Twitter Thread by Vinod Kumar Jha



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Thread

50 years ago, this week in 1971, the USA threatened India to stop the 1971 war. An alarmed India sent a SOS to the Soviet Union. A story that has been nearly erased from Indian history books.

1/

When Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 war seemed imminent, Kissinger spurred Nixon to send the US 7th Fleet’s Task Force, led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise, to the Bay of Bengal.
2/

The USS Enterprise, at 75,000 ton, was the world's largest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the 1970s with more than 70 fighter aircraft. A monster. The Indian Navy’s fleet was led by the 20,000-ton aircraft carrier, Vikrant, with 20 light fighter aircraft.

3/

The USS Enterprise was being dispatched to secure American citizens in Bangladesh was the official American statement. Unofficially it was to threaten the Indian forces and prevent the liberation of East Pakistan. India soon got another bad news.

4/

Soviet intelligence reported to India that a powerful British naval group led by the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle with commando carrier HMS Albion, several destroyers and other ships were approaching India's territorial waters from the west, towards the Arabian Sea.
5/

The British and the Americans planned a coordinated pincer attack to intimidate India: the British ships in the Arabian Sea will target India's western coast, while Americans would make a dash to Chittagong. Caught between the British & the American ships was the Indian Navy.
6/

It was December 1971, and the world’s two leading democracies were now threatening the world’s largest democracy. An SOS from Delhi was sent to Moscow. The Red Navy soon dispatched 16 Soviet naval units and six nuclear submarines from Vladivostok to block USS Enterprise.

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Admiral N. Krishnan, the chief of the Eastern Command of the Indian Navy, wrote in his book, 'No Way But Surrender' that he was afraid that the Americans will reach Chittagong. He mentions how they even thought of attacking Enterprise, in a do or die move, to slow it down.

8/

On December 2nd week 1971, the US 7th Fleet’s Task Force, led by monstrous USS Enterprise arrived in the Bay of Bengal. The British fleet was arriving in the Arabian Sea. The world held its breath.
But,unknown to Americans, the submerged Soviet submarines had overtaken them.
9/

As USS Enterprise moved towards East Pakistan, the Soviet submarines surfaced without any warning. The Soviet subs were now standing between India and the US naval force.

The Americans were shocked.

10/

Admiral Gordon told the 7th American Fleet Commander: "Sir, we are too late. The Soviets are here!"

Both the American and British fleets backed off. Today, most Indians have forgotten about this colossal naval chess battle between the two superpowers in the Bay of Bengal.
End
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Sources: various plus following and books as mentioned in Tweet.
https://t.co/IHObXjyhfP

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Srinath Raghavan's book: 1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh.