

Pakistan's Straight Baselines

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On 10 September, the Pakistani government issued a notification of its straight baseline claim, listing ten turning points:

(a) 25° 02.20 N	61° 35.50 E
(b) 25° 00.95 N	61° 46.80 E
(c) 25° 05.30 N	62° 21.00 E
(d) 25° 06.30 N	63° 51.01 E
(e) 25° 09.00 N	64° 35.20 E
(f) 25° 18.20 N	65° 11.60 E
(g) 24° 49.45 N	66° 40.00 E
(h) 23° 52.80 N	67° 26.80 E
(i) 23° 47.30 N	67° 35.90 E
(k) 23° 33.90 N	68° 07.80 E

Analysis

The baseline commences in the west at (a) in the mouth of Gwatar Bay, lying 1.4nm to the west of the Iranian terminus at 61° 37.03 E but 0.4nm to the east of the equidistant point in the mouth of the bay. The line then proceeds 18nm across the bay to (b) Ras Jiwani. From there, it continues 32nm to (c), a point 3nm west of Ras Nuh and then proceeds a further 81nm to (d) Sail Rock/Gurab, seven cables south of Astola island. From Sail Rock, the line then travels 38nm to (e) Ras Ormara, a headland between two bays and then continues 28nm to (f) Ras Malan. From Ras Malan, the line is drawn 81nm to (g) Ras Monze, west of Karachi, and then 71nm to (h), on the low-water mark of the marshy Indus Delta

coastline. Point (i) lies 10nm to the east on the same low-water mark. The final segment runs 33nm southeast from (i) and terminates at (k), in the sea 2nm from the Indian coast and 5nm southeast of the terminus of the Indo-Pakistani international boundary, the centre of the navigable channel of Sir Creek.

Following examination of these baseline segments, it was concluded that segment (a-b-c) should be replaced by two closing lines of legal bays, following Scandinavian precedents where countries join their closing lines or straight baselines. Segment (c-d-e) is based on two tiny legal bays; straight baselines are not appropriate for this section. Straight baselines are also inappropriate for segment (e-f-g), drawn along a smooth coast that is neither deeply indented nor fringed with islands. The same situation occurs for segment (g-h), the line being drawn in front of a smooth marshy coast. The segment (h-i) on the low-water mark of the Indus Delta would be appropriate if the coast is unstable, in terms of UNCLOS Article 7(2), and would seem to be the first line drawn under that provision, if that was the case. Point (k) actually lies in the sea, and hence cannot be regarded as a proper baseline point. India would presumably challenge the baseline overlapping the mouth of Sir Creek and a section of the adjoining Indian coast.

