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INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR - 1971

The 1971 Indo-Pak war was the third war that India fought with Pakistan after independence. However, this time the reasons for the war were different as compared to the previous ones. You may recall here that on the eve of partition of India there were two wings of Pakistan - the West and the East - separated by 1000 miles with India being sandwiched between the two.

The Western wing is the present day Pakistan and where the government and capital of the country Islamabad is located while the capital for East Pakistan was Dhaka. The people of East Pakistan were dissatisfied with the treatment given to them by the West Pakistani Government. Hence they revolted against them. India helped the Mukti Bahini of East Pakistanis to get freedom. This was the major reason why the 1971 war took place. It was also the first war where Indian Army, Navy and Air Force took part collectively. Each of these wings of the Armed Forces played a major part in Indian victory. Because of Indian help a new nation called Bangladesh was born.



Objectives

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- identify the reasons for the 1971 war and
- explain the major operations of the war.

19.1 Why did India and Pakistan fight a war in 1971?

It is important to understand the reasons behind India's involvement in the 1971 war. East Pakistanis were basically Bengali Muslims. Development in Pakistan was concentrated in the Western part while the Eastern side was neglected. In the 1970 local elections in East Pakistan a new party The Awami League came to power. The people now wanted more autonomy and control over natural resources. Recall here what you have learnt in your previous lessons regarding the nature of political system in existence in Pakistan. Since its independence the government of Pakistan depended very much on the military to rule. By the time this war happened, Pakistan was under the control of a military General named Yahya Khan who took over power from his predecessor General Ayub Khan.

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Note



Map 19.1: Map of West and East Pakistan

The military leadership of Pakistan under General Yahya Khan not only canceled the national assembly but also did not allow the formation of government by the Awami League who had won the recently held national elections. In other words, West Pakistan government rejected the demand for greater political control by the Bengalis. The military arrested the leader of Awami League, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in March 1971 and imposed military rule in East Pakistan. They started committing atrocities against the people. Thousands of refugees started entering India and this created a big problem. Atrocities by Pakistan Army and refusal to accept the demands of the people led to formation of a movement called 'Mukti Bahini' or Freedom Fighters, who led the armed liberation struggle against the Pakistani army.

What is **Mukti Bahini Movement** and what was the reason for its formation?

Mukti Bahini is an armed liberation struggle movement started in East Pakistan against the West Pakistan government. The reason for its formation was the refusal of letting Awami league form to the government after the national elections and arrest of the leader of Awami League leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The mass killing was viewed as '*genocide*' committed by the Pakistani army against its own citizens that led to an estimated 10 million Bengalis fleeing East Pakistan as refugees to India. The Fig 19.1 shows the people heading to India from East Pakistan.

What is Genocide?

Deliberate killing of large group of people particularly of the same nationalistic group, by the ruling junta.



Note

The reasons for this war were -

- An elected political party in East Pakistan, the Awami League was not allowed to form the government was banned.
- Military rule was imposed. Army committed atrocities and killed many Bengalis.
- Bengalis fled and about 10 million refugees came to Assam and West Bengal. This caused serious economic crises in India.
- General strike in East Pakistan and formation of Mukti Bahini to fight Pakistan army.
- India openly supported the freedom struggle of the people of East Pakistan.

**Intext Questions****19.1**

1. Mention any two immediate reasons for India's involvement in the war.
2. Who was the military ruler of Pakistan during the war?
3. What is Awami League and who was its leader?
4. What was the other name for Mukti Bahini and why was it created?

19.1.1 How did Bangladesh get Liberated?

First let us understand this question, one by one. When and where did the fighting begin? And what were the objectives of India?

- The war began on 3rd December 1971 when Pakistani air force launched strikes on air fields in Western India and the very next day India declared war and retaliated with air strikes. However, even before the actual war began, the Indian Army's Eastern Command started preparing for Eastern Operations as early as April and May 1971. The command was given the responsibility of training and equipping the Mukti Bahini freedom fighters who were by then engaged in guerrilla war against the Pakistani army in the East.
- **Objectives for the Armed Forces.** The Indian Armed Forces had two major tasks. These were:-
 - ❖ **Liberate East Pakistan from the rule of West Pakistan;**
 - ❖ **Make sure Pakistan did not take this opportunity to make head ways in Jammu and Kashmir.**

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Note

From the military point of view the objectives meant two things. One was to capture Dacca the capital city of East Pakistan, and the second was to defend the Western borders against any attack by Pakistan. You would have learnt in the previous lessons that the partition of India was incomplete since Kashmir was a contentious issue between the two countries. Hence preventing Pakistan from utilizing the opportunity to enter into Kashmir was also the other objective of the war. Indian Armed Forces started preparing for war. Training for war, getting ammunition and weapons, and clothing for the jawans was all done very meticulously. The Chief of the Army Staff, Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, waited for monsoons to get over before starting any operations. The Indian Armed Forces became fully prepared by December 1971.

What did Pakistan do? Political parties in West Pakistan launched a ‘crush India’ campaign.

On seeing India’s preparation for war and build up of Indian Army troops, Pakistan launched surprise air strikes on 03 December 1971. Pakistani Air Force bombed Indian airfields in Ambala in Haryana, Amritsar in Punjab and Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir. The strike was code named Operation “Chengiz Khan” and marked the formal initiation of hostilities between the two countries. And soon after, India retaliated to the attack in a swift manner. From now on the actual war began. The strategy of Pakistan was to destroy Indian aircrafts and gain air superiority. This in effect means to destroy enemy air fields so that the airspace will be brought under the complete control without any resistance from enemy aircrafts. However, the attempt of Pakistani air force to establish air superiority failed since the Indian air force quickly reacted. Indian Air Force Hunters were used for bombing Pakistan airfields.



Intext Questions

19.2

1. When did the war begin?
2. What were the objectives of India in the war?
3. What do you mean by Operation Chengiz Khan?

19.2 Major Operations in the War

Before we look at the major operations, it is important to know the personalities involved. On the Indian side the leader was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and the Defence Minister was Babu Jagjivan Ram. The Chief of Army Staff was General S.H.J.F. Manekshaw, the Chief of Air Staff was Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal and the Chief of Naval Staff was Admiral S.M. Nanda. On the Pakistani side were General Yahya Khan as the military ruler and Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi as the commander of Pakistan’s Eastern Command under whose control was East Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered immediate mobilization of troops and to respond to the strikes under the overall command of General Sam Manekshaw (later became

Field Marshal). Army, Navy and Airforce took part in the war as one team. Let us see them one by one.

19.2.1 Air Operations

A notable aspect of the war is that all three wings of the Indian military – army, navy and air force – were involved in a well coordinated manner on both the fronts. The Indian air force provided aerial support for the ground forces. The Indian air force achieved complete air superiority at the Eastern front, as well as in the Western front. The aircrafts that were used by the IAF, were the MiG 21s, Canberras, Hunters besides, Gnats and others, and on the Pakistani side were the F-86 Sabre Jets, F104 Star Fighters and others. The role played by MIG 21 aircrafts needs highlighting as it was used efficiently by way of continuous bombing and providing air cover for ground troops during the war.



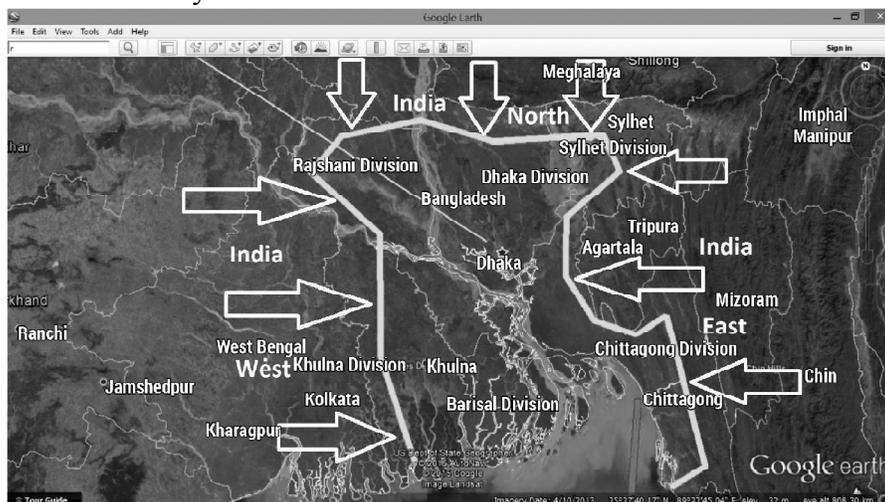
Note

Intext Questions 19.3

1. Who was India’s defence minister at the time of war?
2. Name the Chief of Army Staff of India during the 1971 war.
3. Who was the Commander of Pakistan’s Eastern Command in 1971?
4. Name the prominent fighter aircrafts used during the 1971 war.

19.2.2 The Ground Operations

(a) **Eastern Front:** As you have already studied, the war took place on two fronts. Western front in the Punjab - Jammu borders and the Eastern front in East Pakistan. Let us see the Eastern Front first. Indian Army planned and carried out attacks into East Pakistan from all sides. Each arrow in the Map represents an Indian Infantry Division.



Map 19.2: Indian Army Attack into East Pakistan

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Note

The strategy adopted here was quick, three-pronged assault of nine infantry divisions with attached armoured units and close air support that rapidly entered into the capital city Dhaka of East Pakistan. Under the command of General Officer Commanding in Chief of India Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora of Eastern Command the objective of capturing and taking Dhaka was fully realized. Pakistan Army surrendered on 16 December 1971. It took only 13 days to defeat the Pakistan army. See Table 19.1 and note that we took more than 90000 Prisoners of War.

Inter-Service Branch	Number of captured Pakistani POWs	Officer Commanding
Pakistan Army	54,154	Lieutenant-General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi
Pakistan Navy/ Pakistan Marines	1,381	Rear-Admiral Mohammad Shariff
Pakistan Air Force	833	Air Commodore Inamul Haq
Paramilitary/ East Pakistan Rifles/Police	22,000	Major-General Rao Farman Ali
Civil government personnel	12,000	Governor Abdul Motaleb Malik
Total:	90,368	~

Table 19.1 Pakistan losses in the War in East Pakistan

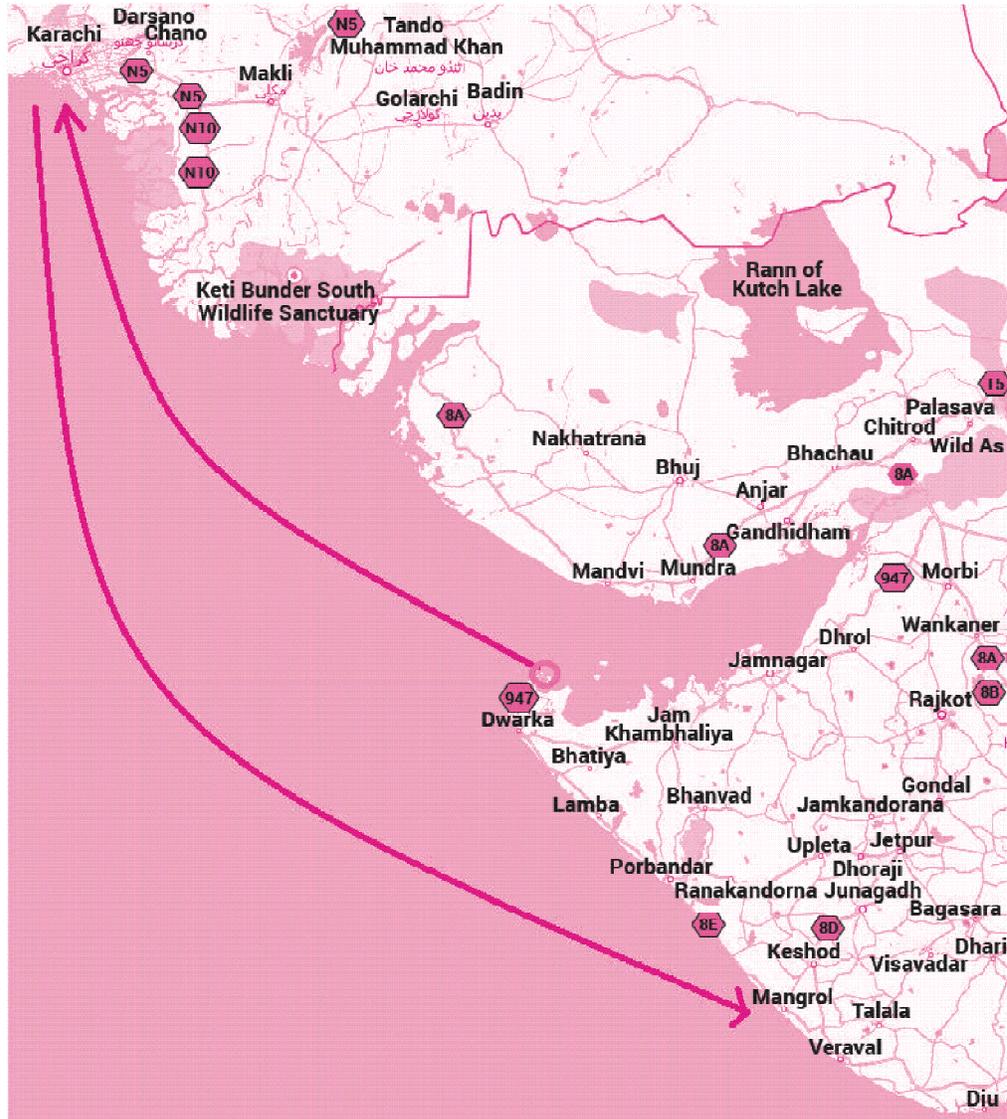
- (b) **Western Front:** On the Western front the main battles were fought in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan. As in the past, Pakistan first attacked Poonch and Chamb. Attack in Poonch was over within 3 days. In Chamb too Indian 10 Infantry Division fought a gallant battle. Pakistan however, managed to capture Mandiala Heights. Because of heavy losses it pulled back and Indian army reoccupied the lost positions. Indian army also captured some important heights in Kargil. In Punjab the noteworthy attack was in Shakargarh which is an area opposite Pathankot. See Map 19.3 for battles in Shakargarh.

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Note

name Operation TRIDENT in which missile boats INS Nipat, INS Nirghat and INS Veer armed with missiles were used. Four days later another naval Operation PYTHON was launched. Both operations were successful in destroying Pakistani ships and thereby reducing their capacity to launch naval attacks against India.



Map 19.4: Operation TRIDENT

At the Eastern front too Indian navy played a remarkable role. The strategy was aimed at not allowing Pakistan to use its Eastern port of Chittagong for reinforcements to attack Indian positions and hence the Indian navy deployed its only aircraft carrier INS Vikrant in the Bay of Bengal. The Indian Eastern Naval Command was under Vice Admiral N. Krishnan who successfully isolated East Pakistan by a naval blockade and trapped their navy in their ports. Besides INS Vikrant notable Indian navy ships that took part in the naval war effort are INS Guldar, INS Gharial and INS Magar and

many other submarines.



Intext Questions

19.4

1. How many Divisions did Indian Army use in the Eastern Front in the 1971 war?
2. Name the Commander in Chief of India's Eastern Army Command.
3. Name the two important naval operations at the Western front during the 1971 war.
4. What was the objective of Operation Trident?
5. What is INS Vikrant?
6. Name the commanders of India's Western and Eastern Naval Command.

19.2.4 The End of the War

Overall, you have seen that this was a short and a decisive war that lasted only 13 days. On all fronts the Indian action relied on leadership, speed, logistics and accuracy and exploited the weakness in enemy's positions resulting in swift victory. The Pakistani side could not match the superiority and speed with which the Indian armed forces were attacking right from day one. Besides, the Pakistani side also lacked, intelligence, strategy and the troops were demoralised and ill equipped to fight. Hence they faced big losses and yielded in less than a fortnight. There was panic in the Pakistani Eastern Command's military leadership commanded by Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi.

Indian advances demoralized the Pakistani soldiers and subsequently, the Indian Army encircled Dacca. On 16th December an ultimatum was issued to surrender and on hearing the ultimatum Lieutenant-General A.A.K. Niazi surrendered and signed the instrument of surrender to Lieutenant General J.S. Aurora [Fig. 19.2]. On the same day Pakistan called for unilateral ceasefire and surrendered its combined military to Indian Army. 93,000 troops were taken as Prisoners of War thereby ending war. And with that the objective of liberating East Pakistan was realized and a new nation-Bangladesh was born.



Note

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Note



Fig. 19.1: Signing of Instrument of Surrender by Pakistani Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi



Activity 19.1

Search the name and image of Param Veer Chakra winner of 1971 war. Also mention the name of batallion and location where the fought the war.



Intext Questions 19.5

1. When did Pakistan forces surrender in East Pakistan?
2. Who signed the instrument of surrender?
3. What was the outcome of the war?
4. What were the lessons learnt?



What You Have Learnt

- If the government does not address the concerns of the people then it is bound to fail.
- This war showed that the Pakistani government failed to find a solution to the internal political struggle by the East Pakistani residents, which aggravated the conflict and the subsequent involvement of India.
- You have also understood that to win a war there must be effective leadership and adequate logistical support.

- Determination is another aspect that has been learnt. For example, the battle of Longewala proved how determined Indian army was in holding its position and put up a resistance which ultimately was successful. Also, the close coordination from the three services of Indian military helped achieve victory.
- It was a great achievement indeed for India and the lessons learnt are applicable even this day.
- Comprehensive national power which includes the efforts of all concerned including the people across the nation is required for any victory.



Terminal Questions

1. Mention the major reasons for India's involvement in 1971 war.
2. Highlight the major naval battles fought during the war.
3. What was the importance of the Battle of Longewala?
4. Mention the reasons for India's victory in the war.



Answers to Intext Questions

19.1

1. Mass killing of Bengalis by Pakistani army and huge number of refugees fleeing to India.
2. General Yahya Khan.
3. Awami league is a political party and its leader was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
4. The other name for Mukti Bahini is Freedom Fighters.

19.2

1. The war began on the 3rd of December 1971 when Pakistani airforce launched air strikes against India.
2. The ultimate objective was to liberate East Pakistan and the immediate objectives were to capture Dacca at the Eastern front and prevent Pakistan from entering Indian territory at the Western front.
3. Operation Chengiz Khan was air strike launched by Pakistani airforce against Indian targets in Western India.
4. Air superiority means to destroy enemy air fields in order to bring the airspace under the complete control without any resistance from enemy aircrafts.

19.3

1. The Defence Minister of India at the time of 1971 war was Babu Jagjivan Ram.

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Note

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Note

2. The Chief of Army Staff of India was S.H.J.F. Manekshaw
3. The Commander of Pakistan's Eastern Command was Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi
4. India's MiG 21s, Hunters, Canberras and Pakistan's F-86 Sabre air crafts.

19.4

1. Nine Infantry Divisions.
2. Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora.
3. Operation Trident and Operation Python.
4. The objective was to attack Pakistan's Karachi port and destroy its ability to support its forces in East Pakistan.
5. INS Vikrant was India's air craft carrier..
6. Western Naval Command was under Vice Admiral S.N. Kohli and Eastern Naval Command under Vice Admiral N. Krishnan.

19.5

1. Pakistan surrendered on 16th December 1971.
2. It was signed by Pakistan's Eastern Army Commander Lieutenant General A.A.K. Niazi.
3. The outcome of the war was liberation of East Pakistan and creation of a new nation called Bangladesh.
4. The lessons learnt was victory could be achieved through good leadership, efficient logistical support, employment of effective battlefield strategies, close coordination from all wings of the military and support from the people of the country.

