly 3000 Indian soldiers were killed and about 1000 more injured. India had asked for help from the superpowers USA and USSR but did not get any help.
- Both China and India did not use their navy or air force in the war.
- China declared a ceasefire on 21 November since it reached its claim lines, and also stated that from December 1, 1962, the Chinese frontier guards would retreat 20 km behind the Line of Actual Control.
- After the war, India increased its support for Tibetan refugees and revolutionaries.

- The defeat in the war also led to the resignation of the then Defense Minister V K Krishna Menon, who was blamed for the lack of preparedness of the army.
- Another consequence of the debacle was that India modernized its armed forces and became more prepared in later conflicts. It also perhaps taught the political leaders to be extra cautious and vigilant when it comes to matters of national security.