

CARTOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON PAKISTAN'S NEW MAP

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Pakistan

The Ministry of External Affairs has termed [Pakistan's announcement of a new political map](#), which asserts its claims on Jammu and Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek, and lays a new claim to Junagadh, as an exercise in "political absurdity", and accused Pakistan of attempting a form of "territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism". Pakistan's decision to issue the map, a tit-for-tat manoeuvre in return for [India's decision to reorganise Jammu and Kashmir](#) a year ago, appears to reset several agreements with India that have been concretised over the past 70 years. The map the Imran Khan government unveiled lays claim to all of Jammu and Kashmir, thus far shown as disputed territory, draws a line demarcating Gilgit-Baltistan separately from the part of Kashmir under its control (Pakistan occupied Kashmir), and renames Jammu and Kashmir as "Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir". The new map leaves the claim line with Ladakh unclear. While each of these acts is outrageous for New Delhi, it should also be questioned in Islamabad. Pakistan's claim to all of Jammu and Kashmir, but not Ladakh, goes against its own commitment to adjudicate the future of all six parts of the erstwhile royal state of Jammu-Kashmir (Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK and Aksai Chin) with India. The claims to Siachen and Sir Creek, that have been the subject of several discussions between India and Pakistan, are also a regressive step. While both sides had reached an impasse on Siachen, the Sir Creek agreement had made considerable progress, and was reportedly even resolved, pending a political announcement in 2007. Either way, both were without doubt disputed areas, and Pakistan's unilateral claim over them is not helpful or conducive to future resolution. Finally, the move on Junagadh, a former princely state whose accession to India was accepted by Pakistan, opens up a whole new dispute. While Junagadh was in contention at the time of Partition, the issue was successfully resolved after a referendum was conducted there in February 1948, in which an overwhelming 95% of the state's residents voted to stay with India.

As New Delhi considers its next moves on this provocation, it should be prepared for Pakistan taking all the issues it has raised with its new map to the international stage. Pakistan's actions, while on completely bilateral matters, come in conjunction with map-related issues India faces today on two other fronts: with China at the Line of Actual Control on Ladakh, and with Nepal at Kalapani and Limpiyadhura (which Nepal's government has also issued a new map about). It is surely no coincidence that all three countries objected to the map New Delhi had issued in November 2019, albeit for different reasons, and New Delhi must be well-prepared to deal with the three-pronged cartographic challenge it will face in the coming months.

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