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JOINT WARFARE  
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GL/01/26

**THE CREEK OF CONTENTION  
BY  
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**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS  
01 JAN 2026**

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The talk covers the historical origins, legal complexities, economic stakes, and strategic implications of the Sir Creek dispute between India and Pakistan, a 64 km tidal estuary in the Kutch region. The cartographic confusion was created by the departing Britishers with the final cartographic cut called the Radcliffe Line in 1947. Sir Creek within the broader legacy of arbitrary colonial boundary-making in the Indian subcontinent, from the Durand Line to the Radcliffe Line, noting that the latter stopped short of clearly demarcating the maritime boundary in Gujarat and left the Banganga/Sir Creek sector ambiguous. This ambiguity hardened into a dispute when Sindh went to Pakistan and Kutch (Gujarat) to India, and although an international tribunal ruling in 1968 clarified some aspects, mutual dissatisfaction persisted. Pakistan refuses to acknowledge the resolution, stating the core boundary issue to be resolved for then Sir Creek.

The core legal disagreement centres on whether the Thalweg Principle applies. India argues Sir Creek is navigable at high tide and extensively used by fishing trawlers, so the boundary should follow the mid-channel in line with international practice on navigable waterways. Pakistan, by contrast, claims the creek is non-navigable and insists the boundary runs along the eastern bank, effectively placing the entire creek on its side. Both states lean on conflicting clauses of the 1914 Bombay Government Resolution: one paragraph supports a boundary east of the creek, while another implicitly accepts the thalweg by recognising its navigability, creating a built-in contradiction that each side exploits to justify its position.

Beyond legalism, Sir Creek's has economic and ecological value. The area is one of Asia's important fishing grounds, sustaining thousands of fishermen from both countries, and the seabed may hold significant oil and gas reserves, whose exploration is blocked by the unresolved boundary. Ecologically, Sir Creek's mangroves and mudflats host flamingos and other migratory birds, making it a fragile but crucial habitat. Continued tension heightens risks to livelihoods and delays potential resource gains for both economies.

Strategically, Sir Creek is portrayed as a vulnerability and potential flashpoint. The creek offers a difficult-to-monitor ingress route toward Gujarat, Rajasthan and India's hinterland; abandoned boats and past use of nearby routes by non-state actors illustrate its security risks. On Pakistan's side, the development and proposed modernisation of Ketī Bandar, about 120 km away, especially under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), raises Indian concerns about enhanced Pakistani naval reach and deeper Chinese presence in the northern Arabian Sea. Additional US interest in the wider area further complicates the strategic geometry, putting two major external powers near an already contested channel. Sir Creek assumes strategic importance with major powers vying for the honours of the coast of Karachi up to Gwadar. India has joint surveillance mechanism with the Navy, ICG and BSF.

India has responded by strengthening forward bases and radar coverage, while political leaders have warned that any provocation here could have serious, possibly history-shaping consequences. In this sense, Sir Creek is depicted not just as another colonial-era cartographic leftover, but as an unresolved maritime fault line where local livelihood issues intersect with energy security, great-power rivalry, and the persistent fragility of India–Pakistan relations.