

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 Supporting UN documents include UNAD, 311/Qen on March 5, 1971 and UNLA 45.8.2 (C) on August 10, 1984.
- 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. Eighteen 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>)

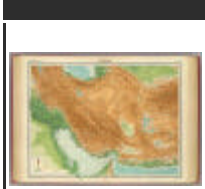


Appendix - Major Maps indicating Persian Gulf as the name for the body of water

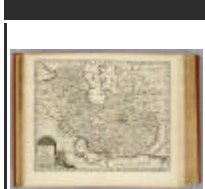
Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection <http://www.davidrumsey.com/view.html>



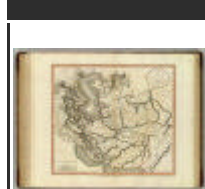
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Central Asia. 1844
World Atlas



Bartholomew, J...
Persia. 1922
World Atlas



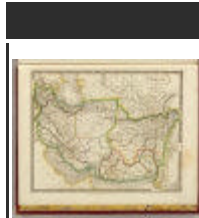
Bowen, Emanuel
Persia, adjacen...
1747 Geography Book



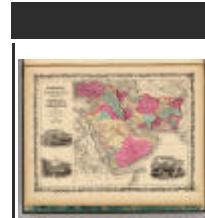
Cary, John, ca...
Persia. 1801
World Atlas



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



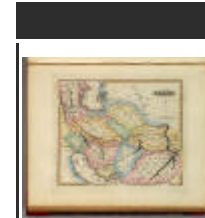
Hall, S. (Sidne...
Persia.
1828 World Atlas



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



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



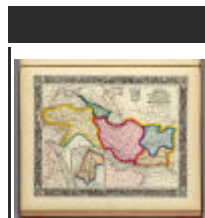
Lucas, Fielding...
Persia. 1823
World Atlas



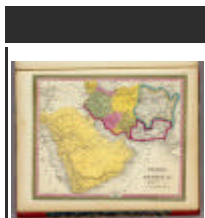
Martin, R.M. ; ...
Persia. 1851
World Atlas



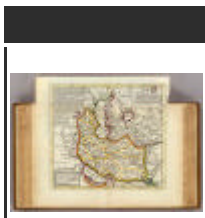
Marzolla, Bened...
Turchia Asiatic...
1856 World Atlas



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



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



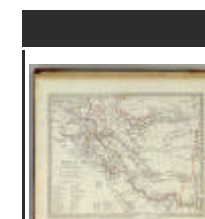
Moll, Herman, d...
Persia, Caspian...
1736 World Atlas



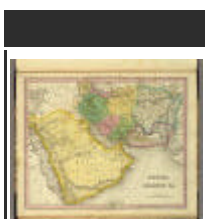
Pinkerton, John...
Persia. 1811 World Atlas



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



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



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