

Iranian Studies Group at MIT

Factsheet on the Legal and Historical Usage of the “Persian Gulf”

International Legal Standards

- q The Group of Experts on Geographical Names was set up by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in pursuance of the Economic and Social Council resolution 715 A (XXVII) of 23 April 1959, and has endorsed “Persian Gulf” as the official name of the body of water.
- q The Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002, E/CONF.94/CRP.87, Item 17 (a) of the provisional agenda*, has based its decision of the discussion of “Arabian Gulf” versus the “Persian Gulf” on the reference “TOPONYMY, The Lore, Laws and Language of GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES”, by Naftali Kadmon Vantage Press Inc., New York, 2001, 333 pp., 35 illustrations, ISBN 0-533-13531-1, Chapter 8 “Persian Gulf or Arabian Gulf”?, which argues that the use of “Arabian Gulf” is faulty. The United Nations website only uses the term “Arabian Gulf” when presenting transcripts of speeches by Arab delegates.
- q The United Nations Oceans and Law of the Sea Office uses only the term Persian Gulf in its legal documents.

U.S. Government Designation

- q A decision by the State Department's Board of Geographical Names in 1917 makes the “Persian Gulf” the only acceptable label for that body of water.

Historical Maps of the Region

- q Starting from the earliest maps, the body of water has been called Persian Gulf by European sources. Among the first Atlases in the world is that of Jean Baptiste Anville, 1751. This map of western Asia shows the body of water labeled as “Golfe Persique” or Persian Gulf. Other major maps dating back to the 18th and 19th century are presented in Appendix 1. (Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, <http://www.davidrumsey.com/index.html>)



Appendix - Major Maps indicating Persian Gulf as the name for the body of water

Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection <http://www.davidrumsey.com/view.html>



Arrowsmith, Joh...
Central Asia. 1844
World Atlas



Bartholomew, J...
Persia. 1922
World Atlas



Bowen, Emanuel
Persia, adjacen...
1747 Geography Book



Cary, John, ca...
Persia. 1801
World Atlas



Colton, G.W.
Persia Arabia &...
1856 World Atlas



Hall, S. (Sidne...
Persia. 1828
1828 World Atlas



Johnson, A.J.
Turkey In Asia ...
1860 World Atlas



Johnston, Alexa...
Persia, Afghani...
1861 World Atlas



Lucas, Fielding...
Persia. 1823
World Atlas



Martin, R.M. ; ...
Persia. 1851
World Atlas



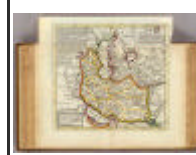
Marzolla, Bened...
Turchia Asiatic...
1856 World Atlas



Mitchell, Samue...
Map of Persia, ...
1860 World Atlas



Mitchell, Samue...
Persia Arabia &...
1846 World Atlas



Moll, Herman, d...
Persia, Caspian...
1736 World Atlas



Pinkerton, John...
Persia. 1811 World Atlas



Rand McNally an...
Persia, Afghani...
1897, World Atlas



Long, George, 1...
Persia, Ottoman...
1831, World Atlas



Tanner, Henry S...
Persia Arabia &...
1836, World Atlas