

# 50th anniversary of 1971 India-Pakistan war

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In news

India observed the 50th anniversary of the 1971 war with Pakistan, also known as the Bangladesh Liberation War

About 1971 the Bangladesh Liberation War

The Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 was the **first war between the countries that did not involve fighting over the Kashmir region**. At this time, the Dominion of Pakistan was divided into West Pakistan and East Pakistan (initially East Bengal). These two regions were separated by the larger nation of India.

Fought under the leadership of then-prime minister Indira Gandhi and chief of army staff (COAS), General Sam Manekshaw, the war ended in less than two weeks with a decisive victory for India, and resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, which was then known as East Pakistan.

Causes of the war

- East Pakistan felt exploited by West Pakistan, which held the majority of political power. In March of 1971, an East Pakistan political party won the election, and West Pakistan chose not to recognize the results.
- This decision led to political unrest in East Pakistan, and West Pakistan responded with military force.
- On 25 March 1971, the Pakistan Army, led by Lieutenant General Tikka Khan, who later went on to become Pakistan's first COAS, launched Operation Searchlight to quell the rebellion in East Pakistan.
- Massive human rights violations were reportedly

perpetrated by the Pakistan Army during this operation.

- The Bangladesh Liberation War began with East Pakistan declaring independence as Bangladesh.
- The hostilities between India and Pakistan formally began on December 3, 1971, when the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), launched pre-emptive airstrikes on 11 Indian airfields. Addressing the nation the same evening, PM Indira Gandhi called the airstrikes “declaration of war against India.”

### India's Intervention in the war

- Due to the violence in Bangladesh, many of its residents sought refuge in India.
- The Prime Minister decided to intervene in the civil war, supporting an independent Bengali state.
- India began supporting rebel troops in Bangladesh, in response, Pakistan attacked an Indian military base in December of 1971. This attack was the official start of the war.
- This war is also known for the Indian Navy's daring assault, called **Operation Trident**, on Pakistan's financial hub of Karachi, which was also the headquarters of the Pakistan Navy
- The 1971 Indo-Pak war is also known for the battle of Longewala, in Rajasthan, in which outnumbered Indian troops fought off advancing Pakistani adversaries

### Establishment of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

- After two weeks of fighting and losing West Pakistan territory, the Pakistani troops in Bangladesh surrendered.
- As a result of the surrender, around 93,000 Pakistani troops were taken as prisoners of war (PoW) by India
- This surrender effectively established the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The war resulted in the highest number of casualties of any Indo-Pakistani conflict.

## Shimla Agreement(1972)

- The Simla Agreement signed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan on 2nd July 1972 was much more than a peace treaty seeking to reverse the consequences of the 1971 war (i.e. to bring about withdrawals of troops and an exchange of PoWs).
- It was a comprehensive **blueprint for good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan.**
- Under the Simla Agreement, both countries undertook to abjure conflict and confrontation which had marred relations in the past, and to work towards the establishment of durable peace, friendship and cooperation.
- The Simla Agreement contains a set of guiding principles, mutually agreed to by India and Pakistan, which both sides would adhere to while managing relations with each other. These emphasize:
  1. Respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
  2. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs.
  3. Respect for each others unity, political independence.
  4. Sovereign equality; and abjuring hostile propaganda.
- **The following principles of the Agreement are, however, particularly noteworthy:**
  - A mutual commitment to the peaceful resolution of all issues through direct bilateral approaches.
  - To build the foundations of a cooperative relationship with special focus on people to people contacts.
  - To uphold the inviolability of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir, which is a most important

CBM between India and Pakistan, and a key to durable peace.