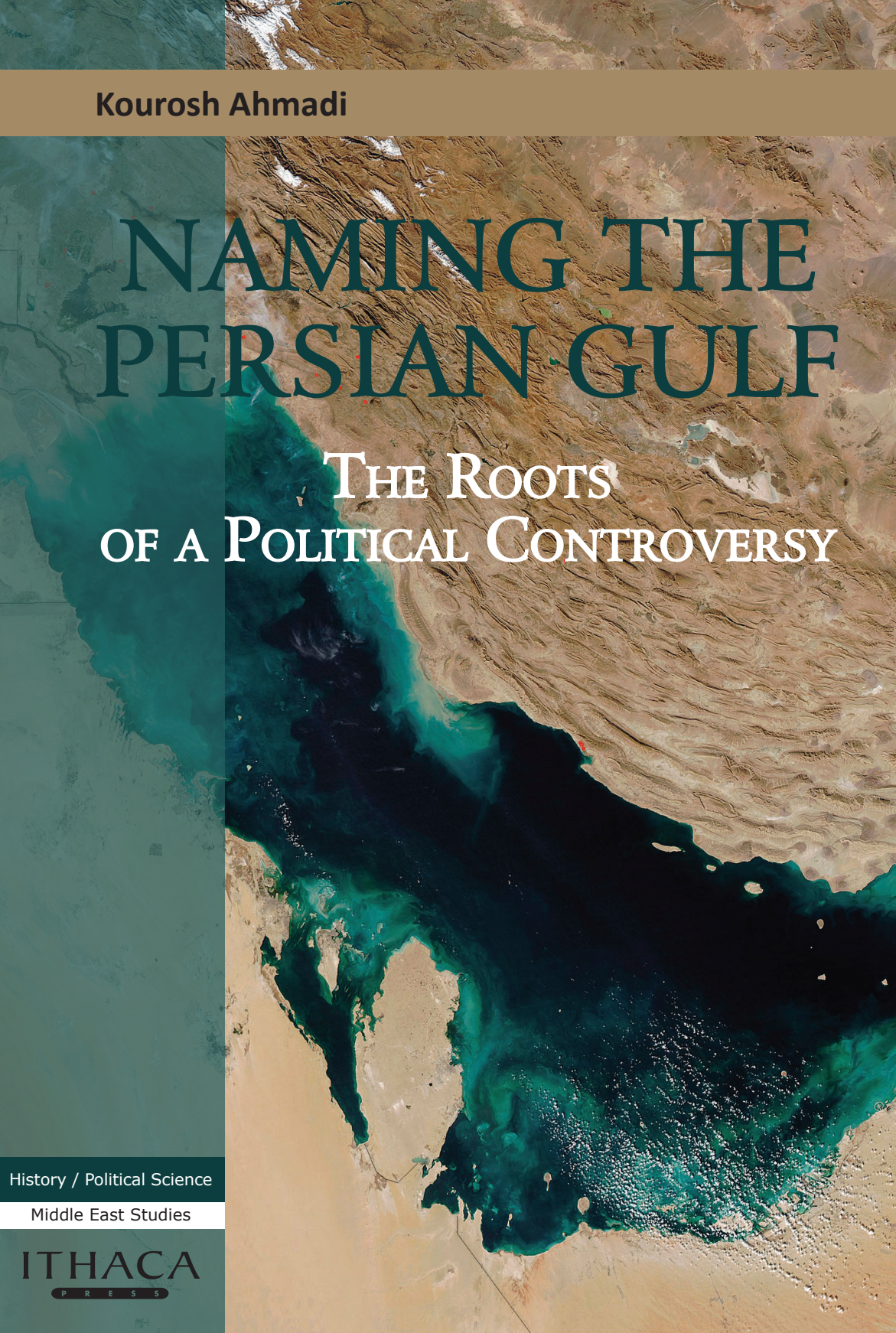
Kourosh Ahmadi

NAMING THE PERSIAN GULF

The Roots of a Political Controversy



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Introduction

One important element of strategic uncertainty in the Persian Gulf region is the tension between Iranians and the Gulf Arab states – expressed, among other ways, in the controversy over the nomenclature of the aforesaid body of water located between the Iranian plateau and the Arabian Peninsula. This issue has persisted since the rise of pan-Arab nationalism in the late 1950s. It includes formal and informal efforts by some Gulf Arab circles to promote the term 'Arabian Gulf' or, simply, the generic term 'the Gulf', over 'Persian Gulf'. Certain Arab Gulf states have attempted to establish the convention 'Arabian Gulf' locally and internationally, and even enacted laws in the 1960s prohibiting the use of 'Persian Gulf' within their territories. These attempts to discourage the term have influenced some organisations, publications, academic institutions, businesses and media in the West and elsewhere; as a result, references abound to 'the Gulf', especially in the UK.

The importance of this naming dispute lies, in turn, with the importance of the body of water in question. The Persian Gulf, as a centrally located geographical feature of extensive size, has been one of the most strategic and significant seas since the dawn of history, a site of contact between great civilisations as well as collision of major interests. In the past, it was important as a major avenue of culture and trade; today it is even more valuable, containing a resource that is vital for the countries on its shores as well as the entire world. It is also located at the heart of the world's most unstable region. The Persian Gulf region itself has suffered from three devastating wars in the past three decades, and is adjacent to and affected by a number of

ongoing volatile situations, including the conflict in Israel/Palestine; the ravages of violent extremism and civil war in Syria and Iraq; and terrorist activity across the Afghanistan–Pakistan border.

Enduring and consistent place names are important for many aspects of local, regional, national and global communications. Uncertainty over the Persian Gulf nomenclature, and the extreme sensitivity with which Persians and Arabs, the two major Middle Eastern ethnic groups, approach it, are all the more consequential, with far-reaching effects for the region and beyond.

Up to the mid-twentieth century, the use of 'Persian Gulf' was exclusive, echoing conventional practice dating back centuries before the Common Era in the works of ancient Greek, Roman and Islamic geographers, cartographers and authors. There has never been a wider consensus on a place name in the Middle East over the past twenty-five centuries. However, following the rise of Arab nationalism in the 1950s, certain Arab countries – beginning with Iraq after the coup of 1958 – adopted the use of the term 'Arab Gulf' or 'Arabian Gulf'. This development resulted in a highly contentious dispute over the nomenclature, involving states, international organisations, corporations, universities and mapmakers.

Persian and Arab civilisations have lived in close proximity to one another, interacting regularly and positively for centuries; as pan-Arabism gained momentum, naming the expanse of water separating them became a source of friction. The dispute followed political developments, as Iranians and Arabs vied for influence in the region. This 'cold war' between royal, conservative Iran and hard-line Arabs, which paralleled the global Cold War, intensified it. Efforts to internationalise the term 'Arabian Gulf' were undertaken by certain Arab states that had already prohibited the term 'Persian Gulf' internally.

The Gulf naming dispute was one of the side effects of this tension, and fanned it further. It eventually took on a strategic dimension as well as a life of its own, largely irrespective of the ups and downs in the diplomatic relationship between Iran and the Arab world. The conflict is now as fierce under the Islamic Republic in Iran

as it had been under the Shah, and has also survived radical changes within and among Arab states.

The dispute can seem like a mere matter of semantics to some, but it is a serious issue in a region marred by ethnic and religious tensions and historic rivalries. (Nor is it difficult to imagine similar tensions arising over nomenclature in other parts of the world, such as the conceivable diplomatic and popular uproar were the US to begin referring to the Gulf of Mexico as the 'Gulf of North America'.) This naming dispute, the longest-running such conflict in the world, is not insignificant among the current priorities of the region; even the United Nations has weighed in repeatedly.

Grassroots protests from Iranians from all walks of life against what they consider the arbitrary change of a historical name are common. Protestors refer to the term 'Persian Gulf' as part of their national heritage as well as an ancient historical reality that should not be tampered with. It is valued for reasons of tradition, and regarded as a matter of pride and prestige. While Iranians are otherwise much divided, they are, as a whole, very sensitive about this issue, to an unprecedented degree. Accordingly, every Iranian government, no matter how it has viewed the case, has had no choice but to follow suit.

One case in point, as we shall see in greater detail in Chapter Seven, was the fierce reaction in 2004 by many Iranians against the use of 'Arabian Gulf' as an alternative to 'Persian Gulf' by the National Geographic Society in its *Eighth Atlas of the World*. The Society received a flood of protest letters and negative reviews, and a petition was signed by thousands of Iranians in defence of what they called the 'Persian Gulf legacy'. The Iranian government entered the fray, banning the Society from Iran. The atlas was later revised.

Another telling development, recounted in Chapter Six, is indicative of the impediment posed by the naming dispute to regional cooperation: the cancellation in 2010 of the Islamic Solidarity Games, which were to be held in Tehran that year. The Riyadh-based Islamic Solidarity Federation took this decision on account of the use by the Iranian organising committee of the term 'Persian Gulf' in the logo and on the medals.

To take one more example: the dispute delayed, for several years in the 1980s, the establishment of a regional organisation tasked with looking after environment of the Gulf: the participating countries could not agree on a name for the new body. The name that was finally chosen – the Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment – gives no hint as to where it belongs.

Thus the dispute over the naming of the Gulf has become a source of tension on its own, and should in no way be considered trivial or superficial. Having begun as a byproduct of Iranian and Arab nationalisms, over the ensuing decades it has become a serious cause for unease in relations between Iran and the Arab world, and an obstacle preventing regional cooperation. Nor does the discord show any sign of letting up.

Place names, in general, are a sensitive issue; they are a source of cultural and national identity. Given the importance of establishing nomenclature standards, specialised national and international organisations must attempt to ensure consistency when fixing geographical names for a variety of purposes. Moreover, the Gulf dispute has widespread consequences, affecting the worlds of diplomacy and academia, media, business and professional sports. The controversy extends far beyond official spheres as well, pitting ordinary people against one another.

Events over the past five decades have demonstrated the persistence of this issue, and highlighted the value of researching it thoroughly. Yet despite its importance and its impact on regional politics, no systematic, scholarly efforts have so far been made to evaluate different aspects of the Gulf nomenclature controversy, including its origins, evolution and impact. No book-length treatment exists in any European language on the subject; there is almost nothing in writing, aside from Internet polemics, in defence of the designation 'Persian Gulf' or the need for a suitable replacement thereof.

This study represents the first attempt to discuss the issue in a coherent, scholarly way. Its main purpose is to examine the origin of the name in dispute, its evolution over millennia and the context within which the controversy has arisen. Efforts have been made to place the conflict against the background of regional politics, and to

review the political and ideological developments that contributed to its emergence in the late 1950s and its subsequent elaboration. The relevant literature dealing with the dispute, as well as the name 'Persian Gulf', has been reviewed extensively.

This book also tries to shed light on the ways in which non-Persians perceived the Persian Gulf across different historical eras, and further appraises the Gulf's physical attributes as well as the people who inhabit its shores and islands.

The following questions will be addressed:

1. What was the historical and traditional name of the body of water separating Iran from Arabia?
2. What was the approach of European explorers, Orientalists and colonialists to the nomenclature of the Gulf?
3. What role did politics – including pan-Arab nationalism – play in initiating the controversy?
4. Why are Iranians so sensitive about the nomenclature, and why do they demonstrate unparalleled attention to the issue despite their numerous divisions over so many others?
5. Can 'soft' laws, as well as regulations concerning name standardisation by the relevant international and national bodies assigned to this task, offset the effect of power politics on the Gulf naming dispute?

The underlying question in this book is whether or not this dispute affects the behaviour of regional and international actors and the conduct of international relations in the area; and, if so, how? I have sought to answer it according to the following methods:

1. Reviewing literary evidence, including classical ancient and medieval works by Greek, Latin and Muslim authors, as well as works on the region by colonial officials, Orientalists, travellers and academics since the sixteenth century.
2. Reviewing maps – several hundred of which indicate the Gulf as 'Persian', with ten to twelve referring to it as 'Arabian' – as well as textual evidence associated with them.

3. Reviewing references to and passages on the Gulf naming dispute in a range of books and articles on a wide spectrum of regional issues.
4. Reviewing relevant political developments in Arab politics and Iranian–Arab relations since the 1950s, with direct bearing on the issue at hand.
5. Reviewing the relevant literature about the naming-dispute controversy over the past several decades from all interested sides, including hundreds of pieces written in English, French, Persian and Arabic.
6. Reviewing the positions of various governments on the controversy, as well as reference books, travel publications, scholarly books and articles, trade publications, academic works, media features, etc.
7. Reviewing works published on general toponymy as well as Gulf toponymy, in particular, by national and international institutions, along with documents released by the United Nations and other multilateral bodies.

The book is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter One looks at the origin of the term in dispute, tracing its evolution through ancient and medieval times.

Chapter Two is allocated to a review of the works and maps of Islamic scholars, seafarers and traders since the eighth century that shed light on the Persian Gulf, the knowledge of the time, its situation and nomenclature.

Chapter Three explores the way colonial powers, orientalists, travellers, diplomats and academics have dealt with the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf since the sixteenth century. It reviews the approaches of different cartographic schools in post-Renaissance Europe, which includes hundreds of maps bearing the name 'Persian Gulf'. A number of maps from this period that refer to the Gulf by names other than 'Persian Gulf' will also be discussed.

Chapter Four deals with the origins of the naming dispute, and attempts to place it within the context of regional politics. It opens by

noting the suspicion on the part of many Iranians that some British officials and academics in particular have encouraged the adoption of 'Arabian Gulf', and sheds light on such claims. The chapter continues by considering the role of pan-Arab nationalism (led by Nasser of Egypt and Qasim of Iraq) in promoting the term 'Arabian Gulf', and the impact of political differences between imperial Iran and the radical Arab world – tainted by East–West rivalries – on the genesis of the dispute.

Chapter Five considers the legal aspects of the issue, and takes into account various approaches adopted by intergovernmental organisations and major instruments of international law as well as controversies to which the name dispute has given rise. Efforts undertaken over the past hundred years at national and international levels to standardise geographical names are also examined, including those by British and American agencies and, most importantly, by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and its Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The chapter assesses the decisions they have arrived at that can help tackle the naming dispute in question.

Chapter Six is allocated to the means by which various countries have positioned themselves in the past and present with regard to the dispute, and their roles in the evolution of the case.

Chapter Seven reviews the positions of major private institutions with regard to the controversies that have arisen from the nomenclature dispute, and looks at their roles in further entrenching both parties to the dispute in their respective positions. The means by which Iranians in Iran and abroad deal with the issue is detailed extensively in this chapter as well.

Chapter One
The Term 'Persian Gulf' in Historical Perspective: Antiquity

The name 'Persian Gulf' arose from the Greek usage *Persikòs koplos* (literally, 'Persian Gulf') during the Greek classical era. Greek Hellenistic, Roman and later European historians and geographers followed suit, and the Latin term *Sinus Persicus* was translated into other living languages. In the mediaeval Islamic period, the term *Daryaee fars* or *Bahr-e fars* ('Sea of Fars' or 'Persian Sea'), denoted, at times, a more extended body of water than the present-day 'Persian Gulf', while the name 'Persian Gulf' for the Gulf proper gradually entered into use at a later time. In the seventeenth century and in parallel to Persian–Ottoman strategic rivalry, few rival designations were put forward, and the standard, traditional term prevailed.

This chapter, along with Chapter Two, aims to verify two assumptions, namely:

1. the term 'Persian Gulf may be the oldest toponym for a body of water';[1]
2. it was the only universally used term to designate the body of water between the Iranian plateau and the Arabian Peninsula up to the 1960s.

To proceed with this task, the documents – including the textual evidence and maps relating to the nomenclature of the Gulf, as well as the relevant historical contexts – are reviewed in a comprehensive but concise manner. The historical continuity of the term since the fifth century BC and the manner in which different linguistic-ethnic groups have dealt with it will figure among the issues discussed. The

focus will stay on major and seminal traditions and works of historical significance.

The Early Historical Period

In ancient times, as in the periods that followed, the Gulf region was under the influence of different cultures. Ethnic groups such as the Elamites, Sumerians, Akkadians and Babylonians were the early inhabitants of the Gulf's coastlands before the establishment of the Persian state in the sixth century BC. The first traces of civilisations in the region date back to more than five millennia BC, when the kingdom of Sumer emerged in Mesopotamia, south of modern Iraq, and to the third millennium BC, when the Kingdom of Elam was established on the shore of the Gulf, towards the southwest of modern Iran.

The most ancient references to the Persian Gulf date to the time of the Sumerians in Mesopotamia during the third millennium BC. A historical text by Lugal-zage-si, King of Uruk (2340–16 BC), refers to the Gulf when it is declares: '… then from the Lower Sea, by the Tigris and Euphrates, as far as the Upper Sea, [the god Enlil] provided him with clear routes … referring specifically to the Mediterranean and the Gulf'.[2] In his classic book *The Persian Gulf*, Arnold Wilson concurs, adding: 'Akkadians called the Persian Gulf *"Tamtu Spalitu"*, meaning the lower sea, versus *"Tamtu Elenitu"*, meaning the upper sea, which was used for the Mediterranean.'[3] In older Mesopotamian cuneiform sources, the Gulf was always the Lower Sea, and in just one case the 'Sea of Magan'.[4]

It is also believed that another term may be the Gulf's earliest historical name, used by Assyrians before the migration of Aryans to the Persian plateau and the establishment of their domination there: in their inscriptions, the Assyrians called this body of water *Nar marratu*, meaning 'Bitter River'.[5] In a later time, i.e., in the first millennium BC, the Gulf is referred to not only as a source of tribute brought to the rulers of Mesopotamia but also as a route for naval expeditions by the kings. Thus, Sennacherib (705–681 BC) mentions his campaigns across the Gulf to the land of Elam, referring to it as 'a rising place of the sun'.[6]

The Persian Gulf in the Greco–Roman Tradition

The Greco–Roman traditions had a powerful, persistent influence on Western civilisations. Islamic civilisation has also been influenced by ancient Greek and Roman authors to some extent. The precedent set by those traditions is therefore important because of the impact it had on the future formation of human thinking across the globe. Given the significant role played by Greek and Roman authors in laying the foundations of geography, history and many other disciplines, it is necessary to begin an enquiry about the Persian Gulf and its nomenclature by looking at their works.

Greek Tradition

From the sixth century BC, the ancient Greek world began to gain knowledge of the stretch of water between Persia and Arabia. It is from this period that the term 'Persian Gulf' or 'Persian Sea' came into use in different variations; it proved enduring throughout the ensuing ages. The Persian geographical position, together with Persia's role as a major power in Antiquity and its relations with the Greeks and Romans, was significant in many ways. The Persians, as the principal settlers of the southern part of modern Iran and on the Gulf's shores, began playing a prominent role in world history with the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire in the sixth century BC. At the same time, they were the first among eastern ethnic groups to establish a relationship with the West.[7]

Moreover, the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia provided the most ancient channels of communication between India and the Mediterranean coasts.[8] Susa on the Gulf was also connected to Sardis on the Aegean Sea by the Royal Road, another major conduit that connected the Gulf to the Mediterranean.

To these factors can be added the Greco–Persian wars that began in 499 BC, lasting for several decades. For these reasons, the Greeks sought to know Persia and its environs, and began using the term 'Persian Gulf' to refer to the body of water bordering the Persian centre of power, i.e., *Persis*, or the modern Iranian province of Fars.

The main reasons for the adoption and continual use of this toponym are the Persian dominance of the landmass bordering the Gulf, mostly on both sides; the fact that outsiders needed to navigate it to reach Persian territory; and the commercial and seafaring activities of the Persians. Naming bodies of water after ethnic groups living in the vicinity is a principle that has been applied around the world and throughout history.[9]

Other reasons contributing to the resilience of the toponym 'Persian Gulf' include the long-lasting actual or potential ascendency of the Persians in the region throughout history and the resilience of Persian civilisation; intermittent Persian naval and seafaring activities; and the location of major seaports on the Gulf. However, the name 'Persian Gulf' was primarily adopted with respect to the presence of the Persians themselves on the Gulf's shores.

It is important to note that the term originated not with the Persians themselves, but from ancient peoples such as the Greeks and Romans, who were mostly at loggerheads with Persia. As to why the long-lasting toponym in question originated in the works of Greek geographers and not from the peoples living by the Gulf, that is a matter requiring further scrutiny, beyond the scope of this work. Briefly, however: Bosworth invokes the infrequent use of maritime routes for the Persian Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid dynasties, as the Persian emperors did not use waterways to project force or direct their dealings to remote regions. Instead, they conducted their trade – and at times made efforts to extend their dominion – across the western and southwestern Asian landmass. For Bosworth, this may clarify why no well-established term designating the Persian Gulf has been passed on to us through either Elamite or Old Persian. In their inscriptions, the Persians usually refer to Persian control over provinces on the land, not to coastlands and seas.[10]

This view is valid, and partly explains the situation. However, there may be another reason for our lack of knowledge about the way local ancient communities referred to their adjoining sea. In the Middle East, textual evidence and maps were prone to destruction on account of war, infighting and looting, as well as natural disasters

such as earthquakes and floods. In ancient Persia, then a vast empire, administration of the land would have been impossible without knowledge of geography and the use of various maps. However, in the course of recurring invasions – especially by Alexander the Great (*c.* 328 BC) and the Arabs (seventh century) – and unending fighting among regional tribes, many libraries and books and maps were destroyed. In the Islamic period therefore, scholars relied primarily on non-Persian sources such as those of the Greeks and Romans.

Classical Greek Knowledge of the Persian Gulf

Although Classical Greek[11] geographers possessed a very fuzzy knowledge of the stretches of waters that surrounded the Arabian Peninsula in the period before Alexander's eastern campaign, there are signs indicating that the term 'Persian Gulf' was coined during this period. It was most likely during the reign of Darius I of Persia (521–485 BC) that the Persian Gulf came to be referred to by this designation. Around 500 BC the Greek geographer and historian Hecataeus of Miletus (*c.* 550–*c.* 476 BC), known as the 'father of geography', 'used the term *Persikòs kolpos* [Persian Gulf]/*Persikòs póntos* [Persian Sea] in a written source for the first time'.[12] As explained later, the distinction he made between the Persian Gulf and the other bodies of water in this period was an exception for the time. Only fragments of Hecataeus's work have come down to us, having been preserved in the work of the writer Stephanus of Byzantium (sixth century AD).[13] In the section of Hecataeus's work that discusses Asia and Africa, the Caspian Sea is described, Media is designated as a region close to the Caspian Gates and 'the Persian Gulf is named'.[14]

The fragments preserved in the works of Stephanus (*Ethnika* 396:15) confirm that Greek geographers and historians as early as Hecataeus were already familiar with the term 'Persian Gulf'. There is a passage in Stephanus's writing in which Hecataeus is quoted describing an island in the *Persikòs kolpos* or *Persikòs póntos*. Müller, who collected Hecataeus's fragments, explains: '[O]n the map of Hecataeus, one can see depicted the part of the Earth and sea that,

from the east to the west, extends from India to Spain … at the south, the map includes the Persian Gulf [fragment 182] and Arabia [fragments 263 and 264].'[15] He continues: 'In Hecataeus's fragments, three cities of Persia and one island of the Persian Gulf are named [fragments 180, 181, 182, 184].'[16]

The term coined by Hecataeus sometime around 500 BC was adopted by later geographers in various forms in different languages. In a schematic representation of Asia and the world based on the data provided later by Greek geographers, a small gulf on the southern coast of the Indian Ocean across from the Caspian Sea should be the Gulf, to which Hecataeus and, later, Eratosthenes, Strabo and others make reference. The Peutinger map, a Roman itinerary map of the fourth century, shows a similar small gulf on the same shores.[17]

Around the same time, referring to his enterprise to dig a canal connecting the Nile to the Red Sea, Darius I used the phrase 'the sea that goes from Persia'. He also erected five large stelae of red granite, near modern Zaqaziq, Egypt, to testify to his success. Suez cuneiform inscriptions read, in part:

> I am Darius, the Great King of kings, King of the countries containing all [kinds of] men … an Achemenian, a Persian from Fars; I seized Egypt; I ordered the canal to be dug from the river by name Nile, which flows from Egypt to the sea which goes from Persia.[18]

The reference to 'the sea which goes from Persia' is considered by some Iranian authors to be the first reference to the body of water now called the 'Persian Gulf'. However, it seems that Darius's usage, implying that the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf were somehow connected, is rather reminiscent of the term *Mare erythraeum* or 'Erythraean Sea', the Romans' *Mare Rubrum*, which was applied to the totality of the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, as explained later.

Before Alexander's eastern campaign, a few other endeavours to explore the Gulf's region are recorded. In this respect, the names of four ancient navigators/explorers stand out. Two of them – Scylax,

a Greek of Caryanda in Asia Minor, and Sataspes, a Persian subject – were sponsored by the Persians. The other two, Hanno and Himilco, were of Carthage; they were '*de facto*, if not *de jure*, allies of Persia against Greece'.[19]

Determined to extend his dominion eastwards, Darius decided to acquire accurate knowledge of the region. To this end, he put together a fleet and appointed Scylax at the helm. He reached the Red Sea through the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, and after a journey of thirty months arrived in Egypt. From there he returned to Susa, and reported on his discoveries to the Persian king.[20] According to another author, the report of Scylax's journey is lost, but from quite a few fragments that came down to us, 'it is most likely that Scylax also mentioned the Persian Gulf'.[21]

Sataspes, the Achaemenian (and, according to Herodotus, Darius's nephew), was the second navigator who started his voyage towards Africa under auspices of an Achaemenid king. He went to Egypt, later sailed southward and, after several months, returned to Egypt.[22] Although the Achaemenids did not use maritime routes to extend their dominion, these reconnaissance missions ordered by them are indicative of the importance they attached to such routes for military and/or commercial purposes.

The surviving evidence from the period before Alexander's expeditions does not reveal any further clue as to the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf in that period. Moreover, there are strong indications that contemporary knowledge of the bodies of water in the wider region, including the Persian Gulf, was vague. The distinction Hecataeus made in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC remained an isolated case. Generally, Greek scholars and others were yet to distinguish between the different parts of the waters that washed the shores of India, Arabia and northeastern Africa.

Before the maritime exploration set off by Alexander's eastern campaign, the western part of the Indian Ocean and its branches (i.e., the bodies of water surrounding the Arabian Peninsula) were generally placed under the blanket designation of the 'Erythraean Sea'. In other words, the Greeks of that period used that name 'for as much

of the adjoining seas, as they became acquainted with: as for instance to the sea of *Omman* and the *gulf of Persia*, as parts of it'.[23] Reference to the 'Arabian Gulf' (the modern Red Sea) and the Persian Gulf, as distinct from the Erythraean Sea, reappeared only later in the works of Arrian.

The great Greek historian Herodotus (*c.* 484–25 BC), who lived during the transition period between Hecataeus and Arrian, provides us with a good example of this confusion. He noticeably fails to distinguish between the Persian Gulf, the Erythraean Sea and the Arabian Gulf, and applies the name 'Red Sea' to the entire Indian Ocean in his works.[24] When Herodotus makes reference to the Red Sea's islands (the residents of which joined Xerxes in his expedition against Greece, and to which exiles were sent), he could only mean, in these circumstances, the islands of the Persian Gulf. He did not follow Strabo and others in making distinctions between the bodies of water in the wider region.[25]

The Hellenistic Era: Alexander's Eastern Campaign

During the Hellenistic Era, which followed the conquests of Alexander the Great and ended with the emergence of the Roman Empire, the ancient world's knowledge of the Persian Gulf received a great boost. Following the successful conclusion of his Indian campaign, Alexander turned his attention to the Arabian Peninsula. This was an opportunity for the Greeks to begin shedding some light on the situation in and around the Persian Gulf. For this purpose, they sent out four intelligence-gathering missions, which greatly improved existing knowledge about the Gulf region. As Arrian explained: 'Alexander was planning to colonize the coast along the Persian Gulf and the islands there, as he thought that it would become just as prosperous a country as Phoenicia …'[26]

During these four missions, the voyage of Alexander's admiral Nearchus in the Persian Gulf was of particular interest in improving the Greeks' knowledge of the region. In subsequent missions, Archias, Androsthenes and Hieron were assigned by Alexander to explore

the Arabian coasts. Although none of the original reports of these expeditions have survived, fragments or excerpts have come down to us in later works by writers such as Eratosthenes (through Strabo), Theophrastus, Pliny and Arrian; of them, Arrian's *Anabasis* offers the most complete version available.

The voyage of Nearchus in 325–324 BC was a turning point in geographical conceptions of the Persian Gulf. The five-month journey, from the Indus mouth to Charax, near modern Abadan at the head of the Gulf, provided a great deal information about the topography of the northern shores of the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf.[27]

Eratosthenes and the Persian Gulf

Expeditions and explorations undertaken under Alexander's auspices allowed geographers of the ensuing period such as Eratosthenes of Cyrene (*c.* 276–195 BC) to form a reasonable impression of the coastlands' topography.[28] Eratosthenes, who lived near the time of Alexander, benefited broadly from the reports of the latter's explorers – including the treatise *Sailing along the Indian Coast*, written by one of Nearchus's lieutenants, Androsthenes of Thasos. The longest extant fragments of this treatise are derived from the work of Eratosthenes;[29] although his own writings have not come town to us, it is possible to determine their content through the works of later authors such as Strabo and Pliny the Elder. Strabo, in his *Geographica*, recounts extensively what Eratosthenes recorded from the accounts of Nearchus and his companions. They reported on what they saw during their cruise in the Persian Gulf, describing the islands, vegetation, the people they encountered, the distance between places, etc.

Strabo echoes Eratosthenes's information and understanding of the Persian Gulf proper, including its location and nomenclature. He separates the inhabited world into northern and southern divisions, dividing each into subsections. According to Strabo, Eratosthenes calls India the First Section of the Southern Division, and Ariana[30] the Second Section. Then, according to Strabo, Eratosthenes 'represents

[its western] side by a sort of line that begins at the Caspian Gates and ends at the Capes of Carmania that are next to the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, he calls this side "western" and the side along the Indus "eastern"'.[31] Strabo goes on to explain that Eratosthenes presents the Third Section much more roughly than the Second, because 'first … the side common to the Second and the Third Sections has not been determined distinctly; second, the Persian Gulf breaks into the southern side'.[32] Elsewhere, Strabo explains: 'After having thus represented the northern side, Eratosthenes says it is not possible to take the southern side as along the sea, because the Persian Gulf breaks into it.'[33] Strabo, quoting Eratosthenes, describes 'the southern side', which 'begins at the outlets of the Indos and at Patalene and ends at Karmania and the mouth of the Persian gulf, having a promontory stretching considerably to the south, and then making a turn into the Gulf towards *Persis*'.[34]

In a passage describing the Arabian Peninsula, Strabo quotes Eratosthenes: 'The northern side is formed by the above-mentioned [Syrian] desert, the eastern by the Persian Gulf, the western by the Arabian Gulf, and the southern by the great sea that lies outside both Gulfs.'[35] Strabo concludes: 'Concerning the region of the Persian Sea, which, as I have said, forms the eastern side of Arabia Eudaimon, this is what Eratosthenes has said.'[36]

Eratosthenes drew the first world map, based on the findings from Alexander's sponsored explorations. The Persian Gulf plays an important role therein. An Arabic version of Eratosthenes's map, as interpreted by Dr Ahmad Suseh and published in his *al-Iraq fi al-Khawarit al-Qadima* (*Iraq in Ancient Maps*), was published by the Iraqi Scientific Assembly in Baghdad in 1959; in it, the Arabic term *al-Khalij al-Farsi* ('Persian Gulf') is used.[37]

Given the important status of Eratosthenes and his pioneering role in the invention of geography as a discipline, the consistent use of the term 'Persian Gulf' in his works is an significant development in the history of the nomenclature of this body of water.

Arrian

The Greek historian Flavius Arrianus (86–166 AD), 'Arrian' in English, described the Indian campaigns of Alexander the Great in his renowned book *Indica*. In it, he relayed the accounts of Nearchus and three other explorers regarding their maritime activities. Arrian's work indicates the extent of knowledge in his time about the Gulf's designation and geography. J. W. McCrindle stresses that Arrian's narratives derived from the journal of the voyage written by Nearchus, and that they include 'minute description of a part of the Erythraean coast'.[38] Arrian explains: 'This narrative is a description of the voyage, which Nearchus made with the fleet, starting from the outlet of the Indus through the Great Sea as far as the Persian Gulf, which some call the Red Sea.'[39] He provides a long description of the coasts and islands of the Gulf from the accounts of Alexander's explorers.

'Persian Gulf' is the term Arrian uses everywhere in *Indica* to designate the waterway between Persia and Arabia. E. J. Chinnock, translator and annotator of Arrian, reminds in a footnote that 'Arrian calls the Persian Gulf by this name, as do also Xenophon and Diodorus. This Gulf was unknown to Herodotus.'[40]

According to Arrian, Alexander explained his plans in his address to 'a council of officers of the brigades' after he heard about soldiers disobeying and refusing to follow him further. Among other things, he said:

> I will also demonstrate both to the Macedonians and the Grecian allies, that the Indian Gulf is confluent with the Persian, and the Hyrcanian Sea with the Indian Gulf. From the Persian Gulf, our expedition will sail round into Libya [Africa] as far as the Pillars of Heracles [Gibraltar]. From the Pillars all the interior of Libya becomes us, and so the whole of Asia...[41]

In Chapter XIX of Book VI, titled 'Voyage down the Indus into the Sea', Arrian describes a ceremony presided over by Alexander. It included the sacrifice of some bulls, cast into the sea as an offering to Poseidon while prayers beseeched the god to safeguard the fleet,

'which he intended to dispatch with Nearchus to the Persian Gulf and the mouth of the Euphrates and Tigris'.[42] According to Arrian:

> Nearchus tells us that from this point [a harbour called Mosarna] a pilot sailed with them, a Gadrosian called Hydraces, who undertook to bring them with safety as far as Carmania [modern Iran's Kerman province]. The course from this place was no longer difficult, and the names of the places are better known, as far as the Persian Gulf.[43]

In one instance, Arrian explains the practical approach Nearchus took with regard to his mission:

> Nearchus indeed in his voyage from India had seen this stretching out not far off, before he turned aside into the Persian Gulf, and he was almost induced to cross over to it. The pilot Onesicritus thought that they ought to have gone thither; but Nearchus says that he himself prevented it, so that after sailing right round the Persian Gulf, he might be able to give a report to Alexander about the things for which he had sent him. For Nearchus said he had not been dispatched to navigate the Great Sea, but to explore the land bordering on the sea, to find out what men inhabit it, to discover the harbours and rivers in it, to ascertain the customs of the people, and to see if any of the country was fertile, and if any was sterile…[44]

Strabo

Strabo (64/63 BC–*c.* 24 AD), was a great Greek geographer, historian and philosopher. He drew a world map that depicted the world as a large island situated in the midst of limitless oceans, from which the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea derived. The nomenclature of the Persian Gulf is taken for granted in Strabo's work. He has a clear knowledge of the Gulf, and distinguishes it from the Erythraean Sea and the Arabian Gulf; he also provides explanation for its nomenclature: 'Next to Carmania is Persis. A great part of it extends along the coast of the Gulf, which has its name from the country, but a much larger portion stretches into the interior.'[45] He further explains: 'The Persian Gulf has the name also of the Sea of Persia ['*la*

Mer des Perses' in the French translation].'[46] He further displays a good knowledge of the topography of the area: 'They say that the mouth of [the Gulf] is so narrow, that from Harmozi, the promontory of Carmania, may be seen the promontory at Macae, in Arabia.'[47]

The elaboration Strabo provides, about the 'Oceanic Theory' (later explained further), clarifies the position of the Persian Gulf from his perspective:

> I now resume my first sketch of the inhabited world and say that our inhabited world, being girt by the sea, admits into itself from the exterior sea along the ocean many gulfs, of which four are very large. Of these four gulfs, the northern one is called the Caspian Sea (though some call it the Hyracanian Sea); the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Gulf pour inland from the Southern Sea, the one about opposite the Caspian Sea and the other about opposite the Pontus [the modern-day Black Sea]; and the fourth, which far exceeds the others in size, is formed by the sea which is called the Interior Sea, or Our Sea [the Mediterranean]; it takes its beginning in the west at the strait at the Pillars of Heracles [Gibraltar] ...[48]

Later, Strabo demonstrates his era's relatively good knowledge of the region surrounding the Persian Gulf. Describing the countries and peoples there, he says:

> Next after Aria,[49] toward the sea, are Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, countries which reach down to the Persian Sea ... After Mesopotamia come the countries this side of the Euphrates. These are: the whole of Arabia Felix, which is bounded by the whole extent of the Arabian Gulf and the Persian Gulf, and all the country occupied by the Tent – Dwellers and by the Sheikh-Governed tribes ... Then come the peoples who live on the other side of the Arabian Gulf and as far as the Nile, namely the Ethiopians ...[50]

Continuing to describe the area surrounding the Persian Gulf, Strabo gives a description of Carmania:

> Carmania is the last portion of the sea-coast, which begins from the Indus. Its first promontory projects towards the south into the Great Sea. After it has formed the mouth of the Persian Gulf

> towards the Promontory, which is in sight, of Arabia Felix, it bends towards the Persian Gulf, and is continued till it touches Persia.[51]

Ancient Greek Maps

There are clear indications that ancient Greek and Roman geographers tried to present their knowledge of their region in maps. While many of these maps have not come down to us, later reconstructed versions of them show that many ancient cartographers – including Hecataeus, Eratosthenes and Strabo – depicted the Persian Gulf as 'a wide gulf or an almost rectangular one, branching out from the Encircling Ocean'.[52]

The earliest maps of the world, drawn by Hecataeus, Strabo, Posidonius and others, show the universe in the form of a disc floating on the sea. They represent the Greek and later Roman imagination of the waters of the world, the basis of the 'Oceanic Theory' or the 'Theory of the Gulfs' defended by Eratosthenes, Posidonius, Strabo and Aristotle. According to this theory, the *oecumene* – the inhabited land or known world, i.e., Asia, Africa and Europe – is an island, floating on the waters and encircled on all sides by the External or Encircling Ocean. Four gulfs branch out of this ocean: the Mediterranean Sea in the west; the Caspian Sea (or Sea of Hyrcania) in the north; and the Persian and Arabian Gulfs, which originated from the South Sea.[53] As we shall see later, the notion of the 'Encircling Ocean' around the *oecumene* was also entertained by Muslim geographers such as Yaqut.[54]

A world map according to the ideas of Posidonius (*c.* 135–51 BC) was drawn in 1628 by the cartographers Petrus Bertius and Melchior Tavernier. Included in Bertius's *Ancient Geography* in Paris, and available in the Library of Congress, it uses *Sinus Persicus* for the Persian Gulf.[55] In an extant fragment, Posidonius provides some hints on the knowledge of his time about the Gulf and his people, when he writes:

> When the Poet says, 'and I came to Ethiopians, Sidonians and Erembians', people are at a loss in the first place about the Sidonians: should the reference be to a people living on the Persian Gulf, from whom our Mediterranean Sidonians were colonists (as

> islanders called Tyrians and Aradians are reported in the Persian Gulf, from whom our Tyrians and Arabians are colonists …)?[56]

Posidonius also says that 'Seleucus, from the Persian Gulf, reported a certain irregularity in these phenomena [i.e. the tides] and regularity in accordance with the differences of the signs of the zodiac.'[57]

One map, titled *Tabula Universalis* and attributed to Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), depicts the world as known between 1500–500 BC. The extant version, based on the interpretation in 1842 by A. Forbiger, was originally published in his *Geographia* and is housed at Leiden University. On this map, the whole southern sea is called *Mare Rubrum*, and the Persian Gulf is given the name *Mare persicum*.[58]

The term 'Persian Gulf' was also used by Dicaearchus (347–283 BC)[59] and Polybius, whose map of Africa (*c.* 143 BC) was interpreted by Bertius in 1628. The original version of this map was published by Bertius in 1630, and is preserved in Leiden University Library.[60]

Roman Tradition

Early Roman historians, during the first and second centuries AD and in keeping with the traditions of the ancient Greeks, used the terms *Sinus Persicus* or *Mare Persicus* as geographical references for the Gulf. Trade relations between the Roman Empire and the East expanded, and exotic commercial goods from China, India, Persia and Arabia were in high demand in the Mediterranean region. Pliny indicates that the Persian Gulf supplied Rome with pearls, which were popular among wealthy Roman women. Eastern and local goods were loaded onto vessels at ports along the Persian Gulf, and shipped north via the Euphrates and Tigris. Accordingly, *Sinus Persicus* then acquired greater importance as one of the principal routes for commerce from and to the Roman Empire.[61]

An account attributed to Isidorus of Charax, who lived in the first century AD, holds that Tylos, now Bahrain, was the 'island in the Persian Gulf where pearls are found in abundance'. The *Periplus Maris*

Erythraei (*Voyage around the Erythraean Sea*, an anonymous work from the second half of the first century AD) simply refers to a place 'not far beyond the mouth of the Persian Gulf where there are many pearl-fishers'.[62] A reduction in the volume of trade along the Silk Road as a result of Persian–Byzantine competition and war, from the early first century BC through to the seventh century AD, boosted sea trade and drew more attention to the Persian Gulf.[63]

Periplus Maris Erythraei

Periplus Maris Erythraei is the first record of organised maritime trading with the nations of the East. Translator W. H. Schoff introduces it as 'one of those human documents, like the journals of Marco Polo and Columbus and Vespucci, which expresses not only individual enterprise, but the awakening of a whole race towards new fields of geographical discovery and commercial achievement.'[64] Its author, an anonymous Greek merchant living in Egypt, narrates the first detailed record of his time on trade in the Indian Ocean and with communities living on its coasts. There are indications, as the translator suggests, that the *Periplus* was written around 60 AD, and that the information it provides is trustworthy. The text makes clear that the author had travelled to India in person.[65] (*Periplus* is also regarded as the earliest first-hand surviving account of the East African coast.)[66] Using both 'Persian Sea' and 'Persian Gulf' as terms, the following is among the several descriptions it provides about the Gulf at the time:

> Sailing along the coast, which trends northward toward the entrance of the Persian Sea, there are many islands known as the Calaei, after about two thousand *stadia*, extending along the shore. The inhabitants are a treacherous lot, very little civilized. At the upper end of these Calaei islands is a range of mountains called Calon, and there follows not far beyond, the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where there is much diving for the pearl-mussel. To the left of the straits are great mountains called Asabon, and to the right there rises in full view another round and high mountain called Semiramis; the passage across the strait is about six hundred

> *stadia*; beyond which that very great and broad sea, the Persian Gulf, reaches far into the interior. At the upper end of this Gulf there is a market-town designated by law, called Apologus, situated near Charax Spasini and the River Euphrates.[67]

Pliny the Elder

Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD) was a commanding officer in both the army and navy of the early Roman Empire. He wrote an encyclopaedic work, *Naturalis Historia*, which includes vivid descriptions of the Persian Gulf and the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula. In a passage about the nomenclature of the Gulf, he states: 'The Persians always dwelt about the Red Sea, on which account it was called the Persian Gulf'.[68] Pliny uses 'Persian Sea' and 'Persian Gulf' interchangeably, as the following examples testify:

> Moreover, that Mesopotamia by itself is enclosed eastward by the Tigris, westward by the Euphrates; on the North by the Taurus, and on the South by the Persian Sea; being in the Length 800 Miles, and in Breadth 360. Charax is the inmost town of the Persian Gulf, from which Arabia, called *Eudaemon* (happy) runneth forth in length.[69]

Regarding the distance between places, he informs us that Susa is 250 miles from the 'Persian Sea'.[70] He quotes Nearchus's report that 'from the Persian Sea to Babylon, by the voyage up the Euphrates, is 412 Miles'.[71] In Book VI, Chapter XXIV of *Naturalis Historia*, titled 'The Persian and Arabian Gulfs', Pliny clarifies that he uses the term 'Red Sea' to refer to the whole of the seas surrounding the Arabian Peninsula:

> This Red Sea is divided into Two Gulfs. That from the east is named the Persian Gulf, and is Circuit 2,500 Miles, by the computation of Eratosthenes. Over against this Gulf is Arabia, which is in Length 1,200 Miles. On the other side there is another called the Arabian Gulf, which runneth into the Ocean, called Azanius. The mouth of the Persian Gulf is five miles wide, though some have made it but four. From this to its deepest recess, by a

> straight course, is known to be 1,125 miles; and it is fashioned like a man's head.[72]

He continues referring to a part of the Onesicritus and Nearchus accounts, about the distance from the Indus River to the head of the Persian Gulf and about some of the people living on its coast.[73] Elsewhere, he says that '[i]t is needful in this place to describe the situation of the Medi, and to discover the face of those countries, as far as to the Persian Gulf …'[74]

Referring to pearls coming from the East, Pliny relays the knowledge of his time about the sources of pearls available in Europe. He writes that pearls 'are sent chiefly by the Indian Ocean … the most productive [source] is Ceylon (Taprobane) and also Stoidis [in the Persian Gulf] … and also the Indian promontory of Perimula; those around Arabia on the Persian Gulf of the Red Sea [in *Persico Sinu Maris Rubi*] are specially praised'.[75]

Plutarch

Plutarch (*c.* 46–120 AD) was an ancient Greek and later Roman citizen. In his two major works, *Moralia* and *The Lives of the Caesars*, he uses the term 'Persian Gulf' invariably for the body of water between Persia and Arabia. According to Plutarch, 'Cleombrotus of Sparta, who had made many excursions in Egypt and about the land of the Cave-dwellers, had sailed beyond the Persian Gulf.'[76] Elsewhere, he discusses Emperor Trajan's campaign, stating that he 'pursued his conquests to the Persian Gulf, crossing a great part of India, and subduing countries as fast as he could travel through them …'[77]

Quintus Curtius

Quintus Curtius Rufus was a Roman historian who lived in the first century AD. His only surviving work, *Historiae Alexandri Magni*, is a ten-book biography of Alexander in Latin. He is another Roman who refers to the 'Persian' Gulf, describing the Pasitigris or Eulaeus (Karun River) very accurately and displaying his knowledge of the region:

> Its source is in the ridges of the Uxians; through a thousand *strada*, between wooded banks, it rushes headlong down a rocky channel. Received on the plains, it assumes a calmer tenor; thence a navigable stream, after gliding six hundred *strada* over a bed singularly level, it blends its waters with the Persian Sea.[78]

Claudius Ptolemy

Claudius Ptolemaeus (*c.* 90–*c.* 168 AD), an eminent Roman citizen of Egypt, figures prominently among Roman geographers and historians who discussed the Persian Gulf. Ptolemy's geographic works, including *Geographia*, compile what was known about the geography of the world in the Roman Empire during the second century AD. His great works on the subject made him the prevailing authority on geographical matters for many centuries. He was gradually overtaken only by major geographical discoveries during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[79]

In order to draw 'a sort of map of the entire *oikoumenē*', Ptolemy tries to demarcate 'the part of the world [contained] in our *oikoumenē*'. He states that it is bounded to the south 'by the unknown land that encloses the Sea of India and surrounds Aithiopia south of Libyē'. Ptolemy then turns to the seas that are 'contained by the *oikoumenē*'. First he describes 'the Mediterranean, together with the bays that are connected to it'. Then, he mentions 'the Hyrkanian or Caspian Sea', which 'is enclosed on all sides by the land, like an island in reverse'. Here it should be noted that Ptolemy corrects the mistake of earlier geographers, who connected this sea to the 'External Ocean'. He later turns to 'the whole sea around the Sea of India, together with the bays connected to it, besides the Arabian and Persian Bays, the [Bay] of Ganges, and the bay that is specifically called Great. This [sea], too, is contained by land on all sides'. (It is a departure from the Greek geographical tradition, which made the Indian Ocean part of the Encircling Ocean.)

Later, describing the size of the bodies of waters, Ptolemy lists some of the more 'noteworthy' bays:

> … the first and greatest is the Bay of Ganges
> the second, the Persian Bay
> the third, the Great Bay
> the fourth, the Arabian Bay …

He continues ranking six more bays in terms of their size.[80]

According to Berggren, the translator and interpreter of Ptolemy, 'his central meridian cuts through the Persian Gulf, passes slightly to the west of Persepolis, and then heads northward through the Caspian Sea and Skythia. The central parallel of latitude is the parallel of *soēmē*, in Lower Egypt'.[81]

Ptolemy was also the first geographer to compile an atlas of the world. It included thirty-six maps of different regions, and twelve regional maps of Asia. The fifth depicts Persia proper, drawing on the information available following the long stay of the Greeks in that land. On this map, the shape of the Persian Gulf is nearly rectangular. It is called *Sinvs Persicvs/Persici*. Inside the Gulf on the lower part of the map, four islands are represented, called, from west to east: Taxiana, Tablana, Spota and Aria Insula/Alexandria.[82]

Ammianus Marcellinus

Ammianus Marcellinus (*c.* 330–*c.* 391 AD) was a Roman historian living in the fourth century. His works recorded the history of Rome from 96 to 378, and contained accounts of Alexander's eastern campaigns as well as the Perso–Roman wars. Relating the history of these wars, he provides a depiction of the Persian Gulf that indicates good knowledge of this stretch of water at his time. As an example, he states: 'Now I will, in a few words, describe the situation and position of that country as well as I can. It is a region of great extent both in length and breadth, entirely surrounding on all sides the famous Persian Gulf with its many islands. The mouth of this gulf is narrow…'[83] Elsewhere in his book, describing Arabia Felix, he indicates that 'a great portion of that country reaches on the right down to the Red Sea, and on its left extends to the Persian Gulf, so that the inhabitants reap the benefits of both'.[84]

The Arabian Gulf

In parallel with the emergence of the toponym 'Persian Gulf', Greek authors began using 'Arabian Gulf' (*Sinus Arabicus*) to designate the waterway between the Arabian Peninsula and northeast Africa. This usage was later adopted by the Romans, and subsequently found its way into European maps and texts, persisting until at least the mid-nineteenth century.

Herodotus calls the present-day Red Sea 'the Arabian Gulf' everywhere in his celebrated *Histories*, written in the fifth century BC. In the second book, he situates the Arabian Gulf between northeast Africa and the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, writing: 'Now, if the Nile should choose to divert his waters from their present bed into this Arabian Gulf …'[85]

Herodotus views the Arabian Gulf as a body of water branching out of the Red Sea, thus applying the term 'Red Sea' as a blanket designation for the eastern Indian Ocean (as discussed earlier). This is quite clear when he describes the course of 'the canal to the Red Sea' that the Egyptian king Necho II ('Necos') attempted to construct – 'a work completed afterwards by Darius the Persian'. According to Herodotus, 'the water is derived from the Nile, which the canal leaves a little above the city of Bubastis'; it is 'carried along the Arabian side of the Egyptian plain … until it enters the Arabian Gulf'.[86] He goes on to state:

> Necos, when he gave up the construction of the canal, turned all his thoughts to war, and set to work to build a fleet of triremes, some intended for service in the northern sea, and some for the navigation of the Erythraean. These last were built in the Arabian Gulf where the dry docks in which they lay are still visible.[87]

The waterway located between Arabia and Egypt is also referred to by Strabo, as by all other geographers of Antiquity, as the 'Arabian Gulf'. In the introduction to the third chapter of Book XVI of *Geographia*, on the description of the Persian Gulf, Strabo has a passage that reads:

> The northern side of this above-mentioned [Arabia] is a desert (*éremos*); the eastern is the Persian Gulf; the western, the Arabian Gulf; the southern is the great sea which is outside the two gulfs, which as a whole is called *erythra* (the red).[88]

In *Geographia*, Strabo clearly shows that the term 'Arabian Gulf' was already emerging as the geographical reference for the body of water separating Arabia from the Horn of Africa, the modern Red Sea. He quotes Eratosthenes as saying: 'Ailana is a city on the other recess of the Arabian Gulf, the one opposite Gaza called the Ailanitic …' Strabo also uses the terms *Sinus Persicus* and *Sinus Arabicus* at the same time, when, for example, he writes:

> The whole of Arabia Felix, which is bounded by the whole extent of the Arabian Gulf and the Persian Gulf, and all the country occupied by the tent-dwellers and by the Sheikh-Governed tribes… Then come the peoples who live on the other side of the Arabian Gulf and as far as the Nile, namely the Ethiopians …[89]

Arrian's works further confirm that the body of water known currently as the Red Sea was then labelled the 'Arabian Gulf'. He uses this term throughout his work, stating, for example: 'Yet from the Arabian Gulf, which runs along Egypt, people have started and have circumnavigated the greater part of Arabia hoping to reach the sea nearest to Susa and Persia, and thus have sailed so far round the Arabian coast … and then have returned home again.'[90]

As explained earlier, Ptolemy, too, uses the term *Sinus Arbicus* – 'Arabian Bay' in the English translation – for the present-day Red Sea. He also uses both *Sinus Persicus* and *Sinus Arabicus* at the same time.

It is noteworthy that use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' for the Red Sea was widespread until at least the early nineteenth century, in academic circles as well as among the people. *The Universal Geography*, a major reference book, commonly designates the modern Red Sea as 'the Arabian Gulf'. For example: 'Abyssinia forms a table land gently inclined to the northwest, and having two great steeps on the east and on the south; the first towards the Arabian Gulf, and the second towards the interior of Africa.'[91] To take another example:

'In the northeast, the Arabian Gulf separates Africa from Asia, without breaking the gloomy uniformity of the African coast.'[92]

At a different, more official level, in India Office, Bombay Commerce, Range 419, vols 39–106, we find tables listing 'Imports and Exports of Bombay with Persian Gulf and Arabian Gulf (Red Sea) in 1801–1854'.[93] Another source published in 1850 explains:

> The custom is, as it has been for ages, to sail from the Persian Gulf, towards the close of the monsoon, and return after the change of these periodical winds… this is also the case for ships sailing from the Arabian Gulf, and the adjoining coasts of Africa and Arabia.[94]

In the same source, figures for the volumes of trade with the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Gulf are given distinctively.[95] Another book citing sources for trade between India and southwest Asia in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shows the concurrent use of the terms 'Persian Gulf' and 'Arabian Gulf' (Red Sea).[96]

Notes

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3 Wilson, A. T., *The Persian Gulf: A Historical Sketch from the Earliest Time to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1928, pp. 32–4.

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5 Delaporte, Louis *et al*, *Atlas historique de l'antiquité*, Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1955.

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8 Kerr, Robert, *A General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 18, Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1824, p. 210.
9 For further discussion about the use of ethnic group names for bodies of water, see Chapter Five.
10 Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.
11 'Classical Greece' denotes a period in Greek history of almost two hundred years, lasting from the fifth through to the fourth centuries BC.
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13 Fanshawe Tozer, Henry, *A History of Ancient Geography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897, p. 71.
14 *Ibid.*, pp. 73–4.
15 Müller, Karl and Theodor Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum*, pp. 1–2, cited in Henry d'Arbois de Jubainville, *Principaux auteurs de l'antiquité à consulter sur l'histoire des Celtes*, tome xii, Paris: A. Fontemoing, 1902, p. 18.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
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25 Rennell, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
26 Hoyland, Robert G., *Arabia and the Arabs: from the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 3.
27 Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p. xix.
28 *Ibid.*
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30 This was a general geographical term used by some Greek and Roman authors of the ancient period for a wide region, including the whole of modern-day Afghanistan, the east and southeast of Iran, Tajikistan and northwestern Pakistan.

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32 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, (2. 1. 23), p. 299.
33 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, (2. 1. 25–26), p. 303.
34 Roller, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
35 Strabo, *op. cit.*, p. 186.
36 Roller, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
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Chapter Two

The Term 'Persian Gulf' in Historical Perspective: The Middle Ages and the Islamic Era

The Middle Ages describe the fifth to the fifteenth centuries – in Europe following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, and in the Islamic world, where they constituted a flourishing and prosperous era as early as the eighth century. The Persian Gulf and its coasts became one of the main regions for the activities of Muslim traders and scholars, and a major point of departure for Muslim seafarers in their spirited journeys to the far east and far west of the then-known world. The greater attention paid to the Gulf during this era encouraged efforts to expand knowledge of this stretch of water and its surroundings, and to form a more detailed picture.

With the start of the Middle Ages in Europe, we observe the beginning of a decline in the Greco–Latin world in the field of geography in general, including the study of the Persian Gulf. Works written during the ensuing thousand years would be mostly limited to compiling and replicating previous works, which could not greatly enhance knowledge.[1]

Among the geographers of the early Middle Ages. we may refer to Julius Honorius, whose fifth-century world map was interpreted and published by Conrad Miller in Stuttgart in 1898. This map shows that the terms *Sinus Persicus*, *Sinus Arabicus* and *Mare Rubrum* continued to be used for the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, respectively.[2] The works of Paolo del Pozzo Toscanelli (1397–1482), including his world map of 1460,[3] bear witness that the same nomenclature survived the passage of time, as his Persian Gulf is labelled with the traditional name.

As time wore on, the lack of enthusiasm for geography in the West was met with a growing interest in geography in the Islamic world during its Golden Age, which began in the mid-eighth century and lasted until the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258. From the onset of this period, Muslim geographers developed a special interest in what they began to call the 'Persian Sea'. Strangely, as we shall see in the next chapter, the revival of the importance of geography in Europe at the beginning of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century coincided with a dwindling interest in the discipline in the Islamic world.

The Persian Gulf could be fully revived as the main channel of trade only with the rise of the Islamic Empire. The works of Muslim scholars illuminate the state of the Persian Gulf and its regions, beginning from the eighth century through to the end of the Middle Ages in Europe. A continuous line of scholars such as al-Kindi and Ibn Khurdadbeh in the eighth and ninth centuries stretches to Abul Ghazi and Sadiq Isfahani in the seventeenth century.

The Nomenclature of the Persian Gulf in the Islamic Tradition

The precedence established by the Greeks and Romans regarding the Gulf was respected and followed by the various Islamic scholars as well as by the Persian, Arab and Turkish empires, which shared sway and spread their influence in the region for centuries. There is a consensus that Muslim and Arab historians, geographers and other scholars were unanimous over the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf, with some inconsequential exceptions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, up to the 1950s.

Following the Muslim conquest of Iran, the new Arab rulers made massive efforts to change Persian name places into Arabic; for example, Ctesiphon, the Sasanian capital, became 'al-Mada'in'. Yet there is no record of any attempt by the Arabs to change the term 'Persian Gulf'. The toponym 'Bahr Fars' ('Persian Sea') was allowed to persist as the only appellation for the stretch of water it described. This continued during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the

four Rashidun Caliphs; as such, it constitutes a *sunna*, i.e. an Islamic tradition. Usage of the designation 'Persian Sea' also continued during the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, and was respected by the different Arab and Iranian dynasties ruling in the region over the following 1,200 years.

On account of the paucity of records, the immediately pre- and very early Islamic times in the Gulf's history are generally obscure. By and large, sources that might have shed light on the Eastern world's knowledge of the Persian Gulf during that period did not survive the tumultuous events that prevailed before the advent of Islam, or the 200 years that followed it. However, beginning in the ninth century, historical and geographical works by Persian and Arab authors emerged, revealing the extent of that era's knowledge and perception of the Gulf as well as the nomenclature and physical descriptions.

Early Islamic Perspectives on Global Maritime Geography

The Persian Gulf has held a prominent position in the history and geography of the Islamic world, more than for the Greco–Roman world. With the advent of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires (661–1258) came urban life and luxury, as well as the expansion of a leisure class in Baghdad and elsewhere. Trade flourished with East Asia via land routes through Central Asia and, more significantly, through the sea route down the Persian Gulf. On the eve of the new Islamic wave, more people began to settle on the coasts of the Gulf – including the Arabs from inner Arabia. The population increase during the early centuries of Islam was another significant factor adding to the importance of this waterway.

Accordingly, these developments further contributed to the Gulf's prominence in the eyes of Muslim scholars. It was a centre of attention for the flourishing school of Islamic geographers whose works from the ninth century onward are known to us. They first provided us with information on the Islamic world's conception of the physical geography of the Gulf, as well as its nomenclature.

Many early Muslim geographers and historians were influenced by the Greek and Roman 'Encircling Sea' concept. Some also based their perspectives on global maritime geography on the reference made to the 'two seas' in the Qur'an, as well as the notion of the 'Seven Seas', as described later. Regarding adherence to the Encircling Sea concept, the great scholars Abu Rayhan al-Biruni and Yaqut ibn 'Abd Allah al-Hamawi can be mentioned. They refer to the Eastern Encircling Sea and Western Encircling Sea, and enumerate the seas and gulfs that branch out from them, including the 'Sea of Fars'.[4]

The Qur'an asserts, in *surah ar-Rahman* (55:19–22): 'He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]/Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses/So which of the favours of your Lord would you deny?/From both of them emerge pearl and coral.'[5] In various interpretations of the Qur'an dating from the seventh century onwards, the phrase 'two seas' refers to both the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. These interpretations hold that there are two inner seas in the world, branching out from the global ocean – one each for the eastern and western hemispheres.[6] Consequently, the 'Roman Sea' (i.e. the Mediterranean) was the body of the inner sea in the west, with the one in the east, referred to as the 'Persian Sea', perceived to be much larger than the present-day Persian Gulf. Following the Qur'an, from the early Islamic period until the beginning of the modern age, many Muslim authors conceived of the inner waters of the globe as two seas, using the designation 'Persian Sea' for all the waters of the East.

Greek and Roman authors such as Eratosthenes and Strabo had a relatively clear understanding of the Persian Gulf or Persian Sea: when referring to the former, they meant more or less the modern-day Gulf. By contrast, earlier Muslim geographers used 'Persian Sea' to denote a much more extended stretch of water. Extant geographic sources indicate that geographers and other authors, both Arab and Persian, who wrote mostly in Arabic from the ninth to the seventeenth century, used both 'Persian Sea' ('Sea of Fars') and 'Persian Gulf' at times to refer to a larger body of water than the Persian Gulf proper. For Ibn Hawqal, the Persian Sea is much

larger than the Persian Gulf; he indicates: 'The Persian Sea is more extensive in length and breadth [than the Mediterranean], reaching to the land of Cheen [China] and to the Sea of Kolzum [Red Sea].'[7] Al-Muqaddasi asks: '… and do you not know that many people refer to the part of this sea as far as the coast of al-Yaman as the Sea of Fars?'[8] Given the location of Yemen, this may indicate that for al-Muqaddasi, too, the Sea of Fars is much larger than the present-day Persian Gulf, and at least includes the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

As we shall see, there are old maps that clearly denote the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea as the 'Persian Sea' and, as we have already seen, 'Persian Sea' was used in some Greek and Roman texts as an alternative name for the Persian Gulf. From the sixteenth century, perhaps through the influence of new discoveries and the modern geography, the term 'Persian Gulf' gradually prevailed in Islamic texts and on maps, while the term 'Persian Sea' continued to be used intermittently up to the early twentieth century. Similarly, the extent of the body of water it designated gradually decreased to become confined to what is known today as the Persian Gulf.

Early Islamic Geographers and Seafarers and the Gulf

Traces of the early Islamic notions of the seas that circled the world can be found in fictional narratives and in the works of geographers and seafarers of the early Islamic centuries. Although these works provide only a blurred picture of the knowledge that early Muslims possessed of the Persian Gulf, they are of interest in outlining how the Gulf was perceived in different ages. Chief among these early works are those referred to in this section.

The Thousand and One Nights

There are almost no available historical or geographical texts that convey the extent of knowledge of the Gulf during the better part of the two first Islamic centuries (seventh and eighth). However, *The Thousand and One Nights* can shed some light on the way the Gulf

was perceived then. The series of narratives concerning Sindbad the sailor (the name is Persian), describing his famous seven voyages, are based on the knowledge of the time. The tale of Sindbad tells of Muslim travels at the time, if romantically. As Arnold Wilson has written: 'In the guise of fable may be recognized everywhere an account of places known and visited at the present day.'[9] This story of prosperous maritime trade and adventure aroused people's curiosity and imagination, and the Sindbad stories became a staple of the *Thousand and One Nights* cycle.

The origins of the accounts, compiled in Arabic during Islam's Golden Age, can be traced back to ancient and medieval Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Indian, Egyptian and Mesopotamian literature and folklore. Dubbed the most influential work of Oriental fiction, the collection probably originated at some unknown time in Iran during the Sasanian era under the title of *Hezar afsana* (*A Thousand Tales*), and later translated into Arabic.[10]

In the narratives, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used several times, and the brief descriptions of its coasts and distances are relatively correct. The Gulf is almost the only proper sea name mentioned in the work. All other bodies of water are referred to by the generic word 'sea'.[11] As we shall see, the term 'Persian Sea' has prevailed in texts and maps produced since the ninth century onward.

Relating the story of his first voyage, Sindbad says:

> I entered into a contract with some merchants, who traded by sea, resolving to improve what money I had, I went to Balsora [Basra], and embarked with several merchants on board of a ship, which we jointly fitted out. We set sail, and steered our course towards the East Indies, through the Persian Gulf, which is formed by the coasts of Arabia Felix on the right, and by those of Persia on the left, and according to common opinion is seventy leagues at the broadest place.[12]

In this narrative, the western Indian Ocean up to the coasts of Abyssinia is referred to as the 'eastern sea'.

On the sixty-sixth night, the storyteller Shahrazade narrates a tale in which Sindbad's ship has 'come into the Persian Gulf, not far

from Balsora', and the two sisters on board throw their brother and the prince overboard.[13]

In one of the stories, 'The History of Zobeide', Shahrazade relates that Zobeide and her two sisters go to Balsora (Basra) and procure a ship:

> … I bought a well-equipped vessel. I loaded it with goods that I had brought with me from Baghdad. We set sail with a favourable wind, and soon left the Persian Gulf. When we were in the open sea, we set a course towards India; and after twenty days of navigation, we landed.[14]

Explaining how he decided to embark on his sixth voyage, Sindbad tells us that 'instead of setting out by the Persian Gulf, I passed once more through several Provinces of Persia and India, and I arrived in a sea port where I embarked on a good vessel whose captain was resolute to make a long navigation'.[15]

In another episode, Sindbad narrates that his ship was attacked by pirates on his way from Serendib [Sri Lanka] to Baghdad, and he was captured and sold as a slave. He recounts that, after being freed along with other traders, '[w]e set out and voyaged from island to island till we had crossed the sea and landed on the shores of the Persian Gulf, when the merchants brought out and sold their stores: I also sold what I had at a high profit'.[16]

Akhbar al-sin wa'l-hind (*An Account of China and India*)

Akhbar al-sin wa'l-hind is one of the earliest known accounts of the travels of Muslim seafaring merchants – in this case, from the port of Siraf on the Persian Gulf through India and Sri Lanka into the Chinese town of Khanfu. The basis for this work are the reports written by a merchant named Suleiman, who set sail in the Persian Gulf and made several voyages up to India and China in 851. The second part of the book was written by Abu Zaid al-Hasan of Siraf, a guide who, although never having travelled to India and China, took it upon himself to modify and complete the work of Suleiman

by reading available material and questioning travellers to those countries. Al-Masʿudi, who met this Abu Zaid in Basra in 916, acknowledges having received information from him, which he used in his *Muruj adh-dhahab wa maʿadin al-jawhar* (*Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*). (On the other hand, Abu Zaid was indebted to al-Masʿudi for some of his statements, without mentioning him.)[17]

This work was published in French in 1718 as *Anciennes relations des Indes et de la Chine*; the editor of that translation informs us that the first pages of the manuscript have been lost, creating uncertainty as to the title of the work. He indicates that, despite the title he gave to the book, it seems to him that the real title was *Akhbar-al-Syn oual-Hind*, i.e. *Observations about China and India*.[18] The editor also indicates that the writing of the first book took place in 851, at a time when commercial relations between the Caliphate and India and China were at their peak.[19] According to the same editor, 'Soleyman' is not the author of the book, and according to the remarks that accompany the work, it was simply written based on his account. This part ends a short way into the text, and the remainder is credited to an author who names himself 'Abou-Zeyd-Hassan' from the city of Siraf, a 'very busy port in Farsistan on the Persian Gulf'.[20]

Suleiman the Merchant commences his account by naming the seven seas one had to traverse to reach China from the mouth of Euphrates. The pages of the manuscript on which the first two seas are referred to are missing, but we learn from a fragment of al-Masʿudi's *Muruj adh-dhahab* that these two seas were, first, Bahr Fars ('Persian Sea', including the 'Sea of Mekran') and second, the Sea of Lar, which the Arabs named 'Bahr al-Larwi' and which extended from the mouth of Indus to modern-day Goa.[21]

Bosworth sets out his beliefs along the same lines:

> The opening pages of our earliest first-hand Islamic text on Indian Ocean seafaring, the *Akhbar al-Sin wa'l-Hind*, are unfortunately lost, and it must have been in these lost leaves that the author discussed the configuration of the Persian Gulf, which he subsequently calls by what became the most generally used term in medieval Islam for it, the *Bahr Faris* 'Sea of Fars', describing it as the 'First Sea'.

> The 'Second Sea' he calls the *Bahr Larwi*, which must correspond to the Arabian Sea. The 'Third Sea' he calls the '*Bahr Harkand*', and since it is separated from the Second Sea by a multiplicity of islands, must be the Bay of Bengal.[22]

al-Kindi

Al-Kindi, or Abu Yusuf Yaqub ibn Ishaq al-Sabbah (*c.* 801–73), was best known as a philosopher, but he also contributed to geography among other fields. A world map attributed to him and to al-Sarakhsi was copied in 1570, and its original manuscript is preserved in Oxford's Bodleian Library. This is possibly the earliest Islamic map to depict the Persian Gulf, labelling it the 'Sea of Fars'. It gives the name 'Bahr Fars' to the body of water branching out from a larger one. The island of Bahrain and the port of Siraf are also indicated.[23]

Ibn Khurdadbih

Ibn Khurdadbih, or Abu'l-Qasim Ubayd Allah (*c.* 820–911) was from Khorasan, Persia, and grew up in Baghdad. He compiled his *Kitab al-masalik wa'l-mamalik* (*Book of Itineraries and Kingdoms*) around 900, and is believed to be the earliest geographer to write in Arabic whose book has survived in its original form. The *Kitab* is highly important to the development of geography in the Islamic world. Ibn Khurdadbih, who served as the director of the Caliphate postal system, provides information on postal routes throughout the Caliphate, as well as the locations of cities and the distances between them.[24]

His book also describes a number of rivers flowing into the Persian Gulf: 'Some of these rivers run towards Basra and some towards Mazar [a city located between Waset and Basra], and hence all of them flow into the Persian Sea.'[25] He also mentions the tides of the Gulf: 'The Persian Sea, which is a big sea, does not have tides during the moonlit nights, other than twice per year'.[26]

Ibn al-Faqih

Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadani, a tenth-century Persian historian and geographer, is famous for his *Mukhtasar kitab al-buldan* (*Concise Book of Lands*), written in 901. In it he wrote: 'Know that the Persian Sea and Indian Sea in the view of continuity are both one Sea.' He also wrote that the 'two seas' referred to in the Qur'an are the 'Persian Sea' and the 'Roman Sea.'[27]

Ibn Rostah

Ibn Rostah (d. after 903) is the Persian author of a book that was probably the seventh part of an extensive encyclopaedia, the *Kitab al-alaq al-nafisa*. The surviving parts deal with geography, including the seas and rivers of the world.[28] In this book, Ibn Rostah maintains: '[F]rom the Indian Sea, a Gulf protrudes towards the territory of Persia, which is called the Persian Gulf, and between the Red Gulf and the Persian Gulf [we find] situated the territories of Hejaz and Yemen and other Arabic lands.'[29] He also describes the Gulfs branching out from the Indian Sea, stating:

> The Indian Sea has a Gulf in the Abyssinian region, which goes through the Barber area, thus named Barbary Gulf … Another Gulf branches out therefrom in Ayla, named the Red Sea. Again, towards the Persian region, another Gulf splits out from that Sea, which is called 'Persian Gulf'.[30]

al-Mas'udi

Abu'l-Hasan Ali al-Masʿudi, the great tenth-century author and traveller, was born in Baghdad in *c.* 893, began his voyages in 915 and died in 956. He travelled extensively in Asia and parts of Europe and Africa, and wrote an encyclopaedic work titled *Muruj adh-dhahab wa maʿadin al-jawhar* (*Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*) containing descriptions of the world and the seas together with histories of various peoples. This and his other book, *Kitab al-tanbih wa'l-ishraf* (*Book of Notification and Review*),

contain detailed discussions about the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean.

The tenth chapter of *Muruj adh-dhahab* is allocated to an 'Account of the Abyssinian Sea, Its Extent, Gulfs and Straits'. Al-Mas'udi describes the 'Indian Sea', which is for him 'identical with the Abyssinian sea', as extending 'from the most western part of Abyssinia to as far as China in the east'.[31] For him, the 'Persian Sea' figures among numerous seas and Gulfs branching off from the Abyssinian Sea. Describing the winds of this Abyssinian Sea, he explains:

> This sea which we have described bears the general name of the Abyssinian Sea. The winds of the different parts of this sea which we have described, and every one of which has a distinct name, as the Persian Gulf, the sea of Yemen, the sea of el-Kolzom, the sea of Abyssinia, and the sea of ez-Zanj [portion of the Indian Ocean adjacent to East Africa], are different.[32]

For al-Mas'udi, the Persian Sea is a Gulf of the Abyssinian Sea, which, as a general name, corresponds to the modern-day Indian Ocean. As to the location, he explains:

> At the Sofalah (low district) of the country of the Zanj [Africa] another Gulf branches off, and this is the Persian sea, which comes up to el-Obollah, to the Khashabat [the wooden sea-marks], and to 'Abbadan, which belongs to el-Basrah. The length of this Gulf is one thousand four hundred miles, and the breadth at the entrance five hundred miles, but in some places, it is not above one hundred and fifty miles wide. This Gulf has a triangular shape, at one angle el-Obollah is situated, thence the gulf extends towards the east along Faris [Pars].[33]

He then describes the places on this coast and what is produced and manufactured there. What is notable in al-Mas'udi's work is that he ascribes two more names to the Gulf, namely the 'Persian Gulf' and the 'Sea of Faris', as in the following passage:

> This sea, I mean the Persian Gulf, which is also called the Persian sea, is skirted by the countries and towns which we have enumerated, as el-Bahrein, Faris, el-Basrah, and Oman, and extends as far as the promontory of el-Jomjomah. Between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of el-Kolzom and Ailah (the Red Sea,) is the Hejaz and el-Yemen …[34]

The quotations below show how he used the name interchangeably:

> We repeat that the seas of China, India, Faris, and Yemen, are connected, and form only one mass of water. The difference of the currents and height of the water is to be attributed to the direction of the winds, the season when they rise, and other causes. The Persian sea is most stormy and most dangerous for navigation, at the time when the Indian sea is quiet; and, again, the Persian sea is quiet when the sea of India is boisterous, stormy, dark, and rough. The sea of Faris begins to be stormy when the sun enters into the sign Virgo, about the time of the autumnal equinox …[35]

> They sail all the year round on the Persian Sea, from 'Oman to Siraf, which is a distance of one hundred and sixty *Farsangs*, and from Siraf to el-Basrah, which is a voyage of one hundred and forty *Farsangs*. But at this time it is not navigable, excepting in the two mentioned routes, or to neighbouring harbours.[36]

On several other occasions, al-Mas'udi uses the term 'Sea of Faris', as in the following passage: 'From the promontory of el-Jomjomah, the vessels enter, from the sea of Faris, into the second sea, which has the name Ladiwa.'[37] Also: '[P]earl fishing, in the sea of Faris, is carried on from the beginning of Nisan (April) to the end of Ailul (October).'[38]

The Balkhi School

The Balkhi school (the name is used by European scholars and derives from al-Balkhi [d. 934], a Persian polymath) thrived in the tenth century. The geographers considered to belong to it are the jewels in the crown of Islamic geography – al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal and al-Muqaddasi among them. The school initiated a powerful cartographic

tradition in the Islamic world at a time when Western mapmaking was still relatively underdeveloped. Its contribution to mapping and describing the Persian Gulf is also extremely important, and it had a great influence on the works of succeeding generations of geographers and scholars.[39]

The maps produced by the various Balkhi geographers are consistent, and are available in many preserved manuscripts to such an extent that experts have called the set the 'Atlas of Islam'. As Harley observes: 'The set consists of a world map, maps of the three seas – the Mediterranean, the Persian Sea (Indian Ocean), and the Caspian Sea – and the maps of the seventeen "Provinces" of the Islamic empire.'[40]

Abu Zayd al-Balkhi himself, a geographer, mathematician, physician and scientist, was the earliest of these authors. His *Suwar al-aqalim* (*Figures of the Climates*) consists chiefly of geographical maps, including those of the two Persian and Roman Seas. On the fringe of the map of the Persian Sea, he named the Zanj Sea, the Ethiopian Sea, the Qolzum Sea, the Indian Sea, etc.[41]

On al-Balkhi's map, Bahr Fars – the Persian Sea – is shown near the centre, followed by Bahr Hind (the Indian Sea), Bahr Zanj and so forth. They are denoted in a branch of waters that protrudes from the Encircling Ocean into the landmass. On this map, as On most other ancient Islamic maps, north is shown below and south above.

al-Istakhri

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al-Istakhri was a tenth-century Persian geographer and traveller from the city of Istakhr, Iran. His book *Masalik ul-mamalik* is a work of descriptive geography that contains twenty-one maps, accompanied by useful commentaries.[42] In al-Istakhri's world maps, the Persian Gulf is connected to the External Ocean. In his *Surat bahr fars* (*Map of the Persian Sea*), Khuzestan and the three islands situated in the Persian Sea, Khark, Laft and Oral, are clearly marked.

A good example of the maps drawn by the geographers of the Balkhi School is the one of Kirman (Kerman), in southeast Persia. It shows a crescent shape representing the Persian Sea, with an inscription in Persian reading *'Daryaee-i-Fars'*. The maps of Ibn Hawqal and al-Muqaddasi do not vary a great deal from these.

On another map by al-Istakhri from a later manuscript copy of *Masalik ul-mamalik,* dated 1325, the Province of Fars in southern Persia is depicted. On this map, the term 'Persian Sea' is inscribed at the top.[43] On these maps, as on all ancient Islamic maps, north is shown below and south above.

Ibn Hawqal

Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim Ibn Hawqal, born in Nisibis, was a tenth-century Arab writer, traveller, geographer and chronicler. His famous work, written in 977, is *Kitab surat al-ardh* (*Pictures of the Earth*); it is also known as *Ashkal al-bilad* (*Diagrams of the Countries*). As a traveller, he wrote extensively about the areas he visited. Sir William Ouseley, author of *The* Oriental Geography *of Ebn Haukal*, points to the importance of Ibn Hawqal: 'Besides the intrinsic merits of the work of [Ibn Hawqal], its authenticity and antiquity induced me to regard it as the most important of all compositions on the subject of Oriental Geography.'[44]

Ibn Hawqal's book contains maps and geographical descriptions of several countries. In his plan of work, he informs us:

> … In the present volume, which is entitled *Mesalek u memalek*, our plan is to describe, to delineate on maps, the various seas or oceans, which surround the land, the inhabited and the deserted islands, and every climate and region of the earth; affixing the name of each, so that it may be known in the maps; and confining ourselves to those countries which are the seat of Islam, the residence of true believers.

He states that 'we begin with Arabia, because the Temple of the Lord is situated there, and the Holy Kaaba is the Navel of the world, and

Mecca … then I proceed to describe *Deryai-Pars*, or the Persian Sea, which surrounds the greater part of Arabia.'[45]

In a chapter titled 'Of the Lakes of Pars [Fars]', Ibn Hawqal discusses the nomenclature of the Persian Sea:

> The Persian Sea is a bay of that Great Ocean, which extends as far as China, along the coast of Hindoostan [India]. In Persian it is called the Sea of Pars, or Kirman, because that none of the countries situated on it are more populous, cultivated, or delightful, and because, in ancient times, the kings of Pars were the most powerful and illustrious; and even at this present time the people of Pars are famous in all quarters.[46]

Towards the beginning of his work, Ibn Hawqal describes 'the region of Islam', which is, in his view, 'superior to the others, because it is more extensive'. He states: 'On the east of the land of Islam are the regions of Hindoostan [India] and the Persian Sea; to the west lie Roum, and Armen, and Allan, and … the land of Islam has to the north the empire of Cheen, [China] … and to the south the Persian Sea, and the region of Sind.' He places the Persian Sea at the heart of the realm of Islam, drawing 'a line through his map, dividing it into two parts, and passing from the Persian Sea to the land of Hindoostan, through the midst of the region of Islam'.[47]

In his view, '[t]he chief Seas are the Persian Sea, and the Sea of Roum, or Mediterranean, which are nearly opposite: both join the great ocean. The Persian Sea is more extensive in length and breadth [than the Mediterranean], reaching to the land of Cheen and to the Sea of Kolzum.'[48] This statement by Ibn Hawqal is, in a way, an adaptation of the 'two seas' concept referred to in the Qur'an, and is also, more surely, representative of the perception of the Persian Sea as much larger than the present-day Persian Gulf.

In a chapter on the Sea of Rum, he compares it with the Persian Sea, stating that 'this sea is of more regular and even outline than the Persian [Sea]'.[49] He later maintains: 'But between Cheen [China] and the west, Magreb, all is inhabited, and the ground cultivated, and the ocean surrounds the land like a collar or necklace. From this

ocean proceed *Deryai Fars*, Persian Sea or Gulph, and *Deryai* Roum, Mediterranean, but not the *Deryai Khozr*, or Caspian Sea.'[50]

Discussing the provinces on the Gulf, he states: '[T]here is not any of the sea in Khuzistan, except a little of the Persian Sea, from Mahi Rooyan, to near Solymanan, opposite Abbadan.'[51] On the Province of Pars, he says: '… and it is bounded on the south by the Persian Gulf'.[52] And on Kerman: '… in Kirman, there is not any lake or great river: there is that bay, or gulph, called the Persian Sea, which comes from the ocean near Hormuz; the water is salty, and ships pass on it to and from'.[53] In the same vein, describing the land of Sind, and part of India, and the country of Makran, and Touran, he writes:

> The eastern boundary of these regions is the Persian Sea. On the western side lie Kirman, and deserts of Sejestan … the southern boundaries are the deserts of Makran, and the territory of the Balouches; and part of this borders on the Persian Sea …[54]

On the 'Sea of Khozr' (Khazar, or the Caspian), he states, among other things, that 'the waters of this sea are bitter and dark-coloured; its bottom is a blackish clay, differing in this respect from the Sea of Kozum, or of Oman, or of Pars. The Sea of Pars is of such clear water that one may see the white stones at the bottom; but the waters of this Sea of Khozr are dark-coloured.' He continues: 'In this ocean [referring to the Sea of Khozr], there are not any inhabited islands, as in the Sea of Fars and of Roum, but there are many trees and forests.'[55]

On Ibn Hawqal's map, the Persian Sea is distinctly marked on the right side (east), along Khuzestan, Fars and Kerman, and it is connected to the peripheral sea.[56]

al-Muqaddasi

Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shams al-Din al-Muqaddasi (*c.* 945/946–1000) was a mediaeval Arab traveller and geographer who wrote *Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma'rifat al-aqalim* (*Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*). Bosworth refers to this book as 'undoubtedly the culmination of the medieval Arabic geographical tradition'.

Al-Muqaddasi accepts the division of the waters of the world into two great seas, but is sceptical about an interpretation that there are seven seas in all; he says that, if one has to find seven of them, they would comprise the seas around the Arabian Peninsula, i.e. those of Hijaz, Yemen, Oman, Makran, Kirman, Fars and Hajar. Most of what he says about the Persian Gulf relates to the danger of navigation there. He maintains that 'all of these waters are dangerous, and ships easily perish in them.'[57]

When describing the al-Quzdar region in Makran, al-Muqaddasi writes:

> East of it is the Sea of Fars, west of it, Kirman, and the desert of Sijistan, with its provinces. To north are the other countries of al-Hind, and to the south is the desert between Makran and the mountains of al-Qufs, beyond which is the Sea of Fars. However, the Sea of Fars surrounds the eastern parts of these countries, and the southern parts beyond these deserts, since the sea reaches from Saymūr on the east to Tiz [in Makran].[58]

Given the location of Makran, for al-Muqaddasi the Sea of Fars is larger than the present-day Persian Gulf and includes, at least, the sea of Oman.

Stressing the notion of the 'two seas', al-Muqaddasi also states:

> Know that we have not seen in the realm of Islam more than two seas. One of the two issues from the direction of the southeast and lies between the country of China and the country of the Blacks. Where it touches the realm of Islam, it rounds the Peninsula of the Arabs, just as we have drawn it on the map. It has many gulfs and numerous inlets. There is a difference of account among those who have described it … Some have shown it in the form of a *taylasan* that at one end touches the country of China, at the other that of the Abyssinians, with one arm in al-Qulzum, another in 'Abbadan [present-day Abadan at the head of the Persian Gulf].[59]

In a passage discussing *surah* 31:27 of the Qur'an and the reference therein to one sea and 'seven other seas', al-Muqaddasi enumerates these seas, mostly known to the Arabs, as follows: al Hijaz, al-Qulzum,

the sea of al-Yaman, the Sea of 'Uman, the Sea of Makran, the Sea of Kirman, the Sea of Fars, and the Sea of Hajar.[60] He further points out:

> If someone should say: 'Why did you include the seas of the Persians among the seven, seeing you had said that God spoke to the Arabs only about what they were familiar with?' The answer to this has two parts. In the first place, the Arabs had frequently travelled to Fars. You know that 'Umar bin al-Khattab … said, 'I learned justice from Kisra;' and he mentions the apprehension of God of that monarch, and his conduct of government. Moreover, anyone who makes a journey to Hajar and Abbadan must have a knowledge of the seas of Fars, Kirman, and Tiz Makran; and do you not know that many people refer to the part of this sea as far as the coast of al-Yaman as the Sea of Fars; or that most of the ship-builders and mariners are Persians? Moreover, this sea that stretches from Uman to Abbadan is not very wide, so that a voyager cannot be unfamiliar with its coasts.[61]

Discussing the Qur'anic geographical concept and the interpretation thereof, he rejects the interpretation maintaining that God refers only to the one of fresh water and one of salt water, since they do not mingle. He adds, 'we reply that the pearl and the coral are not found in fresh water, whereas God says "from them both", there is no disagreement among the learned that the pearl is taken from the Sea of China, and the coral from the Romaean Sea.'[62]

The Apex and Decline of Islamic Geography

Following the great achievements of the geographers of the al-Balkhi school, Islamic geography continued to develop and reached its apex with al-Biruni and al-Idrisi in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These two, as well as other geographers and scholars, are briefly described here along with a summary of their approaches to the Persian Gulf. Over the course of the following centuries, we witness a dwindling of interest in geography in the Islamic world, followed by a revival of its importance in Europe with the advent of the Renaissance.

al-Biruni

Abu al-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni (973–1048) was a Persian polymath, and one of the greatest scholars of the Islamic Golden Age. In his book *Kitab al-tafhim le-awa'il sina'at al-tanjim* (*Book of Teaching the Fundamentals of Astronomy*), he describes the seven *keshvars* (climes) of Persian geography, including the stretches of waters washing the southern coasts of Iran. In referring to these waters, he uses the terms Persian Sea and Persian Gulf. He writes, 'First there was the Sea of Cheen [China], then the Sea of India, from them branched vast gulfs towards the inhabited lands, in a way each is a separate sea, such as the Sea of Fars and Basra with Tiz and Makran on its east shores and Oman on its west shores.'[63]

In his other book, *al-Qanun al-Mas'udi* (*The Mas'udi Canon*), al-Biruni shows the perimeters of the Persian Sea to include the modern-day Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf. In this book, he writes: 'Abbadan is situated at the mouth of "Khashabat" in Tigris delta and its extension is towards the Persian Sea.'[64]

He maintains the same approach to the nomenclature of the Gulf in his *Tarikh-e hind* (*History of India*), in which he states: 'There are several bays or gulfs which penetrate into the continent on this western half of the earth – that of Berbera, that of Klysma [the Red Sea], and that of Persia.' Later in the same book, he explains the instances in which 'continents protrude far into ocean' and 'the ocean too penetrates into *terra firma*, breaking into it in various places, and forming bays and gulfs'.[65] Referring to 'the so-called Sea of Kulzum' [the Red Sea] as a result of sea extending 'as a tongue along the west side of Arabia', he tells us: 'Another and still larger arm of the sea exists east of Arabia, the so-called Persian Sea.'[66]

One of the maps of the seven seas is available in various manuscripts of al-Biruni's *Kitab al-tafhim* in Arabic and Latin. Al-Biruni also produced a map of the world, which did not survive. A map based on his ideas and findings was reproduced by John Bartholomew in Edinburgh, and can be consulted in the Sahab Collection of Historical Documents and Geographical Maps on the Persian Gulf. In this map, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman are

depicted together as *Mare Fars*, and the present-day Arab Sea is given the name *Mare Larevi*.[67]

al-Idrisi

Abu Abdallah Muhammad al-Idrisi (1100–65) was a Muslim traveller, geographer and cartographer who lived at the court of King Roger II in Sicily. He was born in Ceuta, and visited many parts of Europe. Al-Idrisi incorporated the geographical knowledge of his time to create a world map consisting of seventy sections, which illustrates his *Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq fi'khtiraq al-'afaq* (*The Book of Pleasant Journeys into Faraway Lands*).[68]

Al-Idrisi uses both 'Persian Gulf' and 'Persian Sea' for the waterway between Iran and Arabia. In the seventh part of *Kitab nuzhat al-mushtaq*, he describes a region to the south of Iran, delineating it as follows: 'The beginning of this section comprises, starting from the east, the shores of the Persian Gulf, and towards the south the town of Debal [an ancient port located near Karachi].' He notes that the area is a populous place, and observes that 'its soil is not fertile, and it produces scarcely any trees except the date-palm'.[69] Describing Makran and its largest city, Kirusi (Karachi) in the same section of the book, al-Idrisi states: 'On the west of it lies Tiz, a small port much frequented by the vessels of Fars, as well as by those which come from the country of Uman and the isle of Kish, which is situated in the Persian Gulf at a long day's sail distance.'[70]

Agapius of Hierapolis

Agapius (d. 941–2) was a tenth-century Arab Christian writer and the Melkite bishop of Manbij, in Syria. He is best known for his lengthy *Kitab al-'unwan* (*Book of Headings*). In that book, a section titled 'Chapter of the Seas, Gulfs and Islands', he says of the 'Sea of India' that it 'has been measured and it is said that it extends in its length from west to east, i.e. from the coast of India until the coast of Abyssinia …' He continues describing the gulfs of this sea:

> This Sea [of India] contains also on the coast of Persia a gulf which is called the Persian Gulf; its length is 1,400 miles, its width at the beginning is 500 miles and its end is 150 miles. Between these two gulfs is the country of Hedjaz and Yemen; the distance between the Gulf of Aylah and the Persian Gulf is 1,500 miles. This sea contains still another gulf, extending to the end of the country of India, which is called the Green Gulf; its length is of 1,500 miles.[71]

Ferdowsi

Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi Tusi, known as Ferdowsi (940–1020), is the author of the *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*), the national epic of Persia and its wider cultural zone. The epic found its final and lasting form in this book, which, at the same time, provided the Persian language with a solid and firm foundation, enabling it to persist despite Arabic and Turkic pressures.

The entire sea south of Iran, comprising the present-day Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, is called the 'Persian Sea' by Ferdowsi, as in one of his poems:

> Look at the wonder of what the *Dehqan* said
> When he revealed the secret,
> At the city of Kujaran on the Persian Sea
> When he talked of the length and breadth of Pars.

Zakaria Qazvini

Abu Abdullah Zakaria bin Muhammad bin Mahmud Qazvini (1203–83) was a prominent historian and geographer. He is the author of two important books: *'Aja'ib al-makhluqat wa ghara'ib al-mawjudat* (*The Wonders of Creation*) and *Athar al-bilad wa akhbar al-'ibad* (*Monuments of Lands and Traditions of Their Peoples*). In *Athar al-bilad,* he describes the region of Pars as famous, bounded to the east by Kerman, to the west by Khuzestan, to the north by the desert and 'to the south by the Persian Sea.'[72] In *'Aja'ib al-makhluqat,* he indicates that 'from the Indian Sea, two Gulfs branch out: one is the Persian Sea the other Qulzem Sea.'[73] In the same book, he also

indicates that 'the Persian Sea is a branch of the Indian Sea, and it is one of its greatest branches, as well as a prolific and fruitful one'.[74]

Commenting on Zakaria Qazvini's map from a later manuscript copy of *'Aja'ib al-makhluqat*, Cyrus Alai calls it 'a notable world map and a good example of Persian classical maps'. He adds that, on it, 'the Persian Sea, Indian Sea and Chinese Sea as well as the Roman Sea [the Mediterranean] are branching out of the Encircling Sea into the landmasses. Around this Encircling Sea lies the legendary Qaf Mountain, mentioned in the Qoran.'[75]

Yaqut ibn Abdullah al-Rumi al-Hamawi

Yaqut ibn Abdullah al-Rumi al-Hamawi (1179–1229) is the author of one of the most famous and comprehensive geography collections, *Mu'jam al-buldan* (*Dictionary of Countries*). In it, he wrote:

> The *Darya-e-Pars* [Persian Sea] is a tributary of the greater Sea of India and its name, as Hamzeh Esfahani wrote, is 'through Kamsir' in Persian and its limit extends from Tyz, in the Makran region, to Abbadan and Abbadan is the mouth of Tigris and this river flows into the Persian Sea. The coasts of this sea extend from the south of Oman, Shehrd and Merbat and Hazrmut and Aden. On the coasts of the Persian Sea from Abbadan one of the renowned cities is Mahruban. Hamzeh writes that this sea hereafter in the Persian language designated 'through European Route' and that is a bay from the Persian Sea extending from the south to the North, and hence passing the vicinity of Abelleh.[76]

In another passage, he writes:

> As for the Encircling Sea in the east, beyond the farthest limits of the land of China, it too is untravelled. A gulf branches from it, forming the sea, which has been named after every land adjacent to it, becoming first the China Sea and then the Indian Ocean. From it issue other great gulfs, each of which is separately called a sea, such as the Sea of Fars and the Sea of Basrah …[77]

In the first part of *Mu'jam al-buldan,* Yaqut incorporates a very simple map of the world and its important seas. On this map, too, a peripheral sea encircles the earth, and the Persian and Gholzam Seas are depicted as two parallel branches of a huge Indian Sea while the Aral and Caspian Seas are shown as lakes. On this map, the Nile is also noticeably marked. (This map was reprinted in Beirut in 1957.)

Hamdallah Mustawfi

Hamadallah ibn Abu Bakr Mustawfi Qazvini Hamdallah Mustawfi (1281–1349) was a Persian geographer, historian and epic poet. In his book *Nuzhat al-qulub* (*Pleasure of the Hearts*), written in Persian, he writes: 'The islands, extending from Sind to Oman in the Persian sea [*Bahr-e Fars*] are considered parts of Pars regions and the biggest islands, in the view of population and affluence, are Kish and Bahrain.'[78]

Abu al-Fida

Abu al-Fida Isma'il Ibn 'Ali ibn Mahmud al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad 'Imad al-Din (known as Abulfeda in English) was a Kurdish geographer and historian; he was also a sultan from Hama in Syria. His great geographical work is *Takwim-al-buldan* (*Description of Countries*), mostly a compilation of existing sources.[79] He states that he composed this treatise to fix the deficiencies and correct the errors of his predecessors, who had described only 'the countries of the Mohammadans … as if other regions were not worth describing'.[80]

The translator of his work into French points out in his introduction that 'the Geography of Abu al-Feda is not simply a descriptive book. The author, who had been aware of the doctrines of his people, introduces them or at least refers to the principal facts of the science of geography.'[81] For Abu al-Fida, the Persian Gulf is one of the gulfs of 'the "Great Sea", in the south of the inhabited world, which communicates with the "Oriental Sea", and receives different names following the countries that border it or the islands that one

comes across'. In his view, 'the Meridional Sea begins from China and stretches the length of the India's coasts towards the countries of Zang [Africa] … this Sea, in its oriental part, forms bays, gulfs and canals, which enter into the continent and are well known. The largest one is the Persian Gulf … There comes later the Cozom Sea [Red Sea] …'[82]

Later, to provide detailed information about 'the bays and gulfs, which branch off the "oriental sea"', al-Fida allocates a section of his book to depicting 'the Persian Gulf'. In this section, he begins by explaining that 'the Persian Gulf (*Bahr Fars* or Sea of Persia) is an arm of the Sea of India', and describes the Gulf's limits. He refers to Mekran as the Gulf's eastern coast, situated at the entrance of the Gulf; Oman on its western coast, situated also at the entrance of the Gulf. According to al-Fida, 'the Persian Gulf stretches the full shores of Oman and turns north until it reaches Abbadan …' He describes all parts of the Gulf's coast, and gives exact longitude and latitude for every point he mentions. He further designates the entrance to the Gulf, and provides a vivid description of the 'entrance into the Persian Gulf, from the Sea of India, east of the Dordour'. He also mentions three submarine mountains in the Strait, with just the tip of one of them being visible, and a powerful vortex that can break a vessel into pieces.[83]

Ibn Battuta

Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn Battuta (1304–68) was a Moroccan traveller who journeyed extensively over a period of thirty years, and kept accounts of this time that became famous as the *Rihla* (*Travels*). It is said that he covered approximately 75,000 miles, a distance unprecedented until the advent of the modern age.[84]

Despite having travelled far on both coasts of the Gulf, Ibn Battuta mentions its name only twice, perhaps testifying to its fame, with the author (as with other authors) feeling no need to mention the Gulf's proper name. Relating his visit to the region at the head of the Persian Gulf on the way to Basra, he writes:

> I then … proceeded to El Oballa, which was once a large city, but is now only a village; which … is about ten miles from Basra. I then sailed from El Oballa in an arm of the Persian Gulf, and arrived the next morning at Abbadan, which is a village situated in a salt marsh.

He then states that, on the advice of someone in Basra, he changed course and went to Baghdad 'via El Lar, then Irak El Ajam, then to Arabian Irak'. He continues: 'I then proceeded to Abbadan by sea, and after four days, arrived at the city of *Majūn.* This is a town on the Persian Gulf.'[85]

Ibn Khaldun

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) was a Tunisian historian, generally hailed as the father of modern sociology and history. He is best known for his *Muqaddimah* (*Prolegomenon*). With respect to the purpose of this book, we may refer to a chapter titled 'The Parts of the Earth Where Civilisation Is Found: Some Information about Oceans, Rivers and Zones'. In this chapter, Ibn Khaldun discusses the seas that 'branch off from the Surrounding Sea'.[86] Here, he refers to 'a large and wide sea' that flows from the Surrounding Sea on the east and 'is called the Chinese, Indian or Abyssinian Sea (Indian Ocean)'. Among the seas that branch off from the Indian Ocean, he names the Persian Gulf:

> The second sea branching off from the Indian Ocean and called the Persian Gulf (Green Gulf), branches off at the region between the west coast of India and al-Ahqâf in the Yemen. It flows towards the north and slightly to the west until it ends at al-Ubullah on the coast of al-Basrah in the sixth section of the second zone, 440 *Parasangs* [*Farsang*] from its starting point. It is called the Persian Gulf (Persian Sea). It is bordered on the east by the coast of Western India, Mukran, Kirman, Fars, and al-Ubullah where it ends. On the west, it is bordered by the coast of al-Bahrayn, the Yamamah, Oman, ash-Shihr, and al-Ahqaf where it starts. Between the Persian Gulf and al-Qulzum lies the Arabian Peninsula, jutting out from the mainland into the sea. It is surrounded by the Indian

> Ocean to the south, by the Red Sea to the west, and by the Persian Gulf to the east.[87]

Ibn Khaldun discusses the Persian Gulf in his book on many other occasions as well, for a variety of reasons.

Notes

1 Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
2 Sahab, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
3 *Ibid.*, p. xx.
4 Yaqut al-Hamawi, *Mu'jam al-buldan*, vol. 2, Cairo, 1906, p. 60, cited in Mashkour, M. J., *The Name 'Persian Gulf' in History* (translation from the Persian), Ministry of Information and Tourism, Tehran, 1977, p. 30.
5 See: https://quran.com/55/18. The phrase 'two seas' is also mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'an (25:53, 18: 60).
6 A list of these interpretations is provided here: http://www.maarefquran.org/index.php/page,viewArticle/LinkID,4205 (retrieved 10 October 2015). Some more recent discourses, such as one by Allameh Tabataba'i in *Tafsir al-Mizan*, interpret the reference as indicating salty seawater as opposed to freshwater.
7 Ibn Hawkal, *The* Oriental Geography *of Ebn Haukal*, trans. Sir William Ouseley, London: Oriental Press, 1800, p. 6.
8 Al-Muqaddasi, *Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions* (*Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma'rifat al-aqalim*), trans. Basil Collins, Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1994, p. 18.
9 Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
10 Marzolph, Ulrich, 'The Persian Nights: Links between the Arabian Nights and Iranian Culture', in Marzolph, Ulrich, ed., *Arabian Nights in Transnational Perspective*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007, pp. ix, 223.
11 The author has consulted several translations of the work, including one French translation.
12 Limbird, J., *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments: Consisting of One Thousand and One Stories*, London: J. Limbird, 1827, p. 93.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
14 *Les mille et une nuits: contes arabes*, tome II, trans. Antoine Galland, Paris: Normant, 1806, p. 7.
15 *Ibid.*, pp. 171–2.
16 Limbird, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

17 Miers Elliot, Sir Henry and John Dowson, eds, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period*, vol. 1, London: Trubner and Co., 1867, pp. 2–3.
18 Abu Said al-Hasan al-Sirafi, Sulayman al-Tajir, *Relation des voyages faits par les arabes et les persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine dans Le IXe siècle de l'ère chrétienne*, tomes I et II, trans. M. Reinaud, Paris: l'Imprimerie Royale, 1845, p. xii.
19 *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
20 *Ibid.*, p. xv.
21 *Ibid.*, p. iv.
22 Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p. xxii.
23 Sahab, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
24 Bosworth, C. E., 'Ebn Kordadbeh, Abu'l-Qasem Obayd-Allah', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* online, 1997; see: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-kordadbeh
25 Ibn Khurdadbih, *Kitab al-masalik wal-mamlik*, De Goeje, M. J., ed., Leiden: Brill, 1889, p. 233, cited in Mashkour, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
26 Ibn Khurdadbih, *Kitab al-masalik wal-mamlik*, De Goeje, M. J., ed., Leiden: Brill, 1889, p. 53, cited in Afshar, Iraj, *The Name of the Persian Gulf Based on Historical Documents and Geographical Maps*, Institute for Political and International Study, Tehran, 1381 AH, p. 89.
27 Ibn al-Faqih, *Mukhtasar kitab al-buldan*, De Goeje, M. J., ed., Leiden: Brill, 1885, p.8, cited in Mashkour, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
28 Bosworth, C. E., 'Ebn Rosta, Abū Ali Ahmad', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*; see http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-rosta.
29 Ibn Rustah, Kitab al-alaq al-nafisa, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. VII, ed. de Goeje, M. J., Leiden: Brill, 1891, p. 54, cited in Mashkour, M. J., *op. cit.*, p. 9.
30 Ibn Rustah, Kitab al-alaq al-nafisa, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. VII, ed. de Goeje, M. J., Leiden: Brill, 1891, p. 95, cited in Afshar, Iraj, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
31 Al-Mas'udi, *Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*, ed. and trans. Sprenger, Aloys, London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1841, p. 260.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 270.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
34 *Ibid.*, pp. 268–9.
35 *Ibid.*, pp. 342–3.
36 *Ibid.*, p. 343.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 348.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 344.
39 Harley, J. B. and D. Woodward, *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*, Book 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 108–9.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 114.
41 *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.
42 Bolshakov, O. G., 'Eṣṭaḵrī, Abū Esḥāq Ebrāhīm', *Encyclopedia Iranica*; available at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/estakri-abu-eshaq-ebrahim
43 Alai, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
44 Ouseley, *op. cit.*, pp. i–ii.
45 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
46 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
49 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
50 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
51 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
52 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
53 *Ibid.*, p. 139.
54 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 184.
56 For Ibn Hawqal's world map, see Sahab, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
57 Bosworth, *op. cit.*, p. xxvi.
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Chapter Three
The Term 'Persian Gulf' in Historical Perspective: The Modern Era

From the late fifteenth century onward, geography as a discipline in Europe made significant advances. The sixteenth century was dominated by attempts to review the perceptions of Antiquity and the Middle Ages in light of new data, resulting in a gradual transformation of the image of the world. These advances came about through scientific and technological developments; the translation of works by Muslim scholars produced during the Middle Ages; and the long-overdue use of atlases and findings by Ptolemy and other geographers.

The decline and collapse of the Abbasid caliphate in the mid-thirteenth century and the emergence of mainly independent feudal dynasties had already diminished the importance and prosperity of the Islamic Middle East, including the Persian Gulf-rim regions. This caused, among other things, a drop in long-distance trade. The rise of Europe as a keen consumer of oriental luxuries helped, for some time, to bring about a moderate revival in the region; however, the major development around this period was the appearance of new contenders. Until the end of the Middle Ages, traders were mostly Persians and Arabs – but fierce competition in this lucrative profession opened with the advance of the Portuguese into the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf toward the end of the sixteenth century. The Portuguese seized important maritime outlets in the Indian Ocean, including several ports on the Gulf, of which Hormuz was the most significant.

In the Islamic world, the Ottoman Empire entered the arena with the conquest of Iraq and made efforts to confront the Portuguese

in the Persian Gulf. Significantly, the Ottomans failed where the British and Persians succeeded in the early sixteenth century. By that time, the East India Company had spread the influence of Britain in India, which, in subsequent centuries, would contribute to the transformation of the Persian Gulf into one of the major arteries of Britain's trade. In the meantime, other colonial European powers, including the French and the Dutch, also made their entry onto the scene. Yet Britain eventually prevailed as the dominant colonial power in the region.

Gulf Nomenclature and the Modern Era

When the modern era began, usage of the name 'Persian Gulf' – inherited from Antiquity and the Middle Ages – was universal and unchallenged. While the arrival of outside powers on the shores of the Gulf constituted a challenge to Iran's dominant position, it did not turn out to be a threat to the already-established nomenclature of this body of water. All newcomers to the region, with the exception of the Ottomans (and only in a limited way, at that), adopted the Gulf's traditional toponym. This is all the more remarkable if we bear in mind that, in most other cases where colonial powers gained dominance, they stripped places of their native names and gave them new ones to mark them as colonial property. The deep roots of the Gulf's nomenclature in the Greek, Roman, European and Islamic civilisations, and the Gulf's location on the shores of Persia, must surely have been the main reasons behind the continued use of this standard name.

Consequently, over the past five centuries, the Portuguese, British, Dutch, French, Germans, Iranians and Arabs continued to use the term 'Persian Gulf' to designate this body of water in official documents. The Ottoman Empire also used the term (with some exceptions, as explained later).

The Portuguese and the Persian Gulf

Western geography took a big leap forward in the sixteenth century, largely benefiting from the maritime activities of seafaring nations: one rather small nation, Portugal, became a global player and assumed a leading role. Portuguese voyages, explorations and military expeditions in Gulf waters would have a powerful impact on the West's geographical knowledge of the region.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, accounts by Portuguese voyagers provided the first Western European information on the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf. The earliest example is the voyage of Vasco da Gama, who sailed around the Cape of Good Hope up to the coast of India. Travellers, foreign officials in the Persian Gulf, the kings of Portugal and Spain and other parties exchanged maps and writings between 1500 and 1700, in which multiple designations were used for the Gulf in a variety of European languages.[1] As C. E. Bosworth notes:

> It may be safely surmised that it was from Islamic sources that they took over the universally used term 'Persian Gulf'. Thus, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda refers to it as *Sino Persico*, echoing the *Sinus Persicus*, for instance, of Diego Ribero's *Mappa Mundi* of 1529, the so-called 'Second Borgian Map'. João de Barros, in his monumental *Décadas*, generally uses the expression *Mar Pérsio*, and in regard to Afonso de Albuquerque's voyage from Socotra to Hormuz, he speaks of the two narrow entrances of the Gulf encompassing the Arabian Peninsula, *dois estreitos do mar Roxo, e Persico*. He shows some acquaintance with the internal hydrography and topography of the Gulf and its shore lands, for instance, describing *Catif* [Qatif] 'as a port on the "Persian Sea" facing the Isle of *Baharem* [Bahrain]'. Speaking of a further journey of Albuquerque's from Socotra to Hormuz, he mentions the place called by Ptolemy *Metacuem*, *situada além do Cabo Siagro, que he o do rosalgate contra o estreito Parseo* and of Bahrain Island, *Ilha Baharem, que está no seio do mar da Pérsia pegada na costa do Arábia*.[2]

Thus Duarte Barbosa,[3] who might have gone to India in 1500 and collected first-hand knowledge of the Indian Ocean up to Hormuz, gave a detailed description of Hormuz, which he described as being 'at the entrance of the Persian Sea.'[4]

The different variations on the term 'Persian Gulf' comprise the only label reflected in maps drawn by the Portuguese during that period, some of them representing the most dramatic changes in the cartography of the Gulf at the turn of the sixteenth century. The so-called 'Cantino map', drawn in Lisbon in 1502, is the first to show a number of discoveries made by the Portuguese in Asia after the travels of Vasco da Gama and others in the late fifteenth century. The Gulf is referred to as *Sinus Persicus* on this map, which still has a Ptolemaic shape, the data mostly inaccurate.[5]

In 1504, Afonso de Albuquerque sailed to the Gulf region for the first time, and Portugal could finally establish a permanent base at the port of Hormuz. In 1512, as governor of India, Albuquerque sent the King of Portugal a large map drawn by a Javanese navigator showing the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope to China, including the Red Sea and the 'Persian Gulf'.[6] Pedro Reinel, Jorge Reinel and Antonio de Holanda are among the Portuguese cartographers who illustrated the Indian Ocean, including the Persian Gulf. They drew 'The Map of the Indian Ocean', dated 1519, in *Atlas Miller*, in which *Mare Persicus* is the label they use for the Gulf. Dating to that period are also a number of anonymous maps of the Gulf drawn by the Portuguese with the same appellation.[7]

A century later, in 1622, Hormuz was recaptured by Shah Abbas I of Persia with the help of the British East India Company's vessels. Primacy in the Gulf sea area then passed to other maritime nations, above all to Britain and The Netherlands, with the Ottoman Empire playing a dominant role on the western shores of the Gulf.

The Ottoman Empire: An Attempt to Impose Alternative Names for the Gulf

In 1546, the Ottoman Turks captured Basra, on the Persian Gulf, which followed their capture of Baghdad a few years earlier. In the same year they extended their dominion to the Arabian Coast as far as Qatif, pursuant to their military campaign against the Portuguese. In doing so, they cleared the route through the Gulf, giving them

access to the Indian Ocean. Ottoman campaigns against the Portuguese in the eastern seas were conducted under the command of Ahmed Muhiddin Piri (also known as Piri Reis), a notable admiral as well as one of the best cartographers of the time. However, the Ottomans failed to achieve their objective – the capture of Hormuz from the Portuguese – and their failure in the battle over Hormuz in the mid-sixteenth century led to the execution of Piri Reis.[8]

During this time an intense rivalry raged between the Persians and Ottomans; it had begun few decades earlier and culminated in the battle of Chaldiran in 1514. Military encounters between Shi'i Safavid Persia and the Sunni Ottoman Empire continued on and off until the nineteenth century, and the area of modern-day Iraq was a theatre of war between the two belligerents.

At the peak of this rivalry, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire did not want to admit that the Persian Gulf had any special association with Persia. Thus it occasionally adopted and encouraged a name other than 'Persian Gulf'. As Dionisius A. Agius puts it: 'Other names of the Gulf followed in the sixteenth century, following the military advances that the Ottomans made on the Arab littorals.'[9]

The 'Gulf of Basra' was one such Ottoman-sponsored alternative name, which Bosworth tends to view as an indication of the increasing commercial importance of the town. He explains: 'By the mid-eighteenth century, the East India Company merchants had established themselves with permanent factories in both places so firmly that Basra had supplanted Aleppo as the main channel for the barter of English cloth and Persian silk.'[10]

Yet this may not be the correct explanation for the Ottoman tendency to deviate from the traditional term. They began to use new names at least during the first half of the sixteenth century, before capturing Basra – at a time when it was far from the boomtown suggested by Bosworth, who refers significantly to the writings of Richard Knolles, a sixteenth-century historian of the Ottoman Empire. Knolles himself uses the traditional appellation for the Gulf; in his writings on the middle years of the sixteenth century, on Indian

Ocean naval operations by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent against the Portuguese, Knolles describes the 'Gulf of Persia' as part of the Arabian Sea, i.e. the waters outside the Strait of Hormuz.[11]

Before settling on the term 'Gulf of Basra', the Ottomans tried different names; Piri Reis called the Gulf 'the Sea of Hormuz' and 'the Gulf of the Indian Ocean'. Later, after the capture of Basra in 1546, the Ottomans used 'the Gulf of Basra', 'the Gulf of Qatif' and 'the Gulf of Musandam'. Following the Ottomans' example, other geographers and cartographers, especially the Dutch, also used these new terms. They were inscribed on some of the subsequent maps and charts, especially those that depicted the Ottoman Empire. (Some of these cases are further explained later.)

Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, the ruler of the emirate of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates, is a challenger of the Gulf's traditional name; he links the efforts by the Ottomans to introduce a new name for the Gulf with their capture of Basra. In his book, he explains this episode:

> From that time [the capture of Basra in 1546] onwards, and up to 1712, the Ottomans started to call the Gulf the 'Gulf of Basrah' or 'the Gulf of Qatif', or 'the Gulf of Arabia'. This was confusing to cartographers who were accustomed to using the term 'Sinus Persicus' or 'Gulf of Persia', and they began to employ Ottoman as well as earlier titles in the same maps. These terms, 'Sinus Persicus' or 'Gulf of Persia', were adopted by the European cartographers as a result of their contacts with the Portuguese. The most important sixteenth-century Italian cartographer, Giacomo Gastalidi, owed the names used in his map, 'Arabia Felix', to the earlier Portuguese traveller, Duarte Barbosa. He used the name 'Golpho de Persia' but in 1572, after the spread of Turkish influence in this region he added 'Mare Elcatif', making '*Mare Elcatif Golpho de Persia*'. The other cartographers did the same and produced a collection of different combinations designed to please the two enemies, Persians and Turks … In addition to these, in about 1550, Giorgio Sideri made a map especially for the Venetian Ambassador in Istanbul in which he used the term 'Barbarain' meaning 'Sea of Bahrain', from the Arabic *Bahr al-Bahrain.*[12]

The use of the new terms for the Gulf in Ottoman sources, given the Empire's influence at the time, generated some confusion, as Al Qasimi indicates above: the French bishop and historian J.-B. Bossuet labelled one of the maps of the Gulf as *'Golfe de Balsera'*, and the Sea of Oman as *'Golfe d'Ormuz'* in the *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681). Peter Heylin described the Gulf using classic terms such as *'Sinus Persicus'* and *'Gulf of Persia'* in his *Cosmographie* or *Universal History* (written in the 1650s). At the same time, he also used the term *Sinus Carmanicus* (Gulf of Carmania, modern-day Kerman), adding that the term *Mare Elkarisse* (possibly a deformed variation of of 'Elcatif', or 'al-Qatif') was being used for the same Gulf and the entrance to the *'Straits of Balsora* [Basra]*'*.[13]

Bosworth explains that the term *Mare Elcatif* was used for the first time in European geographical literature in the mid-seventeenth century, and it was not clear whether or not it came from Arabic sources that might have named the entire Gulf after the province of Qatif on its Arabian shores.[14]

In this regard, Cyrus Alai believes that 'the Persian Gulf has occasionally been called "Sea of Basra", "Sea of al-Qatif" and "Sea of Bushehr" as local names in addition to its principle name Persian Gulf … In some maps, these local names are considered to be the only names for the Gulf, probably because the mapmakers travelled along just small sections of these shores where one of the above-mentioned local names was used.'[15]

The designation 'Gulf of Basra' occasionally continues to appear on maps until the mid-eighteenth century, but thereafter usage declines. More importantly, these alternative toponyms for the Gulf failed to gain international recognition. At the same time, the traditional term 'Persian Gulf' always continued to be in use during the period, and 'from the late eighteenth century onward [it] was to become virtually the sole term used to describe the Gulf until the sixth decade or so of the twentieth century'.[16] English and French cartographers finally adopted 'Persian Gulf' as the only designation, as did others, and it prevailed. Sultan Al Qasimi also concludes: 'The English cartographers, Christopher Brown and Samuel Thornton,

started using the Name 'Persian Gulf' in 1712 and 1716 respectively, and from then on the other names began to disappear.'[17]

It is also notable that the confusion was not limited to outsiders. The Ottomans themselves were not very enthusiastic or consistent in using and promoting their favoured term for the Persian Gulf; they used 'Gulf of Basra' and the conventional toponym interchangeably. For instance, an Imperial *firman* addressed to the *wali* (ruler) of Baghdad in 1847 indicates the use of the term 'Gulf of Busora' by the Sublime Porte.[18] However, there is another official letter by Grand Vizier addressed to the Pasha of Baghdad, dated 6 April 1847, on the implementation of a *firman* prohibiting the slave trade; it specifies that only transporting slaves into 'the ports of the Sublime Porte that are in the Persian Gulf' should be prohibited.[19]

The inconsistency is also noticeable in the works of Ottoman cartographers and geographers. They used mostly the two names 'Persian Gulf' and *Basra korfesi* (Gulf of Basra) or *Fars dakzi* (Persian Sea) in their maps, which were mostly copied from European maps of Persia with the inscriptions changed to Turkish.

One of the great Turkish geographers, Mustafa bin Abdullah (d.c. 1709; also known as Haji Khalifa and Kâtip Çelebi), writes: '*Darya Pars* [Persian Sea] is called *Persicus Sinus*, meaning Persian Gulf, because in the East of it the Pars region is situated and this Sea also is called *Mare Persicus*, meaning Persian Sea.' He uses the term *Basra korfesi* on his map twice, almost at the two ends of the Gulf, and *Bahr-e Fars* closer to the Iranian coast. On this map, too, the term *Bahr-e Mohit Ajam* ('Sea of Iran') is used for the Sea of Oman.

On a map of Iran drawn in 1729 by Ibrahim Müteferrika (1674–1745), the Ottoman diplomat and publisher, both *Bahr-e Fars* and *Basra korfesi* are used. He places the second closer to the northern Gulf, and the first closer to the Strait of Hormuz. Like Kâtip Çelebi, he also uses *Bahr-e Mohit Ajam* for the Sea of Oman.[20]

In the Ottoman cartographic tradition, the maps of Mohammad Ashraf and Ahmed Refiq are also noteworthy. Mohammad Ashraf is the author of three maps, given the title *The Establishment of the Persian Kingdom in the Fifth Century* BC*, Alexander's Realm and Its*

Conquests and the Establishment of the Kingdoms of Medes, Lidi and Kaldani in the Sixth Century BC when printed in 1908 in Istanbul. On these maps, the name *Fars dakzi* ('Persian Sea') is given to the Gulf.[21] On a map by Ahmed Refiq titled *The Islamic Realm in 1350* AD and printed in Istanbul in 1910, the Gulf is referred to as *Bahr-e Fars*; on another map by him, titled *Islamic Caliphate* and drawn in Istanbul in 1910, *Bahr-e Fars* is used again.[22]

Britain and the Nomenclature of the Gulf

In the sixteenth century, Britain began striving for supremacy in the Persian Gulf and its coastal areas. The British faced an initial setback following the ousting of the Portuguese in 1622 and a period of Dutch prevalence in the Gulf. They finally won the upper hand in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1766, Britain ousted the Dutch from their base on Khark Island, which was the prelude to British ascendency in the Gulf.

However, as a dominant global power in the Gulf region, Britain kept facing resistance from Persia, which was the major – or, at times, the only – regional power. This faceoff continued until Britain's withdrawal from the east of Suez in 1971. The standoffs between these two powers for nearly two centuries led to two wars along the Gulf coastlines, in 1838 and 1856. There followed a dispute over the city of Herat, two force deployments and blockades in 1932 and 1951 over oil concessions, and several threats to deploy warships.[23]

Yet throughout this period, British diplomatic and military circles as well as academia, the media and the business world were consistent in recognising and using the name 'Persian Gulf'. There was no indication of departure from this practice until the 1950s. Given the strong roots of this nomenclature in the Greco–Roman, Islamic and modern traditions, the British not only readily adopted it, but also played a major role in helping it to prevail over Ottoman-sponsored appellations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The accounts by traders and agents of the Muscovy Company of London and the Levant Company provide the earliest information on

the British approach to Gulf nomenclature in the sixteenth century. Agents of the Muscovy Company, including Jeffrey Duckett and Thomas Banister (who travelled frequently to Persia in the sixteenth century) wrote, in 1574, of 'the Gulfe of Persia, called *Sinus Persicus*, between the main land of Persia and Arabia …' Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in *A True Report of the Late Discoveries … of the Newfound Lands*, also used '*Sinus Persicus*'; referring to Portuguese conquests in the Indian Ocean, he states: 'They put off at the cape Guardia Fu, and past the great Gulfe of Arabia, and the Indian Sea, East to Sinus Persicus, and the Island of Ormus.' The London trader John Newberie, who travelled to the region between 1580 and 1582, speaks also of 'Cities of Ormus in the Gulfe of Persia'.[24]

The London merchant Ralph Fitch made a journey to India in 1583 via Syria, Iraq, Basra, and Hormuz, writing: 'Basora standeth near the gulfe of Persia. I went from Basora to Ormus downe the gulfe of Persia in a certain shippe made of boordes, and sowed together with cayro …'[25] As Bosworth indicates: 'Those who were merchants and travellers in these regions knew the standard nomenclature for the waters in question and used these terms fairly consistently.'[26]

The same term found common usage in other major English works. In *A Dictionary of Ancient Geography*, published in 1773, under the entry *'Arabicus Sinus'*, we find a mention of 'the Arabian Gulf, stretching out from north to south between Africa and Asia, for eleven hundred miles'; it ends with: '… it is now called *Mar di Mecca*'. Under the entry *'Persicus Sinus'*, we read: 'Mela, Pliny; a part of that sea which the Romans called *Mare Rubrum*; the Greeks *Mare Erythraeum*; washing Arabia Felix on the east, between which and Carmania …'.[27]

From the eighteenth century onward, 'Persian Gulf' was used consistently by Britain in civil administration; military and diplomatic circles; business; academia; and by cartographers. In all legal instruments and agreements adopted or concluded by the British with the Iranian government and other powers, or with their dependencies in the region and beyond, 'Persian Gulf' was the only standard term of reference for the waterway between Iran and the

Arabian Peninsula. Certain examples indicating the British approach and policy with respect to the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf can be summarised as follows.

British Cartographical Services

For the greater part of the seventeenth century, Dutch cartographic production dominated the map market. The British were sometimes dependent on maps produced by the Dutch, as well as by other nations. The 1672 publication by John Seller of two volumes of maps, titled *The English Pilot* and *Southern Navigation*, was an important step towards establishing an autonomous British cartographic tradition. From around 1700, *The English Pilot* was adopted by commercial publishers.[28]

In one of Seller's maps depicting parts of South Asia, the term 'the Gulf of Persia' is used.[29] Two other British cartographers, Christopher Brown (1648–1712) and John Thornton (1652–1701), helped to clear up the confusion resulting from the occasional use of Ottoman-sponsored appellations for the Gulf, and re-established common usage of 'Persian Gulf'. Thornton, in his map of 1699 titled *Chart of the Persian Gulf*, uses the label *Sinus Persicus*.[30] In 1762, after receiving the Royal Privilege to publish sea charts in England, John Thornton produced numerous charts, including the one titled *Large Draught of the Gulf of Persia from Muscat to Buzaro*, in 1703. With the Gulf labelled *Sinus Persicus*, this chart appeared in *The English Pilot* printed by John How.[31] As to the cartographic works of Christopher Brown, two of his maps (*c.* 1712), titled *Persian Empire Divided into Twenty Governments* and *The Empire of Cyrus the Great*, depict the waterway as the 'Persian Gulf'.[32]

John Speed (1552–1629) is another important British cartographer in this early period; his works will be considered later, separately, owing to the different appellations he used for the Gulf.

The inadequacy of eighteenth-century Britain's knowledge of the Gulf's shores and islands is reflected in Thornton's *The English Pilot for the Oriental Navigation*; it corresponded to then-limited British

interest there. Britain began a survey of the Gulf in the second half of that century. In 1785, the British Navy conducted a brief survey of the Persian coast, and the resulting charts were published by the East India Company along with a wide range of relevant data produced by other cartographers.[33]

In the 1820s, the British began a regular survey of the Gulf's coastal topography. They established a comprehensive body of data to help advance their navigational, military and trade objectives, publishing the results of the survey in the Admiralty's *Persian Gulf Pilot* and systematically updating them. This source remained the basis of European knowledge of the Persian Gulf until the compilation of Saldanha's *The Persian Gulf Précis* and the publication of Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*.[34] (These three important sources are elaborated upon later.) Usage of the term 'Persian Gulf' in the titles of these monumental works is indicative of the widespread, indisputable nomenclature at the time.

British Colonial Organisations in the Gulf

The term 'Persian Gulf' was used in the British civil and military administration, and was included in the titles of agencies dealing with the Gulf, such as the following:

1. The post of Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, created in 1822 in Bushehr, was an official colonial subdivision of the British Empire until 1971 whereby Britain maintained varying degrees of political and economic control over entities in the Persian Gulf. The Political Resident was responsible for Britain's relations with the entire Gulf region.
2. The Persian Gulf Naval Squadron, under the command of the Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf, was created to support the Political Resident in his role. This title was used after 1869. Earlier variants were Senior Indian Marine Officer in the Persian Gulf (1822–30) and Senior Naval Officer in the Persian Gulf (1830–63).[35] (Two other related positions were Senior Naval Officer, Persian Gulf and Senior Royal Air Officer, Persian Gulf.)

3. British judicial organisation in the Persian Gulf consisted of Her Britannic Majesty's Chief Court for the Persian Gulf, under the Political Resident as judge, and Her Britannic Majesty's Full Court of the Persian Gulf as a higher appeal court, which operated until the end of the UK's presence in the region.[36]
4. The Persian Gulf Order-in-Council of 1949 was a subordinate legislation of Britain.
5. Naval Intelligence Division, Iraq and the Persian Gulf was an agency under Britain's Admiralty.[37]
6. Postal Superintendent, Persian Gulf Postal Agencies, Bahrain was a post under British administration.
7. The Persian Gulf Medical Society was founded in 1951 in Bahrain.[38]
8. A company called the Persian Gulf Lighting Service was incorporated in London in January 1950 to administer this particular service with both governmental and commercial participation. Article A of the Memorandum of Association of this company reads: '… to provide, within the limit and approaches to that part of the sea and land areas known to geographers as the Persian Gulf …'[39] The company was administered and financially controlled by the Government of India.[40]

Legal Documents and Instrument

1. The General Treaty with the Arab Tribes of the Persian Gulf was the most seminal agreement concluded between the British and the Arab tribes in the area. It was signed between 8 January and 15 March 1820 by all major Arab tribal chiefs in the lower Persian Gulf, and by Major General Grant Keir for Britain.[41] The word *al-Khalij al-farsi* ('the Persian Gulf') was used in the Arabic text.
2. The Treaty of Peace in Perpetuity was another major treaty agreed upon by the tribal chiefs of the Arabian Coast under the mediation of the British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf on 4 May 1853. Later, an article was signed by the same chiefs and

appended to this Treaty; in it, they engaged themselves and their heirs and successors 'to respect and abstain from all and every interference with telegraphic lines and stations at various points in or near the Persian Gulf ...'[42]

3. By virtue of an 'Engagement Entered into by Sheikh Sultan bin Suggur, Chief of Ras-ool-Kheimah and Shargah, for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade in his Ports', dated 30 April 1847, the sheikh in question refers to the need for 'the concurrence and co-operation of the Chiefs of the several ports situated on the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf' and does 'hereby engage to prohibit the exportation of slaves ...'. Similar texts are later signed, until 8 May 1847, by the sheikhs of 'Debay, Ejman, Umm-ool-Keiweyn, Aboo Dhebbee and Bahrein.'[43]
4. A declaration was issued by 'Mahomed bin Abdullah bin Maneh' on behalf of the 'Wahabee Ameer' on 21 April 1866. In it, he addressed himself to the 'Sahib', 'the Resident in the Persian Gulf', and states that he is 'authorised by Imaum Abdullah bin Fysul' to commit to certain obligations.[44]
5. Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalifa, ruler of Bahrain, in a written 'Engagement with the British Government on the Slave Trade' dated 10 May 1856, addresses himself to Captain Jones, 'the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf'.[45]
6. A 'Friendly Convention' dated 31 May 1861 between Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalifa and Captain Jones begins: 'Considering the tribe disorders which arise and are perpetuated from maritime aggression in the Persian Gulf ...'[46]
7. Under Article 2 of the agreement between Britain and 'Syud Saeed bin Sultan, the Sultan of Muscat', dated 2 October 1845, the Sultan of Muscat engages '... to use its utmost influence with all the Chiefs of Arabia, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf to prevent the introduction of slaves from Africa into respective territories.'[47]
8. Another agreement was signed between Britain and Muscat 'for the more effectual suppression of the Slave-Trade', dated

15 September 1848. Under Article 2 of this agreement, Muscat reiterates its commitment '… to use its utmost influence with all the Chiefs of Arabia, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf to prevent the introduction of slaves from Africa into respective territories'.[48]

9. 'Syud Syf bin Humood, Chief of Sohar, Oman', signed an agreement on 22 May 1849 for the abolition of the African slave trade in his ports, in which he committed himself to cooperate with 'the Chiefs of the several ports situated on the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf' to prohibit the trade in slaves.[49]
10. A treaty between Abdul Aziz ibn Saud and the United Kingdom was signed on 26 December 1915 in which 'the British Government do acknowledge and admit that Najd, Al Hasa, Qatif and Jubail, and their dependencies and territories …, and their ports on the shores of the Persian Gulf are the countries of Bin Saud …'[50]
11. The Anglo–Ottoman 'Convention relating to the Persian Gulf and the surrounding territories' was signed on 29 July 1913. The term 'Persian Gulf' in the title of this convention is an important signifier of the approach of two major empires to the nomenclature of the Gulf.[51]
12. In Article 3 of the Anglo–Turkish Convention dated March 1914, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used.
13. The Anglo–Qatar Treaty signed on 3 November 1916 had as signatories Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim bin Thani of Qatar and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Percy Cox, 'British Resident in the Persian Gulf'.[52]
14. Proclamation No. 5 of 1349 AH (1930–1) notifies the public of the introduction of Bahraini passports. Paragraph 2 of the Proclamation reads: 'This passport will be valid for Persian Gulf ports and foreign countries such as India, Iraq …'[53]
15. The statement of the boundary claim issued by the Saudi government with Qatar and Abu Dhabi, dated 14 October 1949, makes reference to the 'Persian Gulf' in paragraphs 1 and 3.[54]

16. In agreements between the Ruler of Dubai and the Imperial Bank of Iran, dated January 5, 1946, and the agreement between the Ruler of Sharjah and the British Bank of the Middle East, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used.[55]
17. The term 'Persian Gulf' is used in paragraph (c) of the agreement between the ruler of Dubai and the Imperial Bank of Iran, dated 5 January 1946, and the agreement between the Ruler of Sharjah and the British Bank of the Middle East, dated 5 February 1946.[56]
18. In an agreement between the Sultan of Muscat and the Imperial Bank of Iran, dated 10 July 1948, Article 2 employs the term 'Persian Gulf'.[57]
19. The expression 'the British Protected Sheikhdoms in the Persian Gulf' is used in all formal British documents. An example is a letter dated December 1951 from the Political Resident to the Sultan of Muscat.[58]

British-Sponsored Academic Works

During their assignments in the Gulf region, British civil and military officers undertook important and mostly praiseworthy research on many aspects of life there. British colonial officials also commissioned research on the region from scholars and academics. The traditional nomenclature of the Persian Gulf was observed in all of these studies, with no exception. Among the most important research works of this kind are the following examples:

1. While the British were preparing to send an expedition against the Qawasim of Ras al-Khaimah in the late 1810s, a selection of reports by a succession of officers from the survey service of the Royal Indian Navy were put together and issued as 'A Monograph by the Bombay Government of 1856: the Bombay Government, New Series, No. XXIV'. It is subtitled 'Historical and Other Information Connected with the Province of Oman, Muskat, Bahrein and Other Places in the Persian Gulf', and was

published by in 1856.[59] Throughout this work, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used for the body of water concerned.

2. The Gulf's best-known historian, John Gordon Lorimer, used 'Persian Gulf' in the title of his classic work *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia,* which appeared in 1908 and 1915. Lorimer, an official of the Indian Civil Service, was appointed in 1903 by the British government in India to compile it. It is a massive, six-volume work of approximately 5,000 pages, divided into historical and geographical sections. The latest edition was published in 1986.[60]
3. Another publication by the British government in India was the compilation of reports by British political agents under the direction of J. A. Saldanha, titled *The Persian Gulf Précis. Selections from State Papers, Bombay, regarding the East India Company's connections with the Persian Gulf, with a Summary of Events, 1600–1800.* Records dating back to 1600 are summarised in this work, producing a mass of valuable, minute information in eight volumes and 3,200 pages. It was first published in 1908; the most recent edition was released in 1986.
4. *Survey of the Shores and Islands of the Persian Gulf 1820–1829* was published in five volumes in 1990 from original materials in the India Office Library and Records.
5. *The Records of the British Residency and Agencies in the Persian Gulf,* published in 1979, is another major collection of documents from the archives of British colonial officials in the Gulf region.

Other British-sponsored works on the Gulf region that contain the term 'Persian Gulf' in their titles include:

1. *Persian Gulf Gazette and Supplements 1953–1972*
2. *Persian Gulf Historical Summaries 1907–1953*
3. *The Persian Gulf Trade Reports 1905–1940*
4. *The Political Diaries of the Arab World: Persian Gulf 1904–1965*
5. *The Survey of the Shores and Islands of the Persian Gulf 1820–1829*

6. *Treaties and Engagements Relating to Arabia and the Persian Gulf*, compiled by C. U. Aitchison (most recent edition: 1987).

Some British authorities and members of Britain's foreign service who served in the Persian Gulf region or dealt with issues pertaining to the Persian Gulf produced remarkable research on the Gulf and the littoral states. These works, which are authoritative and cover many different aspects of the Gulf, include the following:

1. Sir John Malcolm, the British diplomat and Governor of Bombay, wrote a major work in the early nineteenth century – *The History of Persia, from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*. In it, he reviews the history of Iran and the 'Persian Gulf'.
2. Another major work of the Imperial era was that of Sir Arnold Wilson, *The Persian Gulf: an Historical Sketch from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (1928).
3. Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, wrote *Persia and the Persian Question* in the late nineteenth century. It focused on British India's special concerns regarding the 'Persian Gulf' and southern Persia, and argued that all foreign powers should be kept out of this area by force if necessary.

It may be appropriate to conclude this section by citing an extract from the poem with which Edward Fitzgerald opens his celebrated translation of Omar Khayyam (his book was originally published in London in 1859):

> **These pearls of thought in Persian Gulf were bred,**
> **Each softly lucent as a rounded moon;**
> **The diver Omar plucked them from their bed,**
> **Fitzgerald strung them on an English thread.**[61]

France and the Nomenclature of the Gulf

France maintained a fragile presence in the Gulf throughout the colonial era. French efforts during the short period of Napoleonic

ascendancy in 1807–8 came to a halt after the expulsion of the French ambassador from Persia in 1809.[62] It was not until the late nineteenth century that France made other serious – but not quite successful – efforts to achieve a footing in the Persian Gulf.[63] However, while the French fell short from a geopolitical perspective, their language and culture widely attracted Iranians of the middle and upper classes. Despite British dominance in the region, French was the first foreign language used and spoken by Iranians up to the 1960s.

Throughout the colonial era, the French consistently used the standard nomenclature for the Gulf. Use of the French term *Golfe Persique* was widespread, and taken for granted. At a formal level, Napoleon's correspondence is indicative of this. In his letters, instructions and decrees, he uses *'le Golfe Persique'*; it is a phrase well known from many maps drawn by French cartographers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the instruction dated 10 May 1807 issued by Napoleon to General Gardanne, his envoy to Iran, he tells him to determine 'which way [a French expedition] should take for reaching India', either via 'Alexandrette' or via 'the entrance of the Persian Gulf'.[64] In another sample correspondence, dated 22 June 1807, to Vice-Admiral Decrès, Napoleon informs him that 'for sending an expedition to the Persian Gulf', he is waiting to receive a response from his ambassador to Iran, and reveals his intention to send 'two frigates to the Persian Gulf'.[65]

In the field of cartography, the French initially followed Portuguese models, as did other European powers. Later, following its maritime expansion during the seventeenth century, France was the first country to attempt a challenge to Dutch predominance in maritime mapping. The first significant French maps of the Gulf were drawn by Nicolas Sanson d'Abbéville in the early 1650s. The charts that Guillaume Delisle drew in the early 1700s presented a different shape for the Gulf from the standard Dutch maps, and became very influential all over Europe during the eighteenth century. De L'Isle's numerous maps are important in the development of the Persian Gulf's image during the eighteenth century. All other maps and charts of the region drawn by French cartographers such as Nicolas de

Fer, Paolo Petrini and Jean-Baptiste d'Anville bear the 'Persian Gulf' designation.[66]

A review of the period's most important French books, dictionaries and encyclopaedias reveals the term 'Persian Gulf' to have been well established in French geographic and cartographic literature. For example, *Dictionnaire classique de l'antiquité sacrée et profane*, published in Paris in 1841, refers, under the entry 'Arabie', to a 'vast Asian Peninsula, included between the Persian Gulf and the Erytrean Sea, which was renowned for its aromatics and perfumes'.[67]

Under the entry *'Persicum Mare'* Diderot, in his famous *Encyclopaedia*, maintains that:

> The Persian Sea and the Red Sea are synonymous in Herodotus' writings, l. IV. n. 39, and Strabo's writings, l. VI. Nonetheless, the Red Sea is understood in a much broader sense than the Persian Sea. At the time, the Red Sea or the Erythrean Sea, indicating the part of the Indian Ocean that touches the Arabian Peninsula, forms two large Gulfs; one situated on the east side of Arabia, named the Persian Gulf, and the other situated on its west, named the Arabian Gulf, which still retains the name Red Sea at the present time.[68]

Joachim Lelewel's *La géographie du moyen âge* (*Geography of the Middle Ages*) was published between 1852 and 1857 in five volumes. It is a monumental contribution to the understanding of medieval geography. Throughout this important book, the term *'Golfe Persique'* is the only reference for the Gulf. Discussing a map made by Albateni, Lelewel informs us that 'the designation Persian Gulf is used for the body of waters between the Iranian plateau and Arabia, and that of "Arabian Gulf" for the waters now known as the Red Sea'.[69] He uses 'Persian Gulf' and 'Red Sea' synonymously, referring to the Tigris and Euphrates, which 'run separately towards the south to flow out in the Red Sea or in the Persian Gulf'.[70]

L. Benoist de Matougues *et al*, in *Dictionnaire de géographie sacrée et ecclésiastique*, under the entry *'Arabie'*, explain:

> The vast peninsula … is almost as large as France. This stretch of land is washed on its south by the Sea of Oman; on the west

> and north by two immense Gulfs: it gives its name to the one that separates it from Africa, i.e., the Gulf which is called the Arabian Gulf, and the one that separates it from Persia, which is named 'Persian Gulf'.[71]

Printed Maps of the Persian Gulf

As modern cartography took root in the countries referred to in this and previous chapters as well as in other countries, it is worth taking a quick look at the origins and development of cartography in the age of printing. A clear, recurring trend pertaining to use of the term 'Persian Gulf' emerges.

With the advent of printing in the West in 1477, maps acquired greater importance in geography. Accordingly, correctly naming geographical features and placing labels on maps gave increased impetus to the process of standardising place names. A review of thousands of printed maps demonstrates the establishment of a solid, consistent pattern in naming the Persian Gulf. The only difference that we notice in this era is the occasional use of a few local names such as the El-Qatif Gulf, the Gulf of Basra, the Gulf of Bushehr (or Bushire) and the Gulf of Mesendin (Musandam). These appear on a number of maps with roots mostly in the rivalry between Iran and the Ottomans, which, as explained earlier, had been intensifying since the mid-sixteenth century. While these different names created a degree of confusion, mainly in the seventeenth century, they began to disappear by the eighteenth; the prevalent Gulf nomenclature was definitely restored by mid-century.

Here I have reviewed major developments in mapping the Gulf; however, only a very limited number of significant examples out of thousands of maps and charts are explained. This study covers the time span between the late fifteenth century and late nineteenth centuries, and aims to trace the evolution of the cartographical representation of the Persian Gulf in the modern age. References to maps here have been guided by a combination of chronological approach and survey of national schools of cartography and esteemed cartographers.

The Italian School

Modern cartography originated in 1477 in Venice and Bologna and spread to the famous Antwerp and Amsterdam cartography centres in the sixteenth century. It began with the first edition of Ptolemy's *Geographia*, which included the Fifth Map of Asia (Persia) discussed in Chapter One.[72]

In this new era of cartography, one of the most influential Western depictions of the Persian Gulf was produced by Giacomo Gastaldi (*c.* 1500–65) in Venice. Al Qasimi, in his map collection, refers to him as 'the most important sixteenth-century Italian cartographer'.[73]

Gastaldi's map, *Persia Nova Tabula*, published in 1548, was the first modern map of Persia. On it, the Caspian Sea is called *Mar di Bachav* ('Sea of Baku'), and the Persian Gulf *Mar Persicq* ('Persian Sea') – two terms new to Europe. As Cyrus Alai explains, the term 'Persia' for the whole country appears for the first time on this European-printed general map; as such it constitutes a turning point in the history of mapping the country: previous maps referred only to different regions of Persia.[74] Two maps by Gastaldi, *Il disegno della prima parte dell'asia* (1559)[75] and *Il disegno della seconda parte dell'asia* (1570),[76] bear the term *'Golfo de Persia'*.

Gastaldi's maps were printed and sold in large numbers, and were included in the major atlases of the time (by Abraham Ortelius in 1570 and Gerard de Jode in 1593). Thus they had a lasting impact on the West's conception of the Persian Gulf.[77]

Gastaldi's map of Persia acquired additional importance because it was created during a transitional period from Ptolemaic tradition to the modern map-making era. Many other maps of Persia, including those of Ortelius, carried Gastaldi's influence for some fifty years.[78] It became also the basis for nearly every map of the Safavid kingdom until the mid-seventeenth century.

Another major work in the Italian cartographical tradition is the 1574 wall map of Persia by Egnazio Danti, which bears the inscription *'golfo di Persia, hoggi* [newly] *mare elcatif'*.[79]

The Dutch School

Following the defeat of Portugal by a coalition of Persia and Britain in 1622, The Netherlands began to see its star rise in the region, leading to a considerable increase in contact with the Persians. The Dutch made crucial advances and came to dominate cartography during the second half of the seventeenth century, producing a series of valuable maps – including ones of the Persian Gulf.[80]

Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1563–1610) was the first major Dutch cartographer of the Gulf. He worked for the Portuguese in Goa before joining the Dutch East India Company and travelling to the Gulf region. Linschoten was mainly concerned with the coastal outline of the region, and his regional maps or sea charts benefited from Portuguese maritime surveys. On his map, the Persian Gulf is more accurately portrayed than before, and referred to as *'Sinus Persicus'*.[81]

Gerardus Mercator (1512–94), who produced his own atlas in 1578, was one of the greatest cartographers of the Renaissance period. His maps of the Persian Gulf will be discussed later, along with those of two other celebrated Dutch cartographers, Jodocus Hondius (1563–1612) and Johannes Janssonius (1588–1664); these require more detailed examination because they use different labels for the Gulf.

Ortelius is another celebrated cartographer of the sixteenth century, and an example of those who used two or three different names for the Gulf. His *Theatrum Orbis Terrarium* (1573) has two maps of relevance to our purpose here. The first covers Persia and is called *'Persici sive Sophorum regni typus'*. Here the Gulf is named *'Mare Elcatif, olim* [formerly] *Sinus Persicus'*; the Strait of Hormuz is termed *'Bassora fretum'* ('Strait of Basra'); and the Indian Ocean is *'Mare Arabicum et Indicum'*. The second map, covering the Ottoman Empire, labels today's Red Sea as *'Mare de Mecca et Bohar Corsun, olim Sinus Arabicus'*, and the Strait of Hormuz remains *'Bassora fretum'*. A miniature version of Ortelius's *Theatrum* was produced by Galle and Heyns in 1579 with later editions up to 1593, using *'Sinus Persicus'* for the Gulf.[82] There is another map drawn by Ortelius, titled *Secundae*

Partis Asiae, dated 1580, in which the terms *'Mare Elcatif'* and *'Golfo de Persia'* are used.[83]

At the same time, Ortelius has maps on which he uses the traditional term 'Persian Gulf' – for example, the *Turcicum Imperium*, on which the Gulf is labelled *'Golfo Persico'*.[84] It is important to note the description he provides in Latin on the verso of his above-mentioned map: *'Persici sive Sophorum regni typus'*. There he uses only the term 'Persian Gulf'.[85] On a later map drawn in 1588, he uses the term *'Sinus Persicus'* again.[86]

Petrus Bertius (1565–1629) is yet another example of a famous mapmaker who used different names for the Gulf. He is celebrated for his edition of the *Geographia* of Ptolemy, and for his atlas. Sultan Al Qasimi's collection includes four maps from Bertius: *Arabia* (1610), *Turcicum Imperium* (1610), *Ormuz Regnum* (1610) and another *Arabia* (1616). *Turcicum Imperium* labels the Gulf as *'Mare Elcatif'*; on the other, it is given the name *'Persicus Sinus'*.[87]

Among the reputed mapmakers of the time were Willem Blaeu (1571–1638) and Joan Blaeu (1596–1673), from Amsterdam. The map of Persia included in all editions of Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* and *Atlas Maior* was based on other Dutch maps of Persia, such as those drawn by Ortelius and Hondius. The inscription *'Mare Elcatif, Sinus Persicus'* is used on this map.[88]

* * *

While reviewing the main developments in the cartographical representation of the Persian Gulf, we should not omit two more turning points: the maps of Adam Olearius and Carsten Niebuhr. The map of Persia drawn in 1646 by Olearius, a German scholar and geographer, can be considered to be – after Gastaldi's map of Persia – the most innovative and original cartographic document. It constitutes the second transitional map, this time from the Baroque period (1600–1750) to the Enlightenment. Likewise, the Olearius map influenced the mapping of Persia for about seven decades from the 1650s.[89] On this map, the Gulf is denoted as *'Sinus Persicus'*.

The works of Niebuhr (1733–1815) vividly describe the Gulf's shores and the Arabian Peninsula. Niebuhr was the only surviving member of a 1761 scientific expedition dispatched by the Danish king to Egypt, Arabia and Syria. After touring many sites in the Middle East, the team visited the shores of the Gulf and left Basra for Denmark in 1764. Niebuhr provides, in his books, descriptions of Arabia based on his observations during his long stay in the area. In his accounts, he refers to the Gulf as *'Sinus Persicus'* and uses the term 'Arabian Gulf' to designate the waters between Africa and Arabia, the present-day Red Sea. The second chapter of his book, titled 'On the Extent of Arabia and its Division', begins by stating: 'Arabia proper is this big peninsula, formed by the Arabian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf.'[90] Elsewhere, he explains: 'the famous strait of Babel Mandeb, where the Arabian Gulf joins the ocean, and where we arrived two days after our departure, could be ten German miles wide.'[91]

Niebuhr's works are harbingers of the modern conception of the region, as demonstrated by the map of *Sinus Persicus* compiled in 1765 for the account of his travels. It displays names that are largely the modern ones.

Another work left behind by Niebuhr is a chart, *Gulph of Persi*, based on data gathered during his journeys. It shows the Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and part of Oman.[92] Still another of Niebuhr's charts has a Dutch title, *Ditwatering van den Schat-el-Arab in de Golf van Persië* (*Mouth of the Shatt al-Arab in the Persian Gulf*). Drawn in Amsterdam in 1774, it shows the northwest part of the Gulf, the Shatt al-Arab waterway and parts of the Tigris and Euphrates.[93]

In his writings, Niebuhr provides detailed descriptions of the different aspects of life in the region. The first chapter of his book is titled 'The Arabs Who Live around the Persian Gulf' and reads, in part:

> Our geographers are mistaken, as I already said elsewhere, when they believed that a part of Arabia was under the domination of the Persian Kings. Conversely, the Arabs are dominant on the shores of this kingdom, from the mouth of the Euphrates up to that of

> the Sind. Undoubtedly, the establishments of this people do not belong to Arabia proper. But, as they are independent from the Persians and that their language and traditions were conserved without alteration, it is appropriate to join their description to that of the rest of Arabia.[94]

Describing Islamic sects, he refers to the 'Schyte' sect, saying: 'It is adopted by the Persians, and it has some disciples in the eastern parts of Arabia, and it is dominant on the coastal areas of the Persian Gulf.'[95] On the importance of Niebuhr's work, John Barrett Kelly emphasises: 'No adequate chart of the Gulf existed in the eighteenth century: the only map available was that published by Carsten Niebuhr.'[96]

The Use of *'Sinus Arabicus'* for the Persian Gulf

An important issue that requires some clarification is the use of the term *'Sinus Arabicus'* in reference to the Persian Gulf on some maps of the seventeenth century. Sultan Al Qasimi, for example, has published three maps with the same label for the Gulf, which he holds in his map collection.[97] The Al Qasimi collection contains 278 old Gulf maps, dated from 1493 to 1931. The overwhelming majority (around 187 of them) use variants of the term 'Persian Gulf' in various languages when referring to the body of water between Iran and Arabia. The maps dated before 1570, as well as those after the mid-eighteenth century, invariably use 'Persian Gulf'. In other words, historical maps using labels other than 'Persian Gulf' belong only to that intervening time span.

In the Al Qasimi collection are three maps on which the depiction of the Gulf bears the inscription *'Sinus Arabicus'*. One is titled *Turcici Imperii Imago* and dated *c.* 1616, but it is not attributed to any cartographer.[98] The second map, *Persicum Regnum*, is dated 1625, and is attributed to Hondius.[99] The third one is also titled *Turcici Imperii Imago*, and was published by Mercator and Hondius in Amsterdam in 1628. It is important to add that, on this one, the term *'Mare Rubrum olim* [formerly] *Sinus Arabicus'* is also – curiously – used for

the Red Sea.[100] The Al Qasimi collection also contains seven maps on which the Gulf is given the name *'Mare Elcatif olim Sinus Arabicus'*.

Also included in the Al Qasimi collection are maps dated from 1570 to the mid-eighteenth century that offer different appellations for the Gulf. Among them are fifteen maps that use the term 'Gulf of Basra'; seventeen that use 'Gulf [or 'Sea'] of Elcatif *olim* Persian Gulf'; two use *'Mare Elcatif'*; eight use all three names, 'Persian Gulf', 'Gulf of Basra' or 'Sea of Elcatif'; nine use 'Gulf of Basra' or 'Sea of Elcatif'; fifteen use 'Persian Gulf' or 'Gulf of Basra'. One map also uses *'Sinus Persicus olim Mare Elcatif'*.

Given the historical record, maps with the label *'Sinus Arabicus'* in reference to the Gulf do not withstand scrutiny. Some general observations in this respect follow:

1. There is no instance of the term 'Arabian Gulf' in any classical Arab or Islamic sources, nor did any classical European records refer to the Gulf as the 'Arabian Gulf'. In the absence of any historical supporting evidence, there is a consensus that the term 'Arabian Gulf' emerged in texts and on maps only following the rise of Arab nationalism from the 1950s onward. Gary G. Sick and Lawrence G. Potter: 'As recognized by the United States Board on Geographic names, the name of the body of water that lies between Iran and the Arab states of the Gulf Cooperation Council is the Persian Gulf. For political reasons, Arabs often refer to it as the Arab or Arabian Gulf.'[101] Hermann Eilts: 'The Arab–Iranian nomenclatural controversy over the Gulf, which was so bitter in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was a by-product of the late President Nasser of Egypt's brand of Arab nationalism … "Arabian Gulf" is in fact a recent Arab appellation for that body of water …'[102] Christin Marschall: 'The Arabs decided to call the Gulf "Arab" or "Arabian" during the height of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s.'[103] Salim Wakim: 'No geographer, archaeologist, historian, or inscription earlier than the second part of the twentieth century calls the Gulf the Arabian Gulf.'[104] George Hourani uses the term 'Persian

Gulf' while mentioning the term 'Arabian Gulf', acknowledging some recent Arab sources.[105] Clifford Bosworth, in his major article on Gulf nomenclature, observes:

> [Only in] the early 1960s does a major new development occur with the adoption by the Arab states bordering on the Gulf of the expression al-Khalij al-Arabi as a weapon in the psychological war with Iran for political influence in the Gulf.[106]

2. As already shown, the term *'Sinus Arabicus'* was used from the Classical Greek period to designate the present-day Red Sea, and this usage continued up to at least the mid-nineteenth century. Therefore it would seem untenable to suggest that an established cartographer could have knowingly used one toponym to denote two major bodies of water located in the same region.
3. Another important difficulty with old maps bearing the 'Arabian Gulf' designation is the lack of textual evidence and description supporting them. Since Antiquity, maps have generally been accompanied by texts containing comments and explanations. As the cartographers Harley and Woodward explain: 'Writing commentary on maps has been very widespread and common from al-Balkhi, who wrote commentary on maps he or other geographers drew as early as the early tenth century AD…[107] Ibn Hawqal describes each map literally in the simplest terms … and the description can be understood only in conjunction with the map itself …'[108] Accordingly, maps with the term *'Sinus Persicus'* and its equivalents in European vernacular languages are generally accompanied by text descriptions. The requirement for such description applies especially to old maps. Given the state of printing at the time, a 400-year-old map without text description is likely to lack clarity.
4. Here, the number is also an issue. According to Mohammad Reza Sahab, director of the Sahab Geographic and Drafting Institute in Iran, there are around 2,300 antique maps with the 'Persian Gulf' inscription.[109] The comparative paucity of

pre-modern maps with any different inscription for the same body of water should be taken into account. (As explained earlier, for example, only three maps in the Al Qasimi collection use *'Sinus Arabicus'*.) Against the backdrop of such an immense body of work from different eras that follows a naming practice consistently, a dozen maps – while raising questions about their status – can hardly compromise the established trend.

5. It is also important to note that maps with the labels *'Sinus Arabicus'* or *'Mare Elcatif olim Sinus Arabicus'* for the Gulf date back mostly to the seventeenth century. Before this period, and throughout the period following the mid-eighteenth century, there are almost no maps with such a designation for the Persian Gulf.
6. The expression *'olim Sinus Persicus'* strengthens the argument that the term 'Persian Gulf' was the established name for that body of water. Subsequent developments indicate attempts to change the name to *'Mare Elcatif'*, *'Mar Mesendin'* or 'Gulf of Basra', and, as the 'new' names were not generally known to the public, cartographers felt obliged to add *'olim'*, referring to the name that was, evidently, then well established. As the 'new' names did not survive, nearly all the later maps revert to *'Sinus Persicus'*.
7. Atlases are normally published in many editions. Thus it is important to check the latest edition, in which mistakes may be corrected. As described later, Mercator's maps with the *'Sinus Arabicus'* label, included in the earlier Mercator/Hondius/Janssonius atlas, were later corrected by Janssonius.

Apart from the above, the more important difficulty with the maps in question is that their presumed authors also have maps with variants of the term *'Sinus Persicus'*. These cartographers must have had maps or texts or both already, in which the Gulf was labelled *'Sinus Persicus'* or any of its equivalents in European languages. This problem of consistency contradicts maps with different labels for the Gulf.

Mercator also made a world map dated 1538, the original version of which resides in the New York Public Library. It shows the

Persian Gulf referred to as *'Sinus Persicus'* and the Red Sea as *'Sinus Arabicus'*. (This map resides in the private collection of Mohammad Reza Sahab.)[110]

Another example can be found on maps attributed to Hondius. On one hand, in his *Map of Persia*, included in the Mercator–Hondius Atlases (Amsterdam, 1606), he denotes the Gulf as *'Mare Elcatif olim Sinus Arabicus'*.[111] On the other hand, he has a Map of Asia in which he uses *'Sinus Persicus'* for the Gulf. This map is dated 1597–98), and can be viewed in the Sahab collection.[112] Hondius, together with Bertius, also has a map of Arabia on which he labels the Gulf *'Persicus Sinus'*.

Significantly, Mercator's and Hondius's maps are accompanied by text descriptions. Mercator's *Historia Mundi*, which was edited and published by Hondius, contains textual evidence for the nomenclature of the Gulf. As the English translation of this atlas indicates, Mercator and Hondius use the term 'Persian Bay' for the Persian Gulf in the relevant text. The chapter of *Historia Mundi* titled 'The Kingdome of Persia, or the Empire of the Sophi' reads: 'The kingdome of Persia is situated betweene the Turkish Empire, the Tartarians, the Zagatheans, the Kingdome of Cambaia, and betweene the Hircanian or Caspian Sea, and the Persian Bay …[113] Babylon is situated betweene the Persian bay and Mesopotamia, and on the right and left it is enclosed with the deserts of Susia and Arabia …'[114]

A similar discrepancy exists with at least one of the maps by Janssonius (who was Hondius's son-in-law). While his map *Turcici Imperii Imago* bears the inscription *'Mare Elcatif olim sinus Arabicus'*,[115] he has at least three other maps inscribed *'Mare Elcatif olim Sinus Persicus'*. One of these is a map of Persia, which is included in all the Mercator–Janssonius atlases (1636–80); a copy of the Spanish edition of this map can be viewed in Cyrus Alai's book.[116] On Janssonius's *Asia, Arabia Felicem, Carmanian ac Sinus Persicum Comprehendem*, dated *c.* 1620, the Persian Gulf is referred to as *'Persicus Sinus'*.[117]

Pieter van den Keere (*c.* 1571–1646) is another cartographer who had drawn maps with the term 'Arabian Gulf'. As in the case of Janssonius, Keere also has maps with the inscription 'Persian Gulf'. One is the *Carte de la Perse*, dated 1610.[118]

A similar problem exists with the cartographical works of John Speed (1552–1629): A copy of his map of the 'Turkish Empire' is included in the Al Qasimi collection. On it, the Gulf is given the name *'Mare Elcatif'* in a large font, followed by the words 'sometimes the Arabian Gulf' in smaller one.[119]

A review of Speed's maps shows that he produced several of the same region, in which he designates the waterway between Iran and Arabia as either 'Persian Gulf' or '*Mare Elcatif* sometimes Persian Gulf'. Bosworth describes his maps as follows: 'John Speed, in his *A Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World, viz. Asia, Africa, Europe, America* … dated 1626, simply marks "the Persian Gulf" and "the Arabian and Indian Sea" on his small-scale map of Asia.'[120]

In *Map of the Kingdom of Persia* (1626) by Speed, the cartographer uses the inscription: 'Sea of Elcatif sometimes the Persian Gulfe'.[121] In another map from 1626, held in the British Library, Speed denotes the Gulf with the designation 'Persian Gulf'.

It should be also noted that the maps by Mercator, Hondius and Janssonius with the *'Sinus Arabicus'* label were produced earlier than those with the *'Sinus Persicus'* label by the same authors – especially in the case of Janssonius. We may assume that Janssonius (d. 1664), who survived Mercator (d. 1594) and Hondius (d. 1614), noticed the error and rectified the maps.

In light of the above, it may be argued that the authenticity of certain maps using *'Sinus Arabicus'* to indicate the Persian Gulf is open to doubt. The possibility of an engraving mix-up or misplacement of names on maps while working with Ottoman sources cannot be ruled out. Cyrus Alai, an authoritative expert on old maps of Persia, believes that the usage of *'Sinus Arabicus'* for the Persian Gulf is due to error on the part of the creators of the maps. Referring to one such map by Mercator, he points out:

> There is apparently an error in this map regarding the name of the Persian Gulf. All editions of Mercator's *Geography* contain one map of the world and one map of Asia. Following the Ptolemy tradition, in all of these maps the Red Sea and occasionally the Gulf of Aden, is called '*Sinus Arabicus*' and the Persian Gulf '*Sinus Persicus*'. In the

> map of Persia included in the Mercator-Hondius atlases, however, the Persian Gulf is named '*Sinus Arabicus*'. This nomenclature contradicts not only the Ptolemaic tradition, but also the world map and the map of Asia in the same atlas, both of them surely prepared by Mercator himself. The reason for this discrepancy could only be the fact that the map of Persia was not completed and not even prepared by Mercator, but by Hondius twelve years after Mercator's death. Hondius and his assistants apparently mixed up the two Ptolemaic terms *Sinus Persicus* and *Sinus Arabicus*. Janssonius must have noticed this error, for he rectified it by using the term '*Sinus Persicus*' again for the Persian Gulf in his atlases, which appeared during the 1640s and later.[122]

In general, before the modern age, the production of faulty maps on account of limited data and technical deficiency was not an unusual occurrence. It has always been necessary to correct any confusion caused by maps produced by early cartographers and explorers. Those maps often showed different names for identical places. A well-established expert in place names refers to the frustrations and complications caused by mapmakers, geographers and different national and international services 'when names on maps or in records were incorrectly identified or misnamed'.[123]

Finally, as Bosworth asserts:

> The standard nineteenth- and twentieth-century nomenclature took shape with the important role that the map of the *Sinus Persicus* by Carsten Niebuhr (1765) played. There is little to add on the nomenclature of the Gulf in the last two centuries or so, for the term 'Persian Gulf' was in universal use during this period.[124]

Factors Contributing to the Historic Resilience of the Term 'Persian Gulf'

As indicated earlier, common usage of 'Persian Gulf' owes much to the fact that, for most of the past 2,500 years, Persia/Iran has been the major regional power in the Persian Gulf. The role of Persia as an eminent power in Antiquity, and the Persians' extensive relations with the Greeks and Romans – as well as the need for outsiders

to navigate this stretch of water to reach the Persians' territory – reinforced Persia's status and contributed to the adoption of the toponym for the sea that washes its shores. This is exactly what Ibn Hawqal emphasises when he says:

> [The Gulf] is called the Sea of Pars, or Kirmān, because none of the countries situated on it is more populous, cultivated, or delightful, and because, in ancient times, the kings of Pars were the most powerful and illustrious; and even at this present time the people of Pars are famous in all quarters.[125]

Iran's status in the Gulf and integrity as a state have endured throughout history, a rare phenomenon.

In the ancient world, geographical features and especially bodies of water were mostly named after the ethnic groups or principal towns in their vicinity. Thus the Gulf was called after the dominant ethnic group on its own shores, and the chosen term was widely accepted. Historians and geographers began referring to the Gulf as 'Persian'.

Moreover, Arab sources indicate that, until the eve of Islam in the sixth and seventh centuries, Arabs lived primarily in the mountains and deserts. As understood from Arab and Persian material culture and sources, the Persians controlled the shores of the Gulf until the end of the Sasanian period.[126] Arabs who had left the Arabian interior by the late Sasanian period gradually spread to the Persian coast and became fishermen and sailors.[127]

Iran's Dominant Position in the Persian Gulf

The Pre-Islamic Period

The Persians conquered the last great Mesopotamian kingdom of Babylon in the sixth century BC, spreading their rule over most parts of the Middle East. They and their successors, the Seleucids, Parthians and Sasanians, created an empire that intermittently controlled the entire Persian Gulf. They sent expeditions and occupied coastal regions on the Arab side, prompting a movement of population as well as stimulating mutual interest and giving rise to occasional

settlements in some pockets of the Arab coasts by the Persians and vice versa.

Southeastern Arabia, including present-day Oman, was conquered in the sixth century BC by a Persian army led by Cyrus the Great. Persia, the largest empire of Classical Antiquity, controlled territories that stretched from present-day Iran to Egypt, Greece, parts of India and the entire Arabian Peninsula.[128]

Objects found in the present-day United Arab Emirates, together with literary and epigraphic records, show that the area was ruled by the Achaemenids. Reference to messengers as 'Arabs' in the sixth-century BC Persepolis Fortifications Texts also attests to Persian control over Arab shores at that time. The participation of a contingent from Maka[129] in Xerxes's military expedition against Doriscus in 480 BC, depicted on several Achaemenid monuments, is another sign indicating Persian rule over the lower Gulf.[130] There are also references in Herodotus's works to the inhabitants of the 'islands of the Erythraean Sea' who formed part of the fourteenth satrapy under Darius I, and fought with Xerxes at Doriscus.[131]

Following the dissolution of the Achaemenid Empire, Alexander and his Seleucid successors could not establish any kind of Greek dominance in the region.[132] Nevertheless, Mesopotamia served as a base for the Seleucids' efforts to extend their dominion over the Gulf region and along its Arab shores.[133]

There are signs that the Parthians, during their rule, were present and influential everywhere in the region. Artefacts and elaborate graves found in Arabia on the shores of the Gulf resemble those of Parthians found in Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran.[134] Signs of late Parthian involvement in the Gulf's affairs are found in the *Karnamak i ardashir i papakan* (*Book of Deeds of Ardashir, Son of Papak*), containing the accounts of the conquest of Ardashir (224–40 AD), founder of the Sasanian dynasty. This book refers to the figure of Haftavad, who ruled along the 'coast of the Persian Sea' in his capacity as a Parthian vassal.[135] Under the Parthians, those who ruled over the northern and southern shores of the Gulf were semi-independent, as was the case in most other parts of the Parthian

realm. For example, Sanatruq, who ruled over Bahrain, might have been installed by the Parthian king. High-ranking officials called *arabarches* were appointed by the Parthians to control the deserts where the Arabs resided.[136]

While there is much debate regarding the extent of Parthian control over the Arab shores of the Gulf, it has been reasonably established that the Parthians' Sasanian successors did quickly impose their own rule. The Sasanian kings attached importance to the seas, and elevated the significance of Persian Gulf ports and routes, raising Persia's control over the entire area to an unprecedented level. Owing to the rivalry between Persian and Rome and its adverse impact on trade across the Silk Road, it was imperative for the Sasanians to pay attention to the sea routes.[137] Later sources from the Muslim period, such as al-Tabari, Abu Hanifa Dinawari and Ibn al-Athir, relay accounts of Ardashir's early campaigns that led to the conquests of Oman, Bahrain and al-Yamama (an ancient region east of Najd).[138] Thus the Sasanians succeeded in setting up colonies and engaging some Arab tribes as border guards to defend their western frontier against the Romans. Sources referring to the Islamic conquest of Arabia make it clear that both northeastern and southeastern Arabia were under the control of Sasanian *marzbans* at that time.[139]

As Touraj Darayee explains: 'There is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Sasanians brought changes and a new rhythm to the Gulf, and as the Romans saw the Mediterranean as *mare nostrum* ["our sea"], the Sasanians saw the Persian Gulf as their *mare nostrum*, and part of *Iranshahr*, "the domain of the Iranians"'.[140]

The Islamic Period

The Islamic conquest in the seventh century led to the expulsion of the Persian ruling class from Oman, and brought the region under the rule of the Muslim caliphate. In early Islamic period, the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs appointed the rulers of Fars province, who governed the shores and islands of the Gulf. Arabic gradually replaced

Persian as the everyday language, but Arabised Persian remained widespread in commercial and diplomatic milieus, even well into the eighteenth century.[141]

As the rule of the caliphs over Iran weakened and the central caliphate began to decline, independent Iranian dynasties such as the Taherians, Saffarids and Buyids began to appear on the scene and set up their own rule, with or without nominal allegiance to Baghdad. This development, along with the Zanj Revolt (869–83) – led by seafaring merchants of African descent[142] – shook the foundations of the Abbasid caliphate. Beginning with the Taherians (821–73), these independent Persian dynasties now appointed their own rulers of Fars.[143]

With the Buyid dynasty (932–1062), a Persian family took power in northern, western and southern Iran and Iraq and, *inter alia*, endeavoured to bring the Persian Gulf under its hegemony. It was during Buyid rule, in the late tenth century, that the great geographer al-Muqaddasi wrote his *Ahsan al-taqasim fi ma'arif al-aqalim*.[144]

For 500 years, from the twelfth to seventeenth centuries, the island of Hormuz was under the rule of autonomous emirs, and played an important role in economic exchanges and maritime commerce in the Persian Gulf. The Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, which led to the collapse or weakening of the rulers of Fars and Kerman as well as sporadic infighting in both provinces, placed the emirs of Hormuz in a better position to rule the island more independently and extend their control throughout the Persian Gulf, including its southern, Arabian shores.[145]

As the Safavids and Qajars had no strong naval forces, they could never challenge the European maritime powers that had begun to appear in the Gulf in the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, Bahrain was recaptured in 1602, and in 1622 the Portuguese were expelled from Hormuz by Shah Abbas, with the help of the British navy. These actions were indicative of Iran's ambition in the Gulf and the Safavids' rising star in the region. However, profiting from the disorder that reigned during the last years of the Safavid kings as well as the alternating chaos and strong central rule in Iran, the

British and Dutch competed for ascendancy in the Gulf. In the late eighteenth century, Britain finally prevailed.

Before the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty in the twentieth century, a military campaign by Nader Shah (1730–47) and his admirals in the Gulf was the last major Persian effort to regain supremacy on its waters and Arabian shores. It began with the intention to use or buy ships belonging to the Dutch and the British. As this did not prove entirely successful, Nader Shah's admirals had to commandeer foreign ships based in some of the Gulf ports. Then Nader Shah embarked on a massive drive to build his own ships from timber felled approxinately 1,000 km away, in the Caspian Sea region. He had the wood transported from Mazanderan in northern Iran to Bushehr, requiring a massive amount of labour and causing much suffering.

During the campaign in the Gulf, the Iranian navy captured Bahrain relatively easily in 1736, and took Muscat in 1737 and 1743; but it could not keep them for long. By 1742 the Persian fleet had fifteen powerful vessels in the Gulf. From then on, however, more pressing problems prevented Nader Shah from continuing. Following his assassination by his own troops in 1747, the country was once again consumed by rebellion and disorder.[146]

The only attempt made by the Qajar dynasty (1794–1925) to enhance Iran's presence in the Gulf was Naser al-Din Shah's creation of a navy in the 1880s. Britain's hostile reaction to this decision doomed it to failure. Enjoying full naval supremacy in the Gulf at the time, the British sought to preclude, at any cost, any increase in Iran's capability in the Gulf that could enable it to enforce its sovereignty over its maritime possessions. For more than a century and half, the British followed a policy of containment against Iran as the major regional power in the Gulf, which included claiming its islands for the Arab sheikhdoms under the British protectorate system.[147] Only after Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf in the early 1970s, and the US decision to stay aloof, could Iran could regain its ascendancy in the Persian Gulf.

The Main Ports

The location of the main Persian Gulf ports on Iranian shores since Antiquity should be considered among the reasons the standard nomenclature has endured. Enjoying a dominant position in the Gulf and the adjoining regions for so long, Iran would, at most times, have dominated the sea lanes, and was a leading player in trade across the Indian Ocean. Persia took a leading role in establishing navigational courses in the Gulf, and in building and maintaining port cities.

Topography can be invoked to explain the location of major ports on Iranian coasts. The west coast of the Gulf is shallow, and big ships could not enter without danger. Building vast and practical ports on the eastern (Iranian) shores was a measure to remedy this inconvenience. Moreover, the Iranian shores were more populated from Antiquity through to the modern era, and were thus better explored and charted. Consequently, Iran's chief ports – Rishahr, Siraf, Kish, Hormuz, Hormuz Island, Bandar Abbas and Bushehr – were the main Gulf ports in their heydays, outshining port facilities on the other shores of the Gulf.

Toward the end of the fourth century BC, Alexander's admiral Nearchus reported just one sizeable settlement on the entire coast between the Shatt al-Arab and Hormuz. This was Hieratis-Mesembria, a site probably identical to Rishahr, close to present-day Bushehr.[148]

Rishahr (initially known as Rev-Ardashir) was among few ports on the Persian Gulf that were built or rebuilt by Ardashir. Discoveries in the nineteenth century show that the development of Rishahr may have begun when Babylon was a major power in the region in the eighteenth century BC. There are indications that it was still a busy port, and the chief trade centre in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; these include the word 'Reixer' (a corruption of 'Rishahr') on Portuguese maps, and accounts of traders and port inhabitants. The gradual development of Bushehr at that time came in parallel with the decline of Rishahr.[149]

Siraf (today Bandar-e Taheri) was the richest and busiest seaport as well as the primary trade centre on the Persian Gulf from the early

seventh century AD. It was the most important base for seafaring activity, connecting Persia to India, China and Africa. Having acquired that status in the later Sasanian period, it kept it during the Islamic period for around six centuries. Siraf took over from Rishahr and became 'the principal market for pearls' in the region. Siraf lost its status following Kish's rise to pre-eminence.[150]

According to Suleiman the Merchant, 'the big ships, in particular those coming from China, which were of big dimensions could throw anchor at Siraf.'[151] In his view, Siraf was the true *entrepôt*. 'It was towards this port that sailed the big Chinese vessels, coming from the high sea, and the Arab vessels, that left Baghdad and Basra. And it was the place where all vessels hoisted sails towards India and China.'[152] Suleiman's explanations demonstrate the status of Siraf:

> As to the place where the vessels threw anchor, it was reported that the majority of Chinese vessels depart from the port of Syraf. The merchandises are taken from Bassora, Oman, and other places to Syraf itself; at this port, they are loaded to Chinese vessels. This usage comes from the fact that waves are very strong in this sea (the Persian Gulf) and that water is missing in many places.[153]

The decline of Siraf, and its role as the centre for long-distance trade, was apparently on account of a strong earthquake in 977, attacks by pirates – or a combination of both.[154] Kish Island then rose to pre-eminence. Its ascendancy was relatively short-lived, as in 1229 the Emir of Hormuz, a vassal of Kerman, attacked and captured Kish. The port of Hormuz then occupied the top position in terms of trade, for 500 years from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. After its own gradual decline, the island of Hormuz took its turn as the focal centre of economic exchange and sea trade in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, achieving worldwide fame.

Hormuz Island, well known in medieval Europe, was visited by many merchants and travellers, who found it a major emporium, frequented by the merchants from all parts of the world. For example, the Venetian J. Barbaro, who visited Hormuz in the last quarter of the fifteenth century praised it "as a commercial centre." However,

between the arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century and conquest of the island by Shah Abbas in 1622, the Island suffered mainly on account of local discontent, including a revolt in 1521–22, and Portuguese-Ottoman military rivalry, including two wars in 1552 and 1581.[155]

In the eighteenth century, Bushehr prevailed temporarily over Bandar Abbas and became the chief port in the Gulf, owing to the favour of Nader Shah and the rulers of Zand, who chose Bushehr as their main naval stations. This encouraged the British and Dutch to transfer their factories from Bandar Abbas. During the eighteenth century, as a consequence of the disorder and incessant infighting in Iran that followed the Afghan invasion and the collapse of Safavid dynasty in 1722, Basra emerged as a serious contender for primacy as a regional port. However, its position was undermined in the 1760s following the war between Persia and the Ottoman Empire and the capture of Basra by Persian troops, who held it for approximately three years.

Britain also contributed to Bushehr's dominance.[156] In the mid-nineteenth century, it became the seat of the British political resident in the Persian Gulf. However, the port city began its long, slow decline in the 1930s after it was bypassed by the trans-Iranian railway, in favour of the ports in Khuzestan. Britain moved its political residency to Bahrain in 1947 and closed its consulate in 1951.

Well into the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–79), Bandar Abbas regained its position as the main port of the Gulf. This it held until the early 1980s and the beginning of the Iran–Iraq War, which, coupled with the Islamic Revolution that ended in 1979, created a new dynamic in the Persian Gulf.

Iran's Maritime Activities

It has been said that the Persians have a dislike of the ocean. Lord Curzon, in *Persia and the Persian Question*, discusses what he calls 'the aversion of the Persians to the sea'. It is true that, in the past, geographical and socio-economic conditions did not lead Persia to

focus on or enhance its maritime activity, including trade and the building of a strong naval force. The Persian Empire mostly conducted its military expeditions and state communication across land routes, and relied on an elaborate road network to control its massive dependencies. The same road networks also served as the main conduit for trade and communication from Antiquity through to the modern age. Moreover, the Persian interior, including major Persian centres of population, has always been far from the sea, separated by mountain ranges.

Yet Persia was not the only power with a low level of maritime activity in the pre-modern era. In general terms, use of the navy for military purposes was very limited before and during the age of steam, roughly from 1770 to 1914. Yet there is some evidence indicating that the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea were the scenes of considerable Persian naval activity preceding modern times, of which some major aspects may be summarised as follows.

Evidence indicates that Darius I did pay attention to naval activities: he had a fleet on the Persian Gulf, and scholars believe that he engaged the Ionians and Carians to serve his naval aims. Herodotus speaks of him 'using' the Indian Ocean following the reconnaissance provided by Scylax's voyage. The islands of the Gulf were used as penal settlement, and there are inscriptions in the palace at Susa showing that Mesopotamian rivers were used to transport materials.[157]

As noted in Chapter One, maritime exploration was carried out by four ancient navigators/explorers before the sea survey conducted by Nearchus in 324 BC. Two expeditions were undertaken by Scylax and Sataspes, under Persian auspices about two centuries before Nearchus's voyage. The other two explorers are also said to have been allies of Persia against Greece.[158] Darius I ordered these expeditions to seek accurate knowledge of sea routes. Again, as noted, the Achaemenids did attempt to project power via the sea; yet these missions do indicate that their rulers attached some significance to the control of maritime routes.

There is very little evidence of a strong navy under the Sasanian dynasty. In fact, the Sasanians did not need one. The Persians and

their vassals were already in control of the coastlines of the Gulf, so their maritime presence was mostly established to conduct long-distance trade.[159]

There are sometimes surprising signs indicating the Persians' predominance in sea trade. According to accounts left by Cosmas Indicopleustes, a sixth-century navigator from Alexandria who sailed to India several times, Arabs, Persians and Ethiopians dominated maritime commerce between the Persian Gulf and China. Persians, according to Cosmas, were so numerous in Ceylon that 'on that land is established the Church of Christ of the Sect of the Persians, and there is a presbyter sent from Persia, and a deacon, and the whole service of the church. But the native and the king are of other faiths'.[160] Procopius of Caesarea, a historian who wrote a little later than Cosmas, said that in his time 'the Persians had become the masters of the markets of the East, and the stream of traffic began once more to flow through the Persian Gulf.'[161]

Al-Muqaddasi asks pointedly: 'Do you not know that many people refer to the part of this sea as far as the coast of al-Yaman as the Sea of Fārs; or that most of the ship-builders and mariners are Persians?'[162] His remarks to this effect are referred to by some historians discussing the region's history and Persian undertakings.[163] It is also said that from ancient times, Persian sailors possessed their own navigational guidebooks called *Rahnamag* in Middle Persian (later, *Rahnameh* in Persian), in which ports, coastal landmarks and distances along the coastlines were listed. In *Rahnameh*, the Indian Ocean was described as 'a hard sea to get out of' and warnings were given of the 'circumambient sea, whence all return was impossible'.[164]

As mentioned, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries several Persian kings made extensive efforts to build a strong navy in the Persian Gulf. Apart from the short-lived success of Nader Shah's navy, all efforts failed – mostly because of intermittent domestic upheavals and disorder, but also on account of the strong opposition of foreign naval forces already established in the Persian Gulf.

Nevertheless, as one German author puts it:

The Persian historical memory and national consciousness make it irrelevant to what extent Iran in its past was a seafaring nation or maritime power. The national myth and the conviction that the Persians have always played a leading role in the gulf as well as the awareness of the long coastal line and large population have been important factors in Iran's foreign policy.[165]

Notes

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7 Couto *et al*, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–8.
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16 Bosworth, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxi, xxxii.
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30 *Ibid.*, p. 347.
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40 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
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42 *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 69.
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53 *Persian Gulf Historical Summaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
54 *Ibid.*, p. 276.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 279.
56 *Ibid.*, pp. 280–1.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 297.
58 *Ibid.*, p. 299.
59 It is interesting to note that selections of this work were reprinted under the title *Arabian Gulf Intelligence* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1983).
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82 *Ibid.*, p. 68, pl. 40.
83 Al Qasimi, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
84 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
85 Alai, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
87 Al Qasimi, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–9, 40, 44.
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Chapter Four
Geopolitical Rivalries: The Origins of the Gulf Naming Dispute

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, as previous chapters have shown, reference to the 'Persian Gulf' as the standard nomenclature was an established fact in all historical periods and cartographical traditions. However, in the 1950s, a campaign within the Arab world pursued a change of this standard for, presumably, political reasons. The Cold War was coupled with a regional cold war, which pitted royal, conservative Iranian and Arab republican radicals against each other. This conflict had many byproducts, including the Gulf naming dispute. Towards the end of its colonial presence in the region, Britain played a double game that further complicated the matter: it needed to strike a balance between providing support to its Arab protectorates and appeasing Arab radicals.

The role of Britain was important with regard to the development of the naming dispute. British diplomatic and military circles, as well as British academic, media and business communities, had consistently used the term 'Persian Gulf' until the 1950s, and given no sign of changing this practice. However, it appears that while the British maintained their formal position on the naming of the Gulf – as formulated by the UK Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for Official British Use (discussed in Chapter Six) – they informally adopted an approach that favoured the Arab stance, arousing suspicion from Iran.

Britain and the Term 'Persian Gulf'

Overall, relations between Britain and Iran since the first half of the

nineteenth century have been fraught with suspicion, tension and, at times, military conflict. Many Iranians (polemicists and academics alike) who have a view on the competition between Iran and Britain in the region have attributed an important role to the British in the efforts made to contain Iran and 'de-Persianise' its adjacent regions, including the Persian Gulf (along with its traditional toponym). Some assertions made with respect to the British role in the Gulf naming dispute do not withstand academic scrutiny; however, there are signs indicating that Britain wavered over its long-established policy regarding the term, which occurred in light of new political realities – including Arab militancy.

Iranian–British Competition

Britain, during its ascendancy in the Persian Gulf, was haunted by two spectres: social and political movements in nineteenth-century Persia, which opposed both despotic monarchy and foreign interference; and the danger of the Persian royal court allying itself with European powers hostile to Britain.

The reasons for Britain's unease with regard to Persia throughout its colonisation of the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf can be summarised as follows:

1. Persia was the only major independent regional power in the wider area that adjoined territories under British dominion.
2. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Qajar shahs of Persia, far from submitting to foreign powers, endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of the Safavid dynasty by trying to revive the Persian Empire and extend its perimeters to where they stood at the time of Shah Abbas I in the seventeenth century.
3. Iranian nationalism was vivid and active in the nineteenth century, preoccupied with reclaiming Iran's heritage and preserving its national borders. Iranian nationalist fervour in opposing the British was also reflected in Reza Shah's anti-British policy, and during the Oil Nationalisation Movement.

4. Radical religious discourse, and the formation of an alliance (until after the 1953 coup) between religious and secular politicians with a strong anti-British dimension, found expression in social and political movements during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
5. Protest against the influx of foreign goods and competition was another theme in Iran's vociferous nationalist discourse. It led, for example, to the 'tobacco protest' against the 1890 tobacco concession granted by Nasser al-din Shah to a British national. This resulted in the concession being cancelled.
6. Britain's obsession with guarding approaches to India, and the threat of a Russian push from the north, led the British to believe that India's front line of defence lay in Persia and the Persian Gulf. Thus every policy and practice adopted by the British to defend this front line was viewed by the Iranians as against their national interests.
7. Active popular resentment in Iran, and competition from the Russians, impeded British attempts to further their interests. In the early nineteenth century Britain concluded that it would not be able to subjugate the Iranian body politic in a reliable and consistent way, as it had with other political entities throughout the wider region.

Britain's Two-Track Containment Policy against Iran

In view of the above, for around 150 years Britain (as the global power) conducted a containment policy against Iran (the major regional power). The British adopted a two-track approach both to impinge on Iranian territory and systematically 'de-Persianise' the region, aiming to contain and weaken Iran in the Persian Gulf and along its eastern and later western borders.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Britain encroached upon Iran's eastern frontiers. Its actions to this end included siding with Afghanistan and India on border issues. It also infringed on Iranian territory in the Gulf, among other things claiming Iranian

islands for its local protectorates. On the basis of the 'Exclusive Agreement' of 1892, it prohibited the Trucial States, plus Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait, 'from parting with any portion of their territory in favour of any power without British authorisation'. At the same time, the British sought persistently to bring Gulf maritime territory under their direct or indirect control. Consequently, the Persian Gulf islands – exceptionally important in terms of their international status, strategic location and economic relevance – were deeply involved in successive imperial intrigues and played an influential role in Anglo–Iranian relations. From the early nineteenth century, Britain had made clear that it had had designs on a number of Iranian islands and port facilities in the Persian Gulf. It pursued this policy either by claiming certain islands for the entities under its protection on the Arabian littoral, by seeking them as concessions, or by making formal offers to the Persian government to lease or purchase them.[1]

To strengthen its control in the Persian Gulf, Britain applied its established colonial policy of cultivating notables in charge of small political entities as opposed to engaging regional powers, as these smaller entities were much more amenable to accepting British terms. It is said of Lord Curzon that his ideal was 'the creation of a chain of vassal states stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pamirs'.[2] This well describes British dealings with those found on the margins of their colonies, including the Trucial States.

The second track consisted of 'systematic de-Persianisation' in the wider region of South and Southwest Asia. Since the late eighteenth century, the dominant trend had been the steady decline of Persian cultural and political influence in the regions surrounding Iran; the policy of 'de-Persianisation' played an important role in most cases. It was an outgrowth of the policy adopted by the British in the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century, when they began strengthening their dominance there. Britain sought to drive out the Persian language, which was widely spoken in the Mughal court and in Mughal society before its arrival.[3]

According to Francis Robinson, 'from the eleventh century the elites of India came increasingly to share in the high culture, which we

shall term Perso-Islamic culture … gradually, the sweet and sibilant Persian became the language of the courts'.[4] He continues: 'Almost all the books, commentaries, and super-commentaries normally used in teaching in India had been written in Iran or Central Asia between 1100 and 1600.'[5] Against this backdrop, British policy, including the replacement of Persian with English as the language of government and the banning of Persian from the educational system in the 1830s,[6] led to the decline of Persian in India.

In pursuing a similar policy of de-Persianisation in the Gulf region, the British took steps such as bringing pressure to bear on the Persian community in Bahrain (as described later), shutting down Persian-language schools on that island, bringing teachers from Egypt and Palestine to Gulf Arab sheikhdoms and later to Iraq, and stopping the Iranian consulate in Baghdad from issuing identification cards for the large Iranian community in Iraq.[7]

In 1919 Arnold Wilson, the British Acting Civil Commissioner in Iraq, noted the large number of Persian consular officers, who were present 'in every town and village of any size'. He suggested that any unnecessary posts should be allowed to lapse as those officers who were present in Iraq died off or resigned.[8]

The Role of British Arabists

Arabists – who often spoke Arabic, and were sometimes converts to Islam – were people who spent many years, mostly with their families, in Arab regions as military attachés, intelligence operatives and diplomats. There were also non-governmental Arabists such as journalists, publishers, authors, gun-traders, mercenaries, bankers, interpreters, advisers to Arab rulers, archaeologists and explorers. They constituted an elite within or in the margin of the foreign services of Britain and, later, the US. Some of them, such as T. E. Lawrence, 'went native in the Arabian Desert'[9] and acquired international fame. They were there primarily to serve British interests; however, sometimes they departed from this framework and served their patrons in variety of ways.

British Arabists, owing to their close association with Arab dignitaries, were instrumental in advancing Britain's policies in the Arab world, including its containment policy against Iran; it is possible that they influenced issues relating to the Gulf naming dispute. During the colonial era, they worked, for the most part, directly with Arab local rulers, trying to cultivate intimate relationships throughout the Arab world. The aim was to induce the rulers to act in British interests against a range of rivals and enemies – including the Persian and Ottoman empires. From the early twentieth century on, British Arabists were expected to foster Arab nationalism and direct it against these empires, sustaining the British protectorate system. British Arabists, famously, defended Arab causes in their encounters with non-Arabs in the region. They implemented British policy and pursued British objectives with relative ease up to the 1950s. Then they faced a strong challenge mounted by Arab nationalists and Arab leftist radicals, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt as well the Ba'th Party, which originated in Syria.

In response to the Arab world's increasing importance to Britain, London began to train and use Arabists in three major areas in the nineteenth century: the Levant, the Nile Valley and the Persian Gulf, including the Iranian province of Khuzestan. With the end of World War I, these regions remained of vital concern and received further attention, owing to the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, plus the discovery of oil and the conversion of Royal Navy vessels to oil power as early as 1911.

The Arabist mission during World War I included mobilising Arab sentiment against the Ottomans and promoting rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the Arabists dealt with issues arising from rivalries between Iran and Britain in the Gulf and in Iraq, during and after the latter's independence. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire allowed British Arabists to allocate more time and resources to undermining Iran's traditional position there. This strategy included encouraging ill will against Iran in the Arab world. Reza Shah's 'third power policy' and oil nationalisation movement further mobilised the Arabists against Iran.

The peak of the Arabist activity coincided with the height of the British Empire, yet the Arabists did not disappear with the independence of Arab countries. Since the 1970s, many British officials and non-officials with experience in Arab lands and knowledge of the Arabic language have continued to play important roles within the British establishment.[10]

Although Arabists are influential in many areas in Britain, their presence is particularly noticeable in the intelligence community and in media, academia and policy think tanks. Those active in academia and think tanks appear to be selective in their studies, and to have been disproportionately interested in Persian Gulf issues and developments. They have also tended to support anti-Persian views with respect to the role of Iran in the region's history and politics.[11] Some Arabist academics and politicians have also discounted Persia's legacy as well as Iran's contributions in the fields of human knowledge.[12]

Britain and the Term 'Persian Gulf'

Because of the two-track policy pursued by Britain against Iran and the close association of the British Arabists with Arab sheikhs, the Iranians have always had a strong suspicion that the idea to change the Gulf's name was conceived by the British. This, they believe, occurred during Britain's association with the Arabs against the Ottomans and in parallel with their efforts to undermine the Iranian nationalism. The use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' by the Arabian Service of the BBC, which began in 1959, is always referred to as evidence proving 'Britain's hand' in this affair.

In his report to Prime Minister Manouchehr Eghbal, N. Moinian, Director-General for Publications and Radio, stated that 'BBC Arabic radio used, for the first time, the term "Arabian Gulf" in a programme broadcast yesterday at 8 PM.'[13] Many Iranians were enraged. It was understood that either London encouraged the Gulf renaming campaign or endorsed it as an gesture of appeasement to Arabs in the region. Another report by the Iranian press attaché in Baghdad to the

foreign ministry indicated that this approach was permanent, as 'BBC Arabic radio refers always to the Persian Gulf as the "Arabian Gulf"'.[14]

BBC Arabic radio's adoption of the term 'Arabian Gulf', and later the use of 'the Gulf' by the BBC World Service, followed the formal adoption of 'Arabian Gulf' by the new Iraqi revolutionary government. It came as a big success for pan-Arab propaganda. Other British media outlets gradually followed suit, conferring more significance on the BBC's move. It was another sign to those Iranians who had been suspicious of British policies towards their country.

British authorities, too – occasionally in the 1960s and 1970s and more regularly from the 1980s onwards – preferred to use the generic term 'Gulf'. This policy was in line with the recommendation by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, contained in a memorandum dated 8 May 1978 titled 'Nomenclature of the Persian Gulf' and drafted by the Middle East Department.[15] It refers to an earlier circular on the same subject,[16] explaining that 'recent events have shown that Iranian sensitivity over the description of the Persian Gulf is undiminished.' The document states:

> The correct English name for this water is 'The Persian Gulf'. The use of any other term causes serious offence to the Iranians, and has been known to prejudice contracts and negotiations in Iran. The Arab States are prepared to accept the term 'The Gulf' (although they prefer 'The Arabian Gulf'.)'

The memorandum continues:

> There is no reason why the general tendency to refer to 'The Gulf' without prefix should not be reflected in everyday official usage. But it is important that in communication with Iranian firms or government organizations, or when there might be confusion about which Gulf is meant, or when dropping the prefix could be taken as an obvious or deliberate change of policy, the term 'Persian Gulf' should continue to be used. A general guide in these circumstances is to refer once to the 'Persian Gulf' and thereafter to use 'Gulf'. It may in certain Arab contexts be prudent to omit the adjective 'Persian'.

The document also reiterates that 'the term "Arabian Gulf" should never be used in official communications'.

This avoidance of the standard designation for the Persian Gulf has become another contentious issue in the relationship between Iran and Britain. One example in recent years was the use of the strange term 'Gulf of Arabia' in a prepared statement by Prime Minister Gordon Brown to an energy summit in London.[17]

Despite London's overarching strategy of containing Iran and empowering Britain's Arab protectorates before departing from the region, its recognition of 'Persian Gulf' as an appellation was consistent until the late 1950s. This policy had its roots in history as well as diplomatic and academic practice adopted when Britain was first present in the area in the sixteenth century. Yet Britain was presented with a new situation in the 1950s: on one hand, Arab nationalism (encouraged by British representatives in the region in the years before the collapse of the Ottoman Empire) was on the rise and likely to be hijacked by Nasserists and the Ba'th Party. On the other hand, since the 1940s, the Arab–Israeli conflicts had been complicating the situation. While the British could not or did not want to yield to the Palestinians, appeasing Arab interests on the eastern flank of the Arab world – e.g. on the shores of the Gulf and the Turkish border – was tempting. It appeared to be a less costly option.

Adopting a flexible policy towards Gulf nomenclature posed an inexpensive concession to Arab nationalists that Britain could afford in the 1950s and thereafter. As it also corresponded to the two-track policy against Iran, it helped curry favour with Arab circles and, given the suspicions already clouding Iranian–British relationships, it would produce no new adverse side effects.

Some former British officials tried to justify Arab attempts to rename the Gulf as a counter-claim by them to Iran's claim on Bahrain. Donald Hawley, who served as Political Agent in Dubai from 1958 to 1961, suggests that the continuation of Iran's claim to Bahrain 'helped provoke Arab nationalists' counter-claims, asserting Arabism of the Gulf and the use of the previously unknown term "Arabian Gulf"'.[18]

This understanding of British policy was shared widely among the Iranian public and authorities alike, including the foreign service. Iranian officials had maintained since the 1950s that Britain sought to adapt its empire to the new regional and international realities. To this end, it aimed to lower tensions among different Arab nationalist currents and take a middle way. Thereby Britain was preparing to finally accord independence to the Arab domains under its control, and to reassure Arab public opinion with a view to shielding it from the radical ideas disseminated by pan-Arabism.

Such a perception of British policy was put forth by Mohammad Reza Amir-Teymour, Director of the First Political Department in charge of the Persian Gulf within Iran's foreign ministry, in a major report in April 1965; it was forwarded by Foreign Minister 'Abbas Aram to the prime minister. Amir-Teymour concludes his report thusly: 'If this analysis is correct, it is obvious that the British government, too, in line with Egypt's policy, not only does not oppose the uproar over the change of name from "Persian Gulf" to "Arabian Gulf", but it also possibly fuels it.' To substantiate his conclusion, he refers to the following points as evidence indicative of a new British approach to the Middle East:

1. 'Prime Minister Harold Wilson's statement, issued following his assumption of office, indicating his government's readiness to resolve differences with the Arabs through direct negotiation with President Nasser.'
2. 'The continued implementation of the policy recommended by [Patrick Gordon] Walker, former British Foreign Minister and principal designer of the Labour Party's foreign policy, who was known to be seeking to accommodate the Arabs.'
3. 'Opposition of the Labour Party to the tripartite attack on Egypt in 1956 and this party's officials repeatedly reiterating the need to mend British–Arab relations.
4. The gathering of Gulf sheikhs at the British consulate in Sharjah to review the need to restrict immigration of Iranians to the sheikhdoms.

5. The authorisation of numerous visits by Arab League delegations to the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms.
6. Reference to the Persian Gulf as the 'Arabian Gulf' on the BBC Arabic service.
7. The question of the lighthouse on Abu Musa Island, of which Iran claimed ownership.

In Amir-Teymour's view, 'all of the above prove that British policy is to accommodate the Arabs and grow closer to them'. He concludes that the British were seeking 'to mend relations with the Arabs to save the remaining British Empire, including the Aden base'.[19]

On an informal level, with regard to Britain's approach, the names of two Britons – Roderic Owen and Sir Charles Belgrave – are frequently cited in Iranian literature on the genesis of the competing appellations for the Persian Gulf.

The Golden Bubble: Arabian Gulf Documentary, the book published by Owen (a British writer and adventurer), was used to spread the term 'Arabian Gulf'. This book was the first literary work of any significance to use this name as a substitute for 'Persian Gulf'. It was published in the wake of the oil nationalisation movement led by Mohammad Mossadegh in 1951–3, a circumstance frequently mentioned by many Iranians. Immediately translated into Arabic, the book was an account of the author's year-long voyage to the Arab shores of the Gulf. During his stay, he settled down in Bahrain and from there travelled to Kuwait, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Containing the first use of the term 'Arabian Gulf', and portraying the Arab emirs with extreme sympathy and respect, the book resonated strongly among Arabs and may have had an impact on ensuing developments. As such, it warrants closer review – especially because Arab nationalists had yet to start their campaign in favour of the name change when Owen travelled to the region in 1956, and when his book was first published in mid-1957. At the time, even Nasser still used the term 'Persian Gulf' (as discussed later).

Owen opens his book by explaining why he uses the term 'Arabian Gulf':

> No English map shows the Arabian Gulf; a matter of some concern for those who live there. A traveller has to proceed as though bound for the Persian Gulf – will probably think that that's where he is when he reaches Kuwait or Bahrain, only to be told that that's where he isn't. Persian Gulf? These dry expanses of shallow water – and everything above and especially everything below – are, have been, will be, integral parts of the Arabian Gulf.
>
> This was one of the many things I did not know before going there. It was the first Arab statement of opinion I heard and it was repeated at intervals over a year of wandering until now it is an effort to think of such a place as a Persian Gulf … I shall refer to this burning, humid gulf of the world as 'Persian' before my arrival and as 'Arabian' after; for that is only polite.[20]

In the passage above, Owen recognises that 'no English map shows the Arabian Gulf' and displays a preference for the use of 'Arabian Gulf' over 'Persian Gulf'. His preference may be explained by the fact that, in the places he visited, travellers would encounter only Arabs, and it was a 'matter of some concern' for the inhabitants that the word 'Arabian' was not used to depict the body of water concerned. Thus he decides, after his visit, that it is 'only polite' to call the Gulf 'Arabian'. The nomenclature is not discussed again in the book, not even as a side issue. Out of 255 pages, it is mentioned only in the two paragraphs above. The rest of the book contains detailed accounts of dunes, petrodollars, fantasies of the Arab *nouveaux riches*, lunch and dinner with sheikhs, the status of women, the sheikhs' poets and entertainment, falcon hunting in the desert, and Owen's eyewitness report on the popular protest in Bahrain against the British adviser to the Emir, Charles Belgrave. It is, therefore, safe to argue that the change of nomenclature undertaken by Owen is casual and whimsical, rather than the result of a well-thought-out process.

Moreover, Owen does not discuss any of the issues that are usually broached when place-names are discussed. Fully aware that the 'Arabian Gulf' does not exist, and that no map attests otherwise, he does not attempt to provide a solid basis for the term he coins and makes part of his book's title. The reason he advances for the use of 'Arabian Gulf' refers implicitly to the extensive Arab presence

in the areas he visited, suggesting that the Gulf should be named accordingly; this is the main argument later advanced by pan-Arabists in favour of the name change.

The body of the text does not elucidate as to what Owen might have seen or heard that provided grounds for a name change. He recounts in detail the conversations he had with emirs and dignitaries, as well as with the British Resident in the Persian Gulf, Sir Bernard Burrows, and British agents in the Arab sheikhdoms. In none of these encounters does he refer to any discussion of the name of the Gulf. In only one instance, he mentions a meeting he had with an unnamed Kuwaiti at the house of a British official, quoting the Kuwaiti as saying: 'We are all Arabs here, so of course this is the Arabian Gulf.'[21]

Another point about the book that deserves attention is Owen's inconsistency in using 'Arabian Gulf'; in fact, he uses 'Persian Gulf' and 'Arabian Gulf' interchangeably throughout.

The way in which Owen treated a sensitive case led a number of mostly Iranian observers to accuse him of publicising the term 'Arabian Gulf' out of an aversion to Iran and Iranians, and to insist that he was advancing an agenda born of the long-standing rivalry between Iran and Britain, continuing British efforts to de-Persianise the region. To validate this accusation, many Iranians making this claim maintain that Owen was affiliated with the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company, which was targeted during the years preceding the publication of the book by the oil nationalisation movement. Occasionally, it is even claimed that Owen was a British intelligence operative.[22]

In the book, Owen humorously recounts how he was accused in Bahrain of being a spy during the time he lived there: 'In Muharraq, it was glaringly obvious to all and sundry that I must be an English spy.' He goes on to reject the accusation, claiming he 'was ill-situated to probe' Bahrain's military and industrial secrets: 'I often wondered who I was meant to be spying for in Muharraq. But whenever I pressed anyone to tell me, they'd laugh and give a knowing look, which got us nowhere.'[23] (His admission elsewhere in the book that he was 'the only Englishman living in the old town of Muharraq, apparently the first European there'd ever been' might explain the suspicion.)[24]

Neither the claim that Owen was in the employ of the Anglo–Iranian Oil Company, nor that he was a spy, could be substantiated.

Owen's remarks, and the personal relationships he built with Arab emirs, recall the Arabist attitude, and the line he followed evoked the similar motives that drove other famous Arabists. During his stay in the region, he befriended sheikhs, found his way into their inner *diwans*, accompanied them on their hunts and even sat in on their meetings, to the point that Sheikh Shakhbut of Abu Dhabi (to whom Owen's book is dedicated) offered to let him 'have a turban and be my Grand Vizier'.[25] He writes that upon leaving Abu Dhabi, 'it was difficult to conceive of life without Sheikh Shakhbut, I had been with him so constantly'[26] and that he was 'biased, of course, by my great liking for Sheikh Shakhbut'.[27] He also formed a close relationship with Belgrave, the British Resident based in Bahrain, whom he admires profusely in his book. Similarly, Owen was friendly with British agents posted in the sheikhdoms he visited.

Owen's book was used by Arabs who favoured the name change to promote 'Arabian Gulf'; his outlook went down well in Arab ruling quarters, and gradually found favour in the polity and a section of the media in Britain. Yet the book could not have had a noticeable impact on the use of the of the traditional place name. One book reviewer continues to refer to the 'Persian Gulf' throughout his review of Owen's book, adding: 'Mr Owen is an Englishman who spent a year in the Persian Gulf, or, as he insists on calling it, the Arabian Gulf.'[28] Another reviewer describes the book as 'one of the best books about the Persian Gulf', without referring to the reference made to 'Arabian Gulf'.[29]

It may be speculated that Owen's book – although it did not involve any British officials in any confrontation with Iran – provided fresh ammunition to a new generation of Arab nationalists coming to the fore in the 1950s.

Sir Charles Belgrave, who might be called an 'unofficial Arabist', was an advisor to the Emir of Bahrain from 1926 to 1957. Because of tribal feuding in the 1920s, along with several British interventions, a permanent administrator was sent to Bahrain to ensure political continuity. Sheikh Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa agreed to accept a British

personal advisor who would be employed by him, not by the British government. Belgrave, who had served with Britain's Colonial Service in various places, was eventually chosen.[30]

He is said to have become, in fact, 'the absolute master of the island just six months after his arrival on Bahrain'. Beyond his primary responsibility as the person in charge of financial affairs, 'he assumed the direction of the Police, Judiciary and all administrative departments: health, education, public works …'[31]

Bahrain soon became a centre of activity aiming to repel and limit Iran's influence on the island and its vicinity; the ruling family and Britain, its protecting power, were especially concerned about the long-standing claim to Bahrain held by Iran, and about Bahrain's large Iranian community as well as its numerous inhabitants of Iranian descent. The claim was influenced by the following factors:

1. The British presence in Bahrain was more entrenched than anywhere else in the Gulf. The island served as the informal and, after 1947, formal headquarters for the British protectorates in the Gulf.
2. Time and again, Iran presented Britain with its claim to Bahrain, and rejected its the status of the island as a British protectorate. The ruling Al Khalifa family grew more sensitive to a potential confrontation with Iran, and more accustomed to taking a confrontational stance.
3. Bahrain was the only sheikhdom in the Gulf that saw its emir hire a former British officer as a personal advisor. Britain already administered Bahrain's defence and foreign affairs, by virtue of two agreements signed in 1880 and 1892 with the emir.
4. Numerous American and British firms and personnel arrived in Bahrain after the discovery and exploitation of oil in the 1920s and 1930s on the island.

Belgrave is accused of a series of initiatives to de-Persianise Bahrain, which were pursued with success and would, among other things, drastically bring down the percentage of Persian nationals in Bahrain

from 8.4 per cent in 1941 (which itself had been greater at an earlier point) to 2.3 per cent in 1971.[32]

Several measures in the 1920s and 30s, spearheaded by Belgrave, aimed to Arabise and assimilate the Persian community in Bahrain. They included the 1929 proclamation issued by the Bahraini government, ordering all people born in Bahrain to foreign parents to either register at the British Political Agency or be considered Bahraini subjects. The Nationality and Property Law in 1937 also restricted the right of ownership of immovable property to Bahraini nationals.[33] The law was seen as a solution to 'the growing Iranian problem' in Bahrain, which Britain's Political Agent in Bahrain had referred to in his 'Note on the Persian Communities at Bahrain' to the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, dated 4 November 1929.[34]

Later, the British advisor also played an instrumental role in implementing these measures, including trying to outwit Persians who attempted to dodge the law by registering their property in the name of their children.[35] These two actions, adopted at the peak of British control of the Bahraini government, sought to sever the ties between the large Persian community in Bahrain and Iran.

Belgrave was thus accused – though with no evidence presented – of having proposed in the 1930s to the British Foreign Office and Colonial Service to change the name 'Persian Gulf', but the Foreign Office did not agree.[36] There have been claims that he was the author of an article in the Bahraini Arabic-language magazine *Sout al-Bahrain* (*Voice of Bahrain*) titled 'The Arabian Gulf', and that he encouraged certain Bahraini institutions such as the Post Office to use the name 'Arabian Gulf'. However, it is also claimed that he soon discontinued such activities, because Iran's power in the region was on the rise (coinciding with the reign of Reza Shah).[37] This author could not find any evidence supporting either assertion.

While Belgrave adopted some verifiable measures that led to a decrease in the Persian presence and influence in Bahrain, claims about his attempts to change the name of the Gulf cannot be substantiated. Belgrave's publications, including his articles and books, do not demonstrate a discernible inclination to the term 'Arabian Gulf'. The

only place in his published writings where he uses 'Arabian Gulf' is in his book *The Pirate Coast*: 'The Persian Gulf, which the Arabs now call the Arabian Gulf, is almost an inland sea …'[38] In another book titled *Personal Column*, he uses 'Persian Gulf' several times, or simply the shortened term 'Gulf'.[39]

In an address to the Royal Central Asian Society on 28 June 1967, later published in its *Journal*, Belgrave uses the term 'Persian Gulf' throughout, except where he uses just 'Gulf'.[40] He also published his diaries, in which the term 'Persian Gulf' is used.

The British approach to the Persian Gulf entered a new phase following London's preparation for leaving the east of Suez. Britain's enthusiasm for a federation of small emirates on one hand and for pan-Arabist activism on the other made it more vulnerable in the area, and more accommodating towards its Arab clients. The republican coup in Iraq in 1958 and anti-British moves and rhetoric originating in Cairo all influenced Britain's decision-making process in the Middle East.

Pan-Arabists and the Term 'Persian Gulf'

Politics makes strange bedfellows. The British in the region found themselves in a position, in the late 1950s and thereafter, to either encourage or observe favourably attempts by pan-Arabists to downplay and marginalise Persia's legacy in the region.

While Britain's approach achieved some impact, and Egypt had already made informal efforts towards changing the Gulf's name, Iraq's new republic was the first government to formally order the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf'. This carried the full power of a major Arab state, in the midst of the first crisis in Iran–Iraq relations following the Iraqi coup in July 1958. Nasserist Egypt formally adopted the same term later in July 1960, during the course of its strong reaction against Iran's *de facto* recognition of Israel. It is my belief, which I shall expand upon below, that the adoption by these Arab states of the term occurred as a byproduct of the campaign waged by pan-Arab nationalists, as a weapon in their psychological confrontation with Iran over political influence in the region.

There is a consensus in academic circles (briefly touched upon in Chapter Three and further explained in Chapter Six) that before the 1950s, the term 'Arabian Gulf' had never been used with reference to the stretch of water separating Iran from the Arabian Peninsula, and that it was used and popularised by pan-Arabists in the late 1950s and afterward. All Arab textbooks and historical records used the traditional name.

The only suggestion to the contrary is that the term 'Arabian Gulf' might have been coined in Bahrain in the 1930s. Those who point to this possibility refer to an address given by John Marlowe at the Royal Central Asian Society on 23 July 1963, published later in the Society's journal. There is nothing in the body of the speech to this effect; however, in the Q&A segment of the gathering, Hazim al-Khalidi, an Arab member of the audience, stated that 'no Arab geographer in the past has ever mentioned the words "Arabian Gulf", and the Gulf was always known as the "Persian Gulf"'. He added that 'the words "Arabian Gulf" came from Bahrain in the early thirties when the Bahrainis, being naturally very upset by the claims of Persia over their islands, began to use the teasing words "Arabian Gulf"'.[41] However, this is simply a proposition raised in a meeting; no evidence was ever furnished to support it.

Meanwhile, the name game was not limited to the Gulf's own appellation. It included many Iranian islands as well as cities in southern and western Iran. As to why and how Arab nationalists initiated disputes over nomenclature, especially with regard to the Gulf, two sets of causes bear looking at.

Iranian–Arab Disenchantment and the Gulf Naming Dispute

A hierarchy of ideology, great-power politics and real issues, reinforced by the synergy between them, has created friction in Iranian–Arab relations since the mid-1950s. Under such circumstances, and during the power politics that ensued, the parties resorted to different tactics to advance their interests – including the name game. In general, Arab nationalism brought about a toponymically destabilising process in

the region, as Iranian nationalism did within Iran in the 1930s. In this section, the role of nationalism, ideology and great-power politics in the naming disputes are very briefly discussed:

Pan-Arabism and Anti-Iranian Elements

In this author's view, pan-Arabist ideology – which, I shall suggest below, includes strong anti-Iranian elements – lies at the root of the misgivings and uneasiness that have clouded relations between Iranians and Arabs. In turn, these misgivings and uneasiness gave rise to a hatred that led to attempts by pan-Arabists to Arabise or minimise the heritage of Iranian civilisation – including the changing of names. Thus it is worth discussing this ideology and its relevant components. It is also important to consider the veracity of a range of views that attributes the mostly rocky relationship between Iranians and Arabs over the past fifty to sixty years to an endemic Iranian–Arab enmity with historic, ethno-sectarian and civilisational dimensions.

Historically, we cannot find strong signs indicating the existence of any intrinsic or deep-rooted animosity between Arabs and Iranians. A brief review of their relationship reveals that they mostly coexisted throughout history as good neighbours rather than adversaries. The onset of a systematic effort aimed at vilifying the Persians dates back to the 1920s, and is discernible in the theoretical works of the early pan-Arabist ideologues as one of the components of pan-Arab nationalism, as I shall outline shortly. The pan-Arabists, who seized power from the mid-1950s until the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003, used their anti-Iranian inclination as a driving force behind their campaigns.

Arab nationalism originated in the 'Arab Enlightenment' during and following World War I, and was encouraged by Britain as its geopolitical interests required at the time. However, the ideologues of Arab nationalism in the 1920s through to the 1950s, and later the rise of Nasser and Abd al-Karim Qasim to power in Egypt and Iraq respectively, took Arab nationalism to new, uncharted territories. In search of an enemy to define itself against, Arab nationalists were

drawn to see in Iran a basis for mobilising and energising the Arab masses in the eastern flank of the Arab world.

An aggressive approach towards Iranians or 'Persians' was clearly on the agenda of those intent on forming an Arab identity in general, and an Iraqi Arab identity in particular. In this respect, the teachings of the various schools of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism (such as those led by Sati' al-Husri, Sami Shawkat, Darwish al-Miqdadi and Michel Aflaq), and the way their views were put to action, are notable.

Iraqis, in striving to build the Iraqi state, established an educational programme that drew heavily on the writings of al-Husri. Dubbed the 'intellectual prophet of Arab nationalism',[42] he is known as its primary ideologue and one of the fathers of pan-Arabism. An educator, prolific author, lecturer and confidant of King Faisal, he was concerned less about borders than ethnic identity,[43] and attached the greatest importance to a common language and a common history as the basis for the formation of a nation.

Stressing the importance of language and culture, al-Husri's ultimate goal was to create a 'great Arab state' consisting of Arabic-speaking people – in his view, all Arabic-speaking peoples, whether Muslims or not, could be incorporated into the Arab nation, whereas non-Arab Muslims, primarily Iranians, could not be members of the same community. It is said that 'his thought had wide implications and his writings had a considerable impact on political developments in the Middle East'.[44]

From al-Husri's thinking followed his approach to building the Iraqi education system, which included facilitating the arrival in Iraq of Palestinian, Syrian and Egyptian educators on one hand and excluding Iranians and Iraqis of Iranian origin on the other. Significantly, there was a strong Iranian community in Iraq at the time, and its historical interaction with Iraqi Shi'is was a factor to be reckoned with. Anti-Iranian thinking is also apparent in al-Husri's writings; of special interest is one of his works titled 'Iranian Teachers Who Caused Us [Arabs] Big Problems'.[45] His activities also included a struggle against Persian schools.

Many other pan-Arab nationalists, such as al-Miqdadi, also stressed the importance of language in defining a nation. In his view, 'the Semito–Arab homeland was occupied by Semitic-speaking people from earliest times and surrounded on both sides by hostile Aryans … from the West came a series of Aryans, starting with Alexander and the Greeks and continuing all the way to the British and the French, who held Arab lands in their control. But a greater Aryan threat to the Arabs was to their east, the Persians, who had a long history of aggression towards Arab lands, desiring to exert revenge on Arabs for the loss of their glory, and who humiliated Arabs on a number of occasions and corrupted their culture.'[46]

A study of history textbooks designed for use in the schools of Iraq, Syria and Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s shows evidence of pan-Arab nationalism. These textbooks were prepared by several famous pan-Arabists, including al-Miqdadi, and depicted the Arab homeland 'as a natural geographical unit, consisting of the "Arab Island" – of which "the head" was the Fertile Crescent, "the heart" central Arabia, and "the extremities" the Arabian coastlands from the Gulf of Aqaba to "the Gulf of Basra" '.[47] These textbooks commonly portrayed the Persians as being filled with hatred of Arabs, as well as an obsessive desire for revenge for the loss of their former glory and sovereignty.

Following a trip to Kuwait in 1968, Farhad Nikoukhah, Iran's Deputy Minister for Information, wrote:

> Until a few years ago, all textbooks were drafted and printed in Cairo and now the preparation of these textbooks is entrusted to the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Thus, not only are students directly influenced by the Egyptian propaganda organisation, but also historical realities have mostly been distorted to suit the wishes of Cairo. For example, now, among the youth, we cannot find any student who knows where the Persian Gulf is located or is familiar with the history of the Iranian kingdom. Quite to the contrary, they skilfully portray Iranians as an ethnic group harbouring old-age hostility towards the Arabs. Apart from being tasked with distorting historical realities, Egyptian teachers have tried also to identify Iran and Israel as the same.[48]

Sami Shawkat, another pan-Arab ideologue, was also viewed as stirring up hatred against Persians, and as someone who tried to turn pan-Arabism into the highest Arab value.[49]

Another central defining issue that made pan-Arab nationalists nervous about Shi'i Iran was the status of Shi'is in some Arab countries, including their majority status in Iraq and Bahrain. The great difficulty of assimilating Shi'is into the Iraqi state naturally undermined the efforts of the country's dominant Sunni establishment to propagate the ideas of Arab nationalism. The majority of Shi'is tended to view Arab nationalism as 'a Sunni project designed to reduce the Shi'i to an insignificant minority in an expanded Sunni Arab domain'.[50] The Iraqi Sunni establishment always suspected Shi'is of feeling closer to Iran than to Arabs.

The anti-Iranian elements within pan-Arabist ideology, reinforced by conflicting outlooks and territorial and diplomatic disagreements, were later embraced by Nasserist Egypt and especially Ba'thist Iraq, which began operationalising them in a very dangerous way. Egypt, mostly for political reasons, and Iraq, for nation-building, ideological and geopolitical reasons, tried to define Arab nationalism, *inter alia*, as opposed to 'the Persians' and Iranian nationalism. Thus the way was paved for the Ba'thists to harshly reinforce anti-Iranian, pan-Arabist concepts and later put them to work. The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq was the culmination of what the pan-Arab ideologues put together and what the Ba'thists attempted to carry out to the extreme.

Pan-Arabist ideologues did everything to historicise and conceptualise enmity between Iranians and Arabs – the so-called 'endemic Iranian–Arab enmity' was a pivotal pan-Arabist argument underlying its anti-Iranian approach, yet it cannot withstand serious academic scrutiny. Compared to many other neighbouring peoples in the region, in fact, Iranians and Arabs coexisted peacefully throughout history; good relations far outweighed friction.[51]

Power Politics and Issues Souring Iranian–Arab Relations

Apart from ideology, Cold War exigencies and other issues had an intensifying effect on the situation. Egypt and Iraq, allied with the USSR, faced Iran, an ally of the West. This played a part in determining the nature and pattern of tense relations between Iran and the Arab nationalists. The Iraqi coup of 1958, initially supported by Egypt and Syria, further constrained Iran–Iraq relations, and added rivalry over the Persian Gulf to a long list of disputes between the two countries. The destruction of the Iraqi monarchy, the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact, the friendly overtures of republican Iraq to the Soviet Union and Soviet relations with the Iraqi communists all sent a shudder down the Shah's spine. These developments were perceived in Tehran as ominous signs of the twin threat of Arab nationalism and Soviet communism. Egypt and Syria, following the intensification of their rivalry with the Republic of Iraq, tried to extend their power and influence into the Gulf to counter Iraqi and Iranian ambitions as well as British hegemony.

In search of an enemy on the eastern flank of the Arab world to energise the Arab population, including those in the Persian Gulf, pan-Arab nationalists tried to use such issues as Iran–Iraq territorial disputes, Iran's claim to Bahrain and Iran's recognition of Israel to further portray Iran as the enemy of the Arabs. At the same time, relations between Iran and moderate Arab countries were, in general, friendly. Moreover, there was a change in Egypt's ideological orientations in the 1970s, a friendship with the US that was shared with Iran and a common interest in advancing peace with Israel. These factors facilitated what was dubbed the 'Tehran–Cairo strategic alliance', as will be discussed later. The clashing Iranian and Arab nationalisms so pervasive in the 1960s faded away in the 1970s, and pragmatism mostly prevailed in Iran–Egypt relations. It was also the case, to some extent, with regard to ties between Iran and Iraq in the years immediately preceding the 1979 revolution in Iran.

It is important to note that ever-present factionalism in the Arab world and perennial intra-Arab differences have always constrained cooperation among Arab states, with or against Iran. Over the past

fifty-nine years, none of the efforts by one part or another in the Arab world to form a solid anti-Iranian front, polarise Arabs and Iranians or isolate Iran in regional politics has come to full fruition. Nor did rhetorical appeals to 'Arabism' by pan-Arab nationalists bring about an all-embracing position against then-monarchical Iran, and Arab conservatives have proved unable to mobilise all Arabs against the current Islamic Republic of Iran.

Yet one tactic – the Gulf naming dispute – has survived; no Arab state has risked loss of credibility, or being seen as failing to champion Arabism. Those who did not participate in any anti-Iranian front, whether before or after the Islamic Revolution, have had at least to pay lip service to issues such as the Gulf naming dispute. It has been always necessary for Arab states to avoid alienating extremist elements within and outside their countries. Thus they have given in to the temptation to brandish their credentials, no matter how harmful it might be to their individual national interest.

As a result, the tone of the Iraqis and, at times, Arab nationalists *vis-à-vis* imperial Iran, as well as later Arab conservatives *vis-à-vis* revolutionary Iran, became assertive and critical. Iran was accused of expansionism; using Iranian migrants in the Gulf as agents; infiltrating the Iraqi educational system; trying to export the Islamic Revolution; spreading Shi'ism; and so forth. Iran also looked intimidating as an actual or potential supporter of Kurdish and Shi'i movements in Iraq.

Arab Countries and the Naming Dispute

In the environment depicted above, the Persian Gulf – already important, owing to its unique strategic position and the discovery of oil there – acquired further importance with the rise of Arab nationalism. The area soon became a special focus of interest for Arab nationalists in Egypt, Iraq and Syria and, consequently, an arena in which Iranians and Arabs would interact and compete.

Unsurprisingly, the antagonism that pitted Arab hardliners against Britain drew their attention to the Persian Gulf and the British protectorate system there. Stakes were heightened for the pan-Arabists

by the accession, in 1955, of the Gulf's two littoral states, Iran and Iraq, to a military pact sponsored by the West. As a result, high-profile events such as the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and the ensuing war in 1956, as well as intensive propaganda from Cairo and later Baghdad targeted at Gulf Arabs, put Britain's traditional policy at risk. Hitherto, Britain had sought to insulate the Gulf from developments in the Arab world and direct the Gulf Arabs' attention toward the Indian subcontinent; this was a policy to which Arab nationalists always objected.[52] As links grew between the Gulf and other Arab regions, immigration increased of Egyptians and Palestinians to the Gulf to profit from the oil boom. These circumstances made the Arabs of the Gulf more susceptible to propaganda from Cairo and Damascus, and later from Baghdad. Basic ideological and political differences between the revolutionary regimes in Iraq and Egypt fed into their rivalry over leadership of the Arab world. The sloganeering battle inflamed the situation.

One of the main policies pursued by Arab nationalists attempted to polarise Arabs and Iranians into two confrontational camps by raising overarching issues of great significance for all Arab countries. The relationship between Iran and Israel in the 1960s, followed by the Arabism of the Gulf, were often the issues chosen by Egypt for rallying Arabs against Iran. From the beginning, Iraq focused mostly on Gulf issues. Although Nasser's Egypt also used the expression 'Persian threat' and made efforts to demonise the 'Persians', it was Ba'thist Iraq that took this to its extreme. Egypt, Iraq and their affiliates in different Arab countries sought to emphasise, to varying degrees during different periods, the line that Iran opposed the entire Arab world through its friendship with Israel and its policy in the Gulf. They hoped that by magnifying disagreement between the two camps into an Arab–Iranian conflict, they could polarise the dispute. Iran would then be isolated through pressure on Arabs who were hesitant and more moderate.[53]

The ensuing tension between Iran and pan-Arab nationalists, each perceiving the other as a danger in the Persian Gulf, was amplified by regional and international factors. This laid the foundation for

the Gulf nomenclature controversy. Pan-Arabists sought to control the Arab coastlines of the Persian Gulf, wishing to turn it into an Arab lake, with an eye on its natural resources. It was under these circumstances that the Arab nationalist reference to the 'Arabian Gulf' was taken seriously by the Iranians.

A drastically new environment thus took shape in the Gulf, with grave security implications for all sides and extensive ramifications for their relations. It led to a degree of persistence from Arabs concerning the Gulf nomenclature that has been almost unprecedented compared with other contentious issues, including the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The new appellation for the Gulf was one of the side effects of conservative Iranians and radical Arabs coming face-to-face for the first time in the Persian Gulf, with this stretch of water becoming a primary focus of their rivalry. The term 'Arabian Gulf' was one of the tactics that initially East-orientated, socialist-minded Arabs used against imperial, West-orientated and conservative Iran between 1958–67. The tensions resulted in a regional cold war that ran in parallel with, and was affected by, the global East–West Cold War. Although Egypt opted gradually out of the Arab hard-line camp following the Six-Day War in 1967, the term 'Arabian Gulf' took on a life of its own.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution escalated the tension, this time between Iran's revolutionary government and the moderate Arab states. Yet, to some extent, it improved the relationship between Iran and some of the more radical Arab states. The Gulf naming dispute continued, as did a row over the Gulf's three islands, especially after the establishment of US military bases in the Gulf following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

Iraq, Initiator of the Gulf Naming Dispute

For forty-five years between the 1958 coup and the US-led invasion in 2003, the relationship between Iran and Iraq was fraught with conflict. Antagonism between Iran and pan-Arab nationalists began at government level in the mid-1950s, with Nasser and the Shah at

loggerheads over their conflicting Cold War positions and differing socio-political systems. However, with the founding of republican Iraq, a whole new chapter of discord opened in Arab–Iranian relations, climaxing in the eight-year war in the 1980s. While Iran under both the Shah and the Islamic revolutionary government could reach an understanding with moderate or radical Arab states, it was unable to see eye-to-eye with Iraq.

These tense bilateral relations led republican Iraq to become the first government to formally use the term 'Arabian Gulf' with reference to the Persian Gulf. It was among several tactics that the Iraqi Ba'thists used; the term was broadcast over Baghdad Radio as part of the regime's propaganda against Iran following the 1958 coup.[54]

The Main Elements of Iraq's Foreign Policy

To better understand the origin of the Gulf nomenclature controversy, a quick look at emerging republican Iraq and its global and regional policies – including its Gulf policy – is warranted. For four and a half decades following the 1958 coup, its foreign policy was driven mostly by the urge to restrain Iran. Its Gulf policy was at the root of the name-changing dispute.

This and other moves, including a claim to the Iranian province of Khuzestan, were meant to bolster Iraqi leaders' credentials among Arab states and muster Arab support in their power rivalry with Iran. At the same time, the new policies aimed to address Iraq's perceived geopolitical predicaments and Baghdad's competition with Cairo over leadership of the Arab world. To win an edge over Cairo, the term 'Arabian Gulf' was formally adopted and used by Baghdad in its extensive propaganda against Iran. This Iraqi initiative was later adopted by Egypt during the standoff that followed Iran's *de facto* recognition of Israel in July 1960.

The 1958 coup in Iraq was a turning point in the region. It changed regional politics forever, Persian Gulf politics in particular. Iraq became subject to consecutive military regimes that were viewed

from Tehran (and most of the time from the Gulf's Arab littorals) as a threat to the region's socio-political systems and status quo. The coup removed a conservative monarchy and replaced it with a revolutionary, pan-Arabist regime on Iran's border. It led to the collapse of the Baghdad Pact, a pillar of the 'containment policy' against the Soviet Union. Under new circumstances, old disputes between the two countries took on new importance and, at times, served as excuses to further their rivalry.

Iraq's ideological and ethnic opposition to 'the Persians' soon found it taking the lead in almost every issue of opposition between Iranians and Arabs, including the aforementioned Gulf naming dispute, the claim to Khuzestan and the three-islands issue. Relations between Iran and Iraq had already suffered from an inherited legacy of sporadic and inconclusive wars between the Ottoman and Persian empires. Lasting over several hundred years, these had mostly been played out on Iraqi territory. The similarity of their political systems and strategic outlooks under monarchical regimes was not enough to prevent animosity between Iran and Iraq; however, it had allowed the two sides to deal with each other in a pragmatic and restrained way.

Republican Iraq now looked to settle old scores, while raising new issues with aggressive and unprecedented vigour. Its stance was clothed in ideology and accompanied by anti-Persian rhetoric, which had a destabilising impact on the region. Points of dispute included the Shatt al-Arab waterway, oilfields straddling the shared border, the difference over the delineation of continental shelves and the rights and responsibilities of the two states with regard to Iranians residing in, or travelling to, Iraq on pilgrimage. Iraq's territorial claim to Iran's Khuzestan province, disputes arising from real or imaginary Kurdish and Shi'i questions and, before long, issues arising from the activity of dissidents, all exacerbated the situation. So did geopolitics, inter-Arab power politics and, most importantly, the conflicting ideologies of the global superpowers. The two nations entered the abyss of war in 1980.

The implications of Iraq's real or perceived geopolitical predicaments have always influenced its policy towards the Persian Gulf and its neighbours on the Gulf, Iran and Kuwait. While the Iranian

shores stretch the full length of the northern Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, the Iraqi coast – a mere 40 kilometres – is short and shallow. Furthermore, the Iraqi seaports on the Shatt al-Arab waterway are not always easily navigable. Iran took the position that the fluvial border along the Shatt al-Arab should follow the thalweg, i.e. an internationally recognised line marking the deepest navigational channel. Moreover, all Iraq's important centres of population and industry lie within around 150 kilometres of Iran's border, making for minimal strategic depth should conflict arise. These concerns led Baghdad to lay claim not only to Khuzestan (and renaming it 'Arabistan') but, in 1961, also Kuwait. This had discrediting consequences for Iraq's attempts to find a foothold in the Gulf's Arab littorals, and culminated in two regional wars against Iran and Kuwait.

Inter-Arab politics, especially competition between Iraq and Egypt, provided a continuous source of instability in the region. With roots in monarchical times, tensions flared up after a short recess following the 1958 coup. The warm relations between Iraq and the ephemeral United Arab Republic (UAR) – the Union of Egypt and Syria from 1958 to 1961 – turned tepid and then adversarial. In January 1959, media in the UAR began attacking the Iraqi premier, Abdul-Karim Qasim, accusing him of being a tool of Zionism, Britain and communism. Iraq retorted in kind against Nasser. Ugly phrases were bandied about, including 'cat's paw of Western imperialism', 'gangster, thief and beggar' and 'a vile and ignorant animal'.[55]

Iraq's Gulf policy and general foreign policy not only confronted Iran in the Gulf and on bilateral issues, but also aimed to improve Baghdad's position in the contest for leadership of the Arab world. By the 1960s, Iraq's pan-Arabists found themselves in an intense race with their Egyptian counterparts. To outperform the other, each needed to ratchet up the rhetoric. The situation continued this way until June 1967, when Egypt, facing a difficult reality given the outcome of the Arab–Israeli war, gradually opted out of the contest to the point of restoring diplomatic relations with Iran in August 1970.

Iraq's announcement on 16 December 1958 that it was closing its borders and severing all communications with Iran signalled

the beginning of a new era.[56] The Shatt al-Arab dispute was revived in 1959, leading to a claim on 2 December 1959 by Prime Minister Qasim for the return of the roads outside the Iranian ports of Abadan, Khorramshahr and Khosrowabad, on the Shatt al-Arab. Iranian sovereignty over these ports had been recognised under a 1937 treaty. On 3 January 1960, in turn, Iran claimed sovereignty over half the waterway,[57] demanding that the borderline should run along the deepest navigational channel instead of the lowest watermark on the Iranian bank. These claims and counterclaims resulted in a build-up of forces on the border, and in the Persian Gulf area; a clash ensued on 23 December 1959.[58]

Viewed from Tehran and other conservative Persian Gulf entities, the 1958 coup was an alarming development. It gave a strong foothold to Arab and pan-Arab nationalists on the coasts of the Gulf, raising the spectre of a Soviet presence in the future. Initial support for the coup by Nasser was a turning point in Iran's perception of the threat it felt from Arab nationalists. Iraq signed a mutual defence treaty with the UAR on 19 July 1958, five days after the coup, and Baghdad and Moscow signed a defence pact as well as a trade agreement and a scientific and cultural cooperation accord. These were further alarming signs for Tehran, which responded by concluding a new Iran–US defence agreement in October 1959.[59]

The Name Game Emerges from Iraq's New Gulf Policy

In the heat of the tension between the two countries, the new republican regime began for the first time in Iraq's brief history to work out a Gulf policy. Under its former monarchy, Iraq tended to accord priority to the Fertile Crescent area and Greater Syria, and to compete with Egypt in that region. Entanglement in a kind of dynastic rivalry with the ruling descendants of Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia was also high on Hashemite Iraq's scale of priorities.

Policy differences between Iran and Iraq over the Persian Gulf date back to periods preceding the 1958 coup. Britain's role in Iraq after 1922, and Baghdad's requirements, gave rise to conflicting

interests. Iran at the time was more alarmed over the role that Iraq was playing in promoting 'the idea of establishing a union of emirates and encouraging the Emir of Bahrain in this direction'.[60] Iran's interpretation of Iraq's relationship with Bahrain was another source of disagreement between Tehran and Baghdad. The Iranian consulate in Basra criticised the Iraqi government for a willingness to '… allow itself to come together with the rogue sheikhs of parts of Iranian territory and supposedly liaise with the Persian Gulf emirs to implement the British policy'.[61] Occasional use of the description 'Gulf of Basra' for the Persian Gulf in some Iraqi newspapers was another source of Iranian resentment. That had its origin in the teachings of al-Husri. In his extensive publications on the historical geography of Arab lands, he avoided using 'Persian Gulf', always referring to the the old Ottoman name 'Gulf of Basra' or 'Gulf of Qatif' or, simply, 'the Gulf'. Al-Miqdadi, inspired by al-Husri, consciously avoided 'Persian Gulf' in his writings, using 'Gulf of Basra' instead.[62] The cover letter transmitting the consulate report above to the Ministry of the Court states that 'it is not the first time that Iraqi papers name the Persian Gulf as the Gulf of Basra', and asks for any comment thereon.[63] As explained later, the Ba'th Party also used 'Gulf of Basra' from the 1940s.

Egypt had already launched fiery propaganda at the Gulf sheikhs. However, it mostly aimed to undermine the British protectorate system in the Persian Gulf, as an extension of the war with Britain that Cairo had been already fighting. The focus on the Gulf by the new Iraqi republic was a fresh development, more ideologically tainted and with extensive consequences for the region. It created tumult among the littoral conservative emirs, and added a new dimension to the already difficult and complicated relationship between Iran and Iraq.

Republican Iraq's Gulf policy was based on considering the Persian Gulf to be of 'Arab character' and vowing to safeguard what it called 'Arabism of the Gulf'. This policy was adopted after the 1958 coup, and took on new importance under the Ba'thist regime of 1968, which endured until 2003. It reaffirmed that Iraq was to

preserve the Arab nature of the Gulf by combating what it described as Iranian assault on its Arab identity.[64] Iraqi Ba'thist spokespeople called the Gulf 'an Arab lake' and maintained that Tehran's use of 'Persian' attested to Iran's old dreams of hegemony and empire with the Gulf at its centre, and to efforts by Iran to 'Persianise'.[65] In this respect, in 1969 and 1970, Iraqi statements at the UN claimed that Iran was an alien in the Gulf.[66]

Tehran was challenged by Iraq's emphasis on the 'Arab identity' of the Gulf, and the importance it attached to protecting that status. Corresponding measures by Baghdad, based on this theme, continued to generate more tension in the region. The 'Arab identity' of the Gulf, as a concept, had already been advanced by Egypt as a propaganda tool. However, Iraq's status as a littoral Arab state, and the steps it adopted, took the idea to new heights – especially after the Ba'th Party monopolised power in Iraq in 1968. By virtue of their Arab nationalist outlook and the size of Iraq's territory, Iraqi Ba'thists portrayed their country as the sole 'guardian' of the Gulf's Arab character and the integrity of the Arab homeland, asserting that it 'carries the main burden in safeguarding the area'.[67]

In a joint communiqué issued in May 1965, Iraq and Egypt demonstrated the mentality underpinning pan-Arab nationalist policies on the Gulf:

> Attempts are now being made to efface and expunge the Arabism of the Arab Gulf districts and to change their national character by opening the door to foreign immigration in order that the original Arab inhabitants of these districts should become strangers in their homes. All these conspiracies aim at creating a new 'Israel' to ensure the interests of imperialism in this area.[68]

In addition, Iraq asserted that its policy towards any 'Arab Gulf' state was conditional on the requirement that that state accord to the interests of Arab nationalism. Hence the criterion was the devotion to, and safeguarding of, Arab nationalist interests. In the words of Saddam Hussein:

> We cannot have a normal relationship with a State which relies on a foreign country and uses forces of that country against our Arab people. We shall establish a normal relationship with any State which shows concern for the soil of the [Arab] homeland and the Arabism of the homeland in the Gulf.[69]

A passage from the 'Political Report of the Ba'th Party' reads:

> These [conservative Gulf] regimes did not oppose the threats to the Arab character of the Gulf with an effective policy, in spite of the pressure of public opinion within the area and elsewhere in the Arab homeland … These regimes' alliance – especially at this point – with Saudi Arabia, which has an essential role in the imperialist plan for the Arabian Gulf, gave Saudi reaction a free hand and an effective political cover for it to exert great influence on the area, in collaboration with the Iranian regime and the reactionary regimes of the Gulf.[70]

On the basis of its Gulf policy, Iraq saw itself at the forefront of fighting what it viewed as a systematic Persian infiltration of the Gulf's Arab shores. It claimed a responsibility to impede what it perceived as growing Iranian nationalism in the Gulf and Iran's efforts to 'Persianise' it through immigration.[71] Immigration and settlement of Persians in the Gulf emirates was described by Iraq as 'a colonialist phenomenon, posing a threat to the Arabism of the Persian Gulf analogous to the Zionist colonization of Palestine'.[72]

Meanwhile, Iraq's competition with Egypt further prompted Baghdad to beat the drum of Arabism in the Gulf. After its defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, Nasser's Egypt had retreated from the Gulf and, as a face-saving solution, delegated to the Saudis the defence of the Gulf's Arab character. Consequently, Iraq remained the most difficult neighbour for the Gulf's conservative regimes. Baghdad was accused of heavy-handedness in trying to bring the Arab emirates in line with its strategic objectives in the Gulf, including discouraging them from forging a working relationship with Iran. Meanwhile, Iraq's three attempts, in 1960, 1973 and 1991, to annex Kuwait tarnished its claim to defend the Arab people.

The dispute over Bahrain, together with the issue of the three islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs, provided the pan-Arab nationalists with an opportunity to rally support to face up to Iran. They seized their chance avidly. Iraq took the initiative regarding the islands. They joined Algeria, Libya and South Yemen in taking the issue to the UN Security Council and requesting 'an urgent meeting to consider the dangerous situation in the Arabian Gulf …'[73] The country concerned – the United Arab Emirates – chose not to take an active part.[74] Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with Iran and Britain following the landing of Iranian forces on the islands, and fomented a coup against the ruler of Sharjah, who had signed a memorandum of understanding with Iran on Abu Musa.[75] There was also an attempt on the life of Sharjah's deputy ruler, who had welcomed Iranian forces on Abu Musa.[76] In this period, not only Iran but all the Gulf Arab states were targeted by Iraqi propaganda. The Iraqi president, Hassan al-Bakr, gave a speech in 1973 in which he referred to activities determined to 'form an alliance between the reactionary Iranian and Arab forces in order to encircle the liberation movement, to contain its position and to dominate the sea passages on behalf of imperialism for its own interests and the Zionist objectives'.[77]

The Formal Introduction of 'Arabian Gulf'

The Iraqi military, which took power in 1958, soon adopted a number of new, drastic measures with respect to domestic and foreign policy. The Arab nationalist credentials it claimed led it to formally adopt the term 'Arabian Gulf'; thus Iraq became the first government to do so. On 1 August 1958, the Iraqi Council of Ministers made a decision on the mandatory use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' in lieu of 'Persian Gulf', and notified all government offices through a formal circular to abide by it. This was the first among several tactics that the new Iraqi establishment adopted in regard to Iran.

Iran formally protested the decision. The note sent from the Iranian embassy to the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs reads, in part, as follows:

> According to the news published in some Baghdad newspapers, the Council of Ministers decided that from now on the Persian Gulf must be called the Arabian Gulf and accordingly notified all ministries and administration offices of the decision through an executive circular. Whereas 'Persian Gulf' is the well-known and time-honoured geographical name of a place and the decision made by the Iraqi Government cannot affect the reputation of the Gulf that bore the name Persian Gulf from so many centuries … It can only be an unfriendly step towards Iran …
>
> … The Royal Government of Iran deeply regrets that the new Government in Iraq from its inception is, this way, deepening the misunderstanding left over from the previous Government, thus directing Iranian public opinion in a direction opposite to that of good relationship, which is definitely favoured by the two parties. It seriously expects the Republican Government of Iraq to revise its decision and inform this Embassy of the result.[78]

The Iranian media received the decision of the Iraqi republican government with dismay. In an editorial, the newspaper *Kayhan* stated:

> As we heard, the Iraqi coup Government has taken a decision based on which they changed the name Persian Gulf into 'the Arabian Gulf'. At the time when Iraq belonged to the Ottomans, they referred to this Gulf as the Gulf of Basra, and now when Iraq belongs to the Iraqis themselves, we don't know why they have become so generous as to forgo their private ownership and turn it into an endowment for all Arabs. The effect of this new naming would be the same as the name Gulf of Basra. Had anybody in the world become aware that the Ottomans used the term Gulf of Basra in their conversations and communications and had it affected other communities' use of the term? This time, would this new name have any effect either …?[79]

Subsequently, Iraqi officials began a campaign to remove and replace the term 'Persian Gulf' everywhere in Iraq, as well as publicise the new name in the media and in school textbooks. According to a memo sent to the Iranian prime minister by the General Directorate for Publication and Radio, Ministry of Information, Iraqi state radio

began broadcasting a new programme titled *The Voice of the Arabian Gulf*, which targeted listeners in the Persian Gulf region.[80] Reuters reported the same news on 2 August 1961. According to another report, sent to the General Directorate by Iran's press attaché in Iran's embassy in Baghdad, the prime minister of Iraq – addressing teachers – said that in old maps of Iraq the term 'Arabian Gulf' was still referred to as the 'Gulf of Ajam', and that such maps should be corrected and the term 'Arabian Gulf' inscribed thereon.[81]

A report by SAVAK (Iran's security service under the Shah) to the Prime Minister's Office advised that the textbooks for Iranian students living in Iraq had arrived at Iraqi customs two weeks beforehand – but Iraqi officials had refused to release them, because some of the textbooks contained references to the 'Persian Gulf' and provided information on the Gulf and surrounding regions.[82]

Iranian government documents are also indicative of a widespread campaign by the Iraqi government to promote its policy on the Gulf, including the new name. Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported the following to the Prime Minister's Office:

> Over the past two years and a half, other than extensive radio and press propaganda, the Iraqi Government arranged for the publication of biased books and booklets on Iran, which are mostly about the Persian Gulf, the Khuzestan and Baluchistan Provinces. These publications are mostly written by professors of Iraq's universities and released by Iraq's Ministry of intelligence and distributed in the Sheikhdoms and some other Arab countries.

The same report is also indicative of efforts by Tehran to engage Iranian university professors in countering this propaganda. A follow-up report puts the number of anti-Iranian books and booklets published by Iraq and received by Iran's foreign ministry at twenty-seven. It also indicates that Iraqi propaganda was systematic, with numerous publications distributed in public places in the Gulf's sheikhdoms, such as hotels.[83]

Different Iraqi government departments received instructions to initiate and carry out programmes aimed at wiping out the name

'Persian Gulf' and replacing it with 'Arabian Gulf' – the Department of Antiquities, for example, as explained later. This department took extreme measures, including giving foreign archaeologists the choice of either using their preferred name for the Gulf or leaving Iraq. By the late 1950s, 'Persian Gulf' had been completely eliminated from the archaeological literature of Iraq, and substituted with 'Arabian Gulf'.[84]

Gulf politics continued to be one of the most important prizes in regional and Arab power dynamics. As the Ba'thists gained more influence following the coup against Abdul Karim Qasim in 1963, monopolising power in July 1968, they pursued their hawkish Gulf policy more vehemently. In principle, they always accorded much more importance to names in the process of nation-building, and had begun their name policy much earlier. The Ba'th Party, influenced by pan-Arabist ideologues, had never admitted the term 'Persian Gulf'. The 1947 Ba'th Party statutes is an example in this respect. Article 7, delineating 'Arab fatherland', uses 'Gulf of Basra' for the Persian Gulf and 'Arab Ocean' in reference to the Indian Ocean.[85] The use of 'Gulf of Basra' by the Ba'th Party before the 1958 coup is another example of the non-use of 'Arabian Gulf' for the Persian Gulf before the 1950s.

With the Ba'thists in full control of Iraq, rivalry with Egypt, including the attempt to gain ascendancy in the Gulf area, took on a new significance. Iraq claimed Nasser's legacy and tried to take up the position he was withdrawing from following his disastrous defeat in the Six-Day War of June 1967. Following the Ba'thist coup in 1968 and Nasser's setback, Iraq could claim victory in its rivalry with Egypt and leadership of Arab nationalists on most issues (including those relating to the Persian Gulf) against Iran. However, the Iraqi claim to supremacy in the Persian Gulf had little substance; it was no match for Iran with regard to potential power, or in military, strategic or geopolitical matters. Thus it focused mostly on rhetoric, involving tactics such as the Gulf name game.

In 1974, to systematise its efforts in this respect, Saddam Hussein set up the Centre for Arabian Gulf Studies at Basra University and a

specialised journal dubbed *al-Khalij al-Arabi* (*The Arabian Gulf*). Likewise, Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council established, in 1977, an Arab Gulf Office headed by Saddam himself – he was still Deputy Chairman of the Council – to underscore its commitment towards Iraqi Gulf policy.[86]

Iran and Egypt at Loggerheads in the Gulf

Gamal Abdel Nasser, who represented combative Arab nationalism, possibly played the most significant role in promoting the name 'Arabian Gulf' in Arab countries. Nasser, known for honesty and the integrity of his character, was a tragic victim of the ideology of pan-Arabism. He was less interested in changing the term 'Persian Gulf' than appearing to confront the Shah of Iran as an ally of the West. He started the campaign to change the Gulf's name only after Iran confirmed its *de facto* recognition of Israel in July 1960.

Iranian–Egyptian Relations

The history of relations between Iran and Egypt exemplifies the partly whimsical nature of relations between Iran and the Arab states in general, rooted in policies that have mostly failed to focus on their national interests. Iran has had no 'permanent' dispute with Egypt involving an issue of importance relating to either party's national interest; the two countries are located far apart, in different geopolitical sub-regions, each characterised by its own particularities. It is interesting to note that Nasserist Egypt once sought to export its brand of anti-monarchical and left-leaning revolution to the Gulf's rim countries; later, revolutionary Iran was accused of seeking to export *its* Islamic revolution to Egypt. More interestingly, at one point Iran's close relations with Israel were, to an extent, a reaction to the threat Tehran perceived from Cairo's rhetoric and meddling in the Gulf. At another point, Egypt ironically reacted to what it perceived as Iranian attempts to disrupt its own peace with Israel. As the prominent Egyptian journalist Mohamed Hassanein Heikal sarcastically recalled:

'For a number of years, we severed our relations with the Shah of Iran because he had ties with Israel. Today, we sever our relations with the revolution because it opposes our ties with Israel.'[87]

The period 1952–3 helped create affinities between Iran and Egypt. Prime Minister Mossadegh of Iran visited Egypt and discussed, *inter alia*, how to coordinate Iranian policy toward Britain.[88] The common elements of Anglophobic nationalism in both countries were later strengthened by anti-monarchical sentiments that peaked after Egyptian nationalists assumed power in July 1952, almost a year before the coup against Mossadegh's democratically elected government in Iran. Although this episode in the history of the two countries was brief, it left an enduring impression, proving their mutual ability to forge friendly relations. The coup against Mossadegh in 1953 interrupted their common cause and became a point of divergence in their bilateral relations.

The disputes that ensued, unlike the Iran–Iraq case, were more diplomatic and rooted rather in differing political and global outlooks and disagreements on how to deal with Israel. There were no concrete conflicts involving their real national interests. Nonetheless, the accession of Tehran to the Baghdad Pact in 1955 was a decisive point that put it on collision course with Cairo, which had already adopted a pan-Arab nationalist and pro-Soviet policy. Thus the stage was set for a drawn-out war of words between conservative, pro-West Iran and Pan-Arabist, pro-East Nasserist Egypt. Moreover, Cairo perceived the British protectorate system in the Gulf and the Arab sheikhdoms as Britain's soft underbelly, susceptible to pan-Arab rhetoric and threat. Iranian–Egyptian differences culminated in the period 1960–7, following Iran's confirmation of its relations with Israel.

Egypt's Policy on the Naming of the Gulf

While Iraq's focus on Gulf issues arose from its geopolitical situation and rivalry with Iran, Egypt's Gulf policy was rather an offshoot of the two issues of foremost importance for its national security: its standoff with Britain and the Arab–Israeli conflict.

Egypt's Gulf policy began to take shape in the mid-1950s, and included blunt 'anti-imperialist' and 'anti-reactionary' rhetoric. The Persian Gulf shores soon became a focus for the anti-British propaganda emanating from Cairo. As the conservative Gulf emirates were British protégés, the rhetoric aimed at them also picked up an 'anti-reactionary' flavour. This became unsettling for Tehran. Egypt's propaganda was mainly intended to apply pressure to Britain and open a new front in its conflict with the British. It also took issue with Britain's customary policy of insulating the Gulf Arabs from Middle East developments and directing their attention toward the Indian subcontinent. The presence of Palestinian refugees in the region as well as Egyptian technicians and schoolteachers, and news of the Suez conflict in 1956, had a profound effect on the whole lower side of the Persian Gulf.

At this stage the Egyptian government was focused on Britain and had yet to directly challenge Iran's status in the Persian Gulf. One important indication of this was the continued use of the term 'Persian Gulf' by Egyptian officials until the early 1960s. During this period Nasser, in pursuit of his pan-Arab goal, frequently used his famous mobilising catchphrase 'from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf' in reference to the so-called 'Arab homeland'.

The Egyptian president also made a historic speech on the anniversary of King Farouk's abdication, on 26 July 1956 at El-Mansheya Square in Alexandria. He announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, saying: 'We shall work so that the Arab homeland may extend from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf.'[89] Nasser gave another important speech in February 1958 at a ceremony in which he and President Shukri al-Quwatli of Syria proclaimed the establishment of the United Arab Republic, saying he hoped that 'the new state will come to include all Arab countries, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf'.[90] Addressing 250,000 Egyptians in Cairo on 22 July 1958, on the sixth anniversary of the coup against King Farouk, Nasser predicted the eventual victory of Arab nationalism 'from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf'.[91]

This catchphrase was a familiar reference in the political literature of the Arab world and the West for many decades following

Nasser. Nejla M. Abu Izzeddin writes: 'Arabs generally think of themselves as one nation, its members exceed one hundred million, its homeland extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf …'[92] French Premier Guy Mollet, aiming to denounce Nasser in a speech in the French National Assembly on 31 July 1956, quoted from a pro-Nasser pamphlet that called for 'efforts to unite the Arab world from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf'.[93] John F. Dulles, then the US Secretary of State, charged Nasser with 'ambition to extend his influence from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf'.[94]

Anwar Sadat, Nasser's confidant and his successor, in his book *Revolt on the Nile* (1957), identified the Persian Gulf by its standard name. In one of a few references to the Gulf, he writes: 'The War [World War II] was a partial revolution and Egypt feels it; the country whose political horizon now embraces the whole Arab world, from the Persian Gulf to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean …'[95]

There was even a street in Cairo named after the Persian Gulf up to the early 1960s, when it was changed. The street name plate was inscribed *'al-Khaleej al-Faresi'* ('Persian Gulf') on the right, and was later changed to a different name, though it still read – in smaller letters – 'formerly Persian Gulf Street' on the left.[96]

The Shah's confirmation in an interview of Iran's *de facto* recognition of Israel on 24 July 1960 tipped the balance and opened a new page in Iran's already tense relations with pan-Arab nationalists. It drew swift and passionate condemnation by Egypt and a few other Arab countries, despite the Shah's emphasis that this did not represent a new development, and that Iran had recognised Israel eleven years earlier. Hostile tactics multiplied. Nasser announced on 26 July that Cairo had broken off diplomatic relations with Iran. He made a caustic personal attack on the Shah, whom he described as having 'sold himself to imperialism and Zionism'.[97] The UAR unsuccessfully attempted to convince other Arab states to break with Iran.[98] However, the Arab League declared a boycott against Iran on 8 August.[99]

This episode was a decisive moment in the Gulf naming dispute. It should be noted that Egypt used the term 'Arabian Gulf' only after its relations with Iran sank to their lowest point. While Iraq had

formally adopted the term 'Arabian Gulf' almost two years earlier, it was Nasser who promoted it to the Arab world.

Other tactics already used by pan-Arabists were quickly adopted by Egypt as well. They included changing Khuzestan to 'Arabistan', claiming it as part of the Arab world and beginning to draw parallels between 'Iranian immigration to the Gulf states and the Zionists' earlier immigration to Palestine'.[100] The Egyptians also warned the Gulf sheikhs, mostly through harsh radio broadcasting, about Iran's 'master plan' to take over their lands through immigration.

From this point on and for seven years, Iranian–Egyptian ties continued to deteriorate. The Yemeni civil war, which broke out in 1962, worsened the contention between Iran and the pan-Arab nationalists. Iran and Saudi Arabia actively opposed Egyptian intervention in Yemen as part of Nasser's designs on the Gulf. They considered his troop deployment to Yemen as an attempt to establish a foothold on the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf, and as a threat to oil export shipping via the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Iran, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, helped by Israel, contributed to the defeat of the Egyptian military efforts, which ultimately failed; the failure was followed by Nasser's calamitous defeat in June 1967. Nasser's adventure in close proximity to the Gulf alarmed conservative emirs in the region and cast further suspicion on pan-Arabism. Consequently, the Yemen civil war episode was also important in the sense that it strengthened Iran's position and mollified moderate Arabs, encouraging them to close ranks with Iran – a development that challenged pan-Arabism at its very core.

In the final analysis, the impact of Nasserist Egypt was minimal in the Gulf region, and – apart from ephemeral effects in Bahrain and Kuwait – Nasserism failed to grow any roots in those societies or initiate any long-term efforts from the Arab population of the Gulf. However, Nasser, along with Qasim of Iraq, set a rhetorical agenda for Arab nationalists and conservatives alike – including the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' – that they have been unable to ignore ever since.

Egypt's conclusive defeat in 1967, among other developments, led Nasser to gradually modify its radical policy in the Arab world

and towards Iran. He toned down his rhetoric against the Shah and abandoned the chronic references to the 'Iranian threat' that lay at the centre of Egypt's pre-1967 propaganda in the Gulf. As a result, the two countries resumed diplomatic relations under Nasser's watch in August 1970, about one month before his death. Friendly relations between Iran and Egypt subsequently reached a pinnacle in the second half of the 1970s, to the extent that a 'Tehran–Cairo strategic alliance' could be spoken of.[101]

Egypt's gradual policy shift coincided with Britain's announcement of its departure from East of Suez. The process was eased following the liquidation of Iran's claim to Bahrain, paving the way for Cairo to submit to Tehran's desire for 'outside forces' to leave the Persian Gulf to its littoral states. While its competition with Iraq continued unabated, as a face-saving solution Egypt agreed to pretend that it was passing on to Saudi Arabia the torch of safeguarding Arabism in the Gulf.[102] Then came the coup in 1968 in Baghdad, and Iraq's subsequent activity against Sadat's approach towards a settlement with Israel; this, together with Iran's policy in the Gulf, found Tehran and Cairo on the same side in opposition to Iraq. Later, on the issue of the islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, Egypt adopted an impartial line. In exchange, Tehran agreed to distance itself from Israel and support the Arab cause more vocally. At the same time, these developments allowed the Shah to tip the balance in the Gulf in favour of conservative forces, and thus isolate radicals – including Ba'thist Iraq.

The Ba'thist coup in Iraq and rapidly improving ties between Iran and Egypt, including material help from Iran to Egypt during the 1973 Arab–Israeli war,[103] created two diverging tracks in Iranian–Arab relations. On the other hand, relations between Iran and Iraq deteriorated. Iran denounced the 1937 agreement on the Shatt al-Arab waterway following Iraq's ultimatum in 1969, preventing Iran's flagship from sailing through that waterway. This episode brought the two countries to the edge of war.

These political developments had a noticeable impact on Egyptian policy regarding Gulf nomenclature. As John Marlowe

maintains, the failure of Nasserism showed that 'the term "Arabian Gulf" represented, not the shadow of an impending reality, but the ghost of a lost cause'.[104] Under the new circumstances, the term 'Persian Gulf' began to reappear in parts of the Egyptian media, and officials adopted a flexible policy on it. According to a report sent by the Iranian embassy in Cairo to the foreign ministry, an article written by Zakaria Nil and published by the partly state-owned newspaper *al-Ahram* praises Iran as a 'neighbouring brotherly and friendly country for the Arabs' and declares that 'its approach during the crises the Arabs faced is considered ideal and good'. The writer then points to 'the sensitivity of Iran about the name "Persian Gulf" ' and asks whether 'disagreement on geographical names is considered a vital issue and whether the naming of the "Persian Gulf" as "Persian Gulf" or "Arabian Gulf" is the show of hostility and aggression on the part of one towards the other'. He continues: 'Geographical names cannot contain political or regional signs and intentions … whether we attribute the Gulf to Iran or Arabs, such nomenclature cannot establish any political rights for one party or deprive or reduce the right of the other.' He concludes that 'it is in the interest of Iran and the Arabs to resolve this issue and prevent others from expanding it'.[105]

In another article published by *al-Ahram* on the 'Arab Homeland', both the terms 'Gulf' and 'Persian Gulf' are used, as reported by Iran's embassy in Cairo and forwarded by the foreign ministry to the Prime Minister's Office.[106] Likewise, the weekly *al-Watan*, published in Cairo, ran an article titled 'The Fight between Communism and Democracy in the Middle East and Africa' in which the term 'Persian Gulf' was used; this was reflected in a report forwarded by the Iranian foreign ministry to the Prime Minister's Office.[107] There is also an interview with Iranian Prime Minister A. A. Hoveyda, published in *al-Ahram*, in which both interviewer and interviewee use the term 'Persian Gulf'.[108]

At official levels, there were also indications that the Egyptian authorities had softened their position on the issue. A report from Iran's embassy in Islamabad indicates that the issue of creating an 'Arabian News Agency' was raised by the Iranian ambassador in a farewell luncheon offered by the Pakistani ambassador on the eve of

his departure. This had given rise to a discussion of this issue. At this meeting, the Egyptian ambassador supported the use of the name 'Persian Gulf' and considered it to be a historical reality.[109]

The Gulf Arab Littorals and Arab Moderates

The Arab sheikhs of the lower Persian Gulf and Arab moderates agreed belatedly and reluctantly to abandon the use of the Gulf's traditional name. For a while, during the 1960s, they continued to refer to it as the 'Persian Gulf'. Evidence of this fact abounds. One example is the correspondence between the Emir of Kuwait and the British Political Resident on 19 June 1961 that is the basis of Kuwait's independence; in it, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used.[110] King Faisal of Saudi Arabia paid a visit to Tehran on 8 December 1965, during which the two countries began discussing a strategy whose objective was 'the security and political future of the Persian Gulf', as mentioned in the joint statement.[111]

Faisal bin Salman Al Saud writes of an era in Gulf politics when the foreign minister of an Arab country such as Kuwait could refer publicly to the 'Persian Gulf', as when he said: 'Under no circumstances will we accept the continued presence of British military forces in the Persian Gulf.'[112] In the documents that paved the way for the independence of Bahrain, the government of that country – though reluctantly – agreed to use the traditional term 'Persian Gulf'.[113] A combination of the environment created by the British protectorate system and pressure from Arab nationalists in the 1960s gradually induced the Gulf's sheikhs to adopt the term 'Gulf' or 'Arabian Gulf', sporadically at first.

They have always been influenced by global currents emanating from first Britain and then the US, as well as regional currents stemming from the major power in the region, i.e., Iran, then Arab nationalists and moderate Arabs. Globally, the Arab emirates were heavily influenced by, and benefited from, two policies of aimed at containing Iran, enforced by the UK up to 1971 and after 1992 by the US. Containment by Britain ended in 1971, along with Britain's

protectorate system in the lower Persian Gulf following the British withdrawal from East of Suez.[114] British policy, which sought to shield the sheikhs, included at least a hands-off approach towards the rhetorical aspects of pan-Arabism, allowing the emirs latitude to pay lip-service to it by adopting some of its harmless mottos. It was a way, as explained earlier, to please the pan-Arabists without cost when it came to British interests in the area. Moreover, this approach could benefit the Iran-containment policy.

The containment planned and enforced by the US began in 1992, following Saddam Hussein's disastrous adventure in Kuwait. In both cases, the United States sought (and continues to seek) to contain Iran by, among other things, isolating it within the region and keeping the small Arab states from interacting with it in a serious way.

During the twenty-one-year interval between the two containment policies, the Gulf was left to itself, with no global power able or considering it necessary to intervene. With the US engaged in the Vietnam War, the Shah was strong enough until the late 1970s to secure the Gulf. Moreover, during this period no Arab state – Egypt included – was inclined to accede to a US request for bases on its territory. An 'over the horizon' US military presence, 'out of Arab sight except in an emergency', was the only option Gulf Arab states were prepared to discuss in the 1970s and 1980s, owing to the strategic alliance between the US and Israel.[115] Other important factors thwarted moderate Arabs from providing military-base rights to the US: the dynamism created by Iran's Islamic Revolution in the region and its inspirational impact on existing social and political forces; the degree of animosity between Iran and the US in the 1980s; and the global bipolar system.

The opportunity provided by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, coupled with the end of the Cold War, put an abrupt end to the above considerations and drastically changed the situation. Base rights for the US, and a military presence in the region, continued following the ejection of Iraq from Kuwait. Among other effects, this backed up what was known as the 'dual containment policy' against Iran and Iraq. As Iraq was already devastated and subject to crippling,

comprehensive sanctions, the US presence meant to challenge Iran's ascendancy in the Gulf, which flowed primarily from natural attributes such as its history, population, economy and geopolitics, as well as human resources. Consequently, a new period set in after the Kuwait war, characterised after 1992 by a 'second containment policy'. This gave some latitude to the Gulf's Arab littorals, creating space for them to drum up the Arabism of the Gulf.

The second important factor influencing the attitude of the Arab emirs *vis-à-vis* Iran was the pan-Arab current. The Gulf policy that Iraq conducted for forty-five years up to 2003, and Egypt's Gulf policy for about fifteen years up to the late 1960s, included efforts aimed at undermining Iran's relations with Gulf Arab sheikhs while posing as the latter's potential saviour. Trying to polarise Iran and the Arabs and isolating Iran in the Arab world (including the Gulf) was a major component of Iraq and Egypt's Gulf policies in said periods, as discussed earlier.

Apart from the individual undertakings of Egypt and Iraq with the Gulf states, the Arab League – dominated by pan-Arabist governments – was also an important vehicle for bringing pressure to bear on the emirates. On 13–14 July 1964, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, having sent personal messages to their rulers, led the 'League Commission to the Emirates of the Arab Gulf'. Although the aid offered by the League was rejected by the emirates under British pressure,[116] continued intervention by the Arab League helped advance Iraqi and Egyptian policies.

Some internal, confidential reports shed light on the understanding of the then-Iranian government of the role of the Arab League on the issues at hand, and the whole Gulf naming controversy. A report by the Persian Gulf Department within Iran's foreign ministry, sent to the Prime Minister's Office, reads:

> From the first Arab League session in 1964 in Cairo, the Persian Gulf became more important for the Arab governments and they decided to pay more attention to the issues related to this body of water and its surrounding areas. They directed the bulk of their propaganda towards Iran and Britain. The themes they develop

> in their propaganda consist mainly of focusing on the claim that Iran and Britain conspire to keep the Gulf Arabs backward, impede their progress, expel Arabs from their homeland and replace them with Iranian immigrants. They also accused 'some Arab sheikhs' of behaving according to Britain's and Iran's wishes by showing hostility towards other Arabs, trying to bar the penetration of any Arab nationalist feeling into the Gulf area and refusing to allow the huge oil revenue to be spent for the welfare of all Arabs. This propaganda campaign originates essentially from Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus, and some other Arab capitals felt obligated to follow suit and relay them. Following the said Arab League meeting, an Arab league delegation consisting of representatives from Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia visited the Gulf Sheikhdoms. The delegation proposed technical assistance to them and the Arab League allocated 7.5 million dollars to this end … Iraq invited the sheikhs to Baghdad … Saudis, though, did not agree with the Egyptian policy of intervening in the Gulf and refused to finance this programme.[117]

Farhad Nikoukhah, Deputy Minister for Information, following a trip to Kuwait, reported the following:

> The Arab League and its propaganda organisation, which receives a budget of around 480 million Rials [around 7 million dollars at the time] from Kuwait and Sheikhdoms, is tasked with, among other things, countering Iran's propaganda within and without Arab countries. For this League, Iran and Israel are the same as to their hostility towards the Arabs, and the penetration of Egyptian, Syrian and Palestinian elements in this League, makes Kuwait, which is the main treasurer, cautious *vis-à-vis* Iran's propaganda.[118]

The perceived strength of pan-Arabism in the 1950s and 60s, and its ostensible prevalence throughout the Arab world, had an impact on moderate Arab rulers. These included the vulnerable, small emirates of the Gulf, which saw no alternative to coordinating with Cairo and Baghdad. The more-Arab-than-thou rhetoric that pan-Arab governments used exercised considerable pressure on the emirs of the Persian Gulf. It caught them in a crossfire between, on one hand, the exigencies of a policy of sensible cordiality with the big neighbouring state, whether under a monarchical regime or an Islamist revolutionary

one, and, on the other hand, embracing the rhetoric of the 'Arabism' of the Gulf as preached by their fellow Arabs. Since the mid-twentieth century, this crossfire has been an important influence on the political destiny of moderate Arabs. Such a difficult situation finally brought them to consent to and give in some features of the rhetoric, while trying to resist others.

Arab moderates did, more or less, resist the pressure to break with Iran's royal government and give way to the policy of polarisation between Arabs and Iranians in order to isolate Iran. Yet they generally found it difficult to ignore all pan-Arab tactics and rhetoric. Although it was not acceptable for the emirs to participate in an anti-Iranian Arab front sought by Egypt and Iraq, oppose the British presence in the area or incorporate revolutionary reforms advocated by radicals, they had no option but to pay lip service to these things – including the rhetorical aspects of the policy, such as the 'Arabism of the Gulf'. This was the minimum concession in the face of a strong and aggressive pan-Arabist camp. By such means the British policy of condoning pan-Arabist rhetoric, as explained earlier, helped create some wiggle room for the emirs.

Plenty of documents point to the pressure moderate Arabs felt from radicals on issues such as the Gulf's name. A report from the Iranian embassy in Amman, Jordan, to the foreign ministry warns that 'the issue of the nomenclature of the Persian Gulf and its changing into the Arabian Gulf, which has recently gained currency in Arab countries and Arab emirates, is important and requires attention'. The report continues:

> This move, which is contrary to all historical norms and flies in the face of all logic, has even been taken up by some Jordanian papers, despite this country's close relationship with us. … This move began when Nasser and Qasim took power. Other Arab countries, either out of fear or to please these two leaders, took the same way, and follow them, despite being aware of the wrong way they are taking. I raised this issue with Mr Wasfi al-Tal, the Prime Minister [of Jordan], he said, 'The Jordanian Government wishes to fulfil the wish of the royal Government [of Iran], but unfortunately, given the venomous propaganda by Nasser's and

> Qasim's regimes, we can't currently ignore the Arabs' common interests and call the Gulf by its real name, i.e. the Persian Gulf. Now that we cooperate with them they call us 'colonised', 'traitor' and 'valet', guess what would happen, had we refused to cooperate with them and, for example, contrary to their wish, used the term 'Persian Gulf' instead of 'Arabian Gulf'.[119]

Mohammad Reza Amir-Teymour, Director of the First Political Department in Iran's foreign ministry, reported on his meeting with the Kuwaiti foreign minister in Kuwait, quoting him as saying:

> A few years ago, in a meeting in New York, I discussed this issue [the name of the Persian Gulf] with the Iranian Foreign Minister. I expressed my view stating that we'd better not pay much attention to this issue; and each party [should] call the Gulf as it wishes. We call it the Arabian Gulf and you call it the Persian Gulf. But, unfortunately, the Iranian authority continues to insist on employing 'the Persian Gulf'.

According to the report, Amir-Teymour replied:

> The use of 'Kuwait – the Arabian Gulf' by the Kuwaiti Government as its international address has hurt the feeling of the Iranians. It is obvious that Kuwait is an internationally well-known country and it does not need to have an address pinpointing its location, as one never hears of 'Britain by the British Channel' or 'France beside Italy'. The foreign Minister said: 'What can we do? This is a decision taken by the Arab League, and we have no choice but to follow it.'[120]

The report, annexed to Amir-Teymour's letter submitted following his trip to Kuwait, reads in part: 'The skilful propaganda by Egypt resulted in the revival of the feelings of the Arabs and, because of this, the Arab leaders, out of fear of clashing with Arab public opinion, which would jeopardise their interests, like it or not, are obliged to follow Egypt in many areas.'[121] He continues:

> The Egyptian Government aims to hit two targets with one shot: 'the Arab unity' and 'Arab homeland'. On the one hand, by

> raising issues such as changing the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Gulf, the Egyptian government tries to drive a wedge between Iran and Kuwait and other Arab sheikhdoms. On the other, through provocation and propaganda, it tries to harass the Iranians [living in the Arab coast of the Gulf] and have them expelled, thereby further distancing Iran and Kuwait from each other and destroying the principal core of resistance against the Egyptians.[122]

With the same constraint that Arab moderates faced, the Iranian embassy in Amman reported that 'newspapers, while reporting the Shah's interview, referred to the Persian Gulf as the Arabian Gulf and the embassy protested against this action'. The embassy further explained: 'Jordanian officials are obliged to be cautious with regard to the propaganda apparatus of the United Arab Republic, and in their statements they usually simply use the shortened "Gulf" or use the name "Shatt al-Arab" instead. For example, King Hussein recently used the expression "from the Atlantic Ocean to the Shatt al-Arab".'[123]

Pan-Arabists' widespread activities, supported financially and politically by pan-Arabist governments, succeeded also in establishing local political and social bases in the emirates and in Arab countries, further tying the moderates' hands. Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians living and working in the Gulf's Arab littorals, including in government agencies, and locals recruited by pan-Arabists, played an important role in forming these bases – either out of conviction or financial interest. Nikoukhah, following a trip to Kuwait, wrote in his report:

> The Kuwaiti Ministry of Guidance, which controls propaganda tools in the country, is now dominated by Egyptian and Palestinian experts. This Ministry is being developed by these experts who are obedient to the Egyptian propaganda organisations. Eighteen Egyptian and Palestinian experts continue to hold sensitive posts in this Ministry, and many of the employees therein are trained in Egypt. In recent years, the influence of the Egyptian propaganda organisation over the Kuwaiti media has been enormous, to the point that the Kuwaiti Minister for Guidance in his recent visit to Tehran explicitly admitted that 'There are newspapers whose articles are drafted abroad and published in Kuwait.'[124]

In the same report, he refers to the preparation and printing of all Kuwaiti textbooks being entrusted to the Egyptian Ministry of Education, resulting in students being directly exposed to Egyptian propaganda – historical realities mostly distorted to suit the wishes of Cairo – and in Egyptian teachers trying to identify Iran and Israel as the same. Nikoukhah continues:

> The Kuwaiti youth using maps printed in Cairo are not familiar with the term Persian Gulf. In Kuwait many institutions, companies, streets and schools are named 'Arabian Gulf' and even in some cases the formal letterhead includes the term Arabian Gulf. This is an impediment in the way of developing cultural relationships between our two countries. Kuwaiti officials even consider it better to use the word 'Gulf' in bilateral negotiations, which is neither reasonable nor acceptable. Difficulties also include reference to the term 'Arabian Gulf' in all newspapers and, therefore, Iranian airlines and commercial companies cannot publish their ads in these papers and build closer relationships with them. Egypt's influence in some Arab countries, including Kuwait, is a major difficulty in the way of Iran's activities.[125]

The memo by the Iranian press attaché in Kuwait sent to the foreign ministry reports the banning of the bulletin of the Iranian embassy in Kuwait for featuring an article titled 'The Persian Gulf', in which, according to the report, 'irrefutable historical evidence on the nomenclature of the Gulf' was presented. It explains that the bulletin had been published fifteen days before Kuwait's Independence Day anniversary. According to the report, the press attaché heard from the Minister for Guidance that the government had not ordered the banning of the bulletin, but 'some journalists from a few newspapers went to the print house and threatened that if it continued printing the Iranian bulletin, they'd boycott it'. In the same report, the press attaché refers to four or five newspapers in Kuwait, such as *al-Resala*, *al-Taleea* and *Akhbar al-Kuwait*, that are 'tools of the Nasserist faction in Kuwait, and their circulation doesn't exceed 400–500'.[126]

In none of the periods covered do we witness any consistent and analogous policy adopted by all the emirates in their dealings with

Iran. Their positions towards Iran and their receptivity towards pan-Arabist propaganda and activities extended across a wide spectrum, from the most lenient to the most stringent. As in the examples above and for the reason referred to below, the degree of hostility displayed in Kuwait in the 1960s against anything Persian or Iranian – especially the term 'Persian Gulf' – was unparalleled among those so-called moderate Arab states, including all lower Gulf Arab entities. For instance, Kuwaiti banks issued an announcement to Kuwaiti businessmen in June 1965 informing them that, while opening letters of credit, they should do their best to avoid using the term 'Persian Gulf' (and to use it only when they were obliged to). In the past, banks had informed businessmen that if they used the term 'Persian Gulf', their requests would be rejected.[127] In another case, a shipment to Kuwait affixed with a postage stamp displaying a map of Iran with the Persian Gulf designated as such was returned.[128] The term 'Persian Gulf' was forbidden on goods, bills of lading, letters and any other documents, 'Arabian Gulf' being deemed acceptable. Later, sea-going vessels were turned back from Kuwaiti shores if they happened to produce a cargo bill bearing the name 'Persian Gulf'.[129]

Sometimes the stringent measures adopted by Kuwait took an amusing turn: Paul Balles, a journalist, recalls in an article that, 'returning from a holiday to Kuwait, a customs officer insisted that I black out the Persian Gulf from a map in my luggage and replace it with Arabian Gulf before he allowed the map to pass customs'.[130]

Overall, the Gulf's emirs and many other Arab moderates adopted, to different degrees and with different levels of enthusiasm, the term 'Arabian Gulf'. Some also agreed to help bankroll, at times, pan-Arabist activities and the project to 'save the Gulf's Arabism'. As depicted above, Kuwait was an extreme case where Egyptians, Iraqis, Palestinians and Syrians, forming a strong pan-Arabist lobby, enjoyed enormous influence and a free hand – mostly because Kuwait had been a weak independent country since 1961, and Britain was not in a position to shield it from pan-Arabist penetration as much as in the case of the Gulf's other emirates. Moreover, the independent status Kuwait enjoyed made it more susceptible to pressure from

the Arab League, which followed a pan-Arabist agenda due to the influence of its pan-Arabist caucus.

At the time when Britain was pushing the nine emirates – the seven Trucial Coast Sheikhdoms plus Bahrain and Qatar (excluding Kuwait) – to form a federation, the deputy rulers of Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai held a meeting in Dubai on 22–25 May 1965, in which they approved, among other things, the creation of an Arabian Gulf currency to replace the Indian rupee. The idea had been initiated by Abu Dhabi.[131] On 7–8 July 1965, in Dubai, the text of the Arabian Gulf Currency Agreement was agreed on and signed by the rulers of the four emirates present at the May meeting. Representatives of the five other states attended all the remaining sessions. This agreement soon failed as a result of the Shah of Iran's angry reaction to the news of the signing. Not only did he opposed the term 'Arabian Gulf Currency', but also rejected any currency with which Bahrain was associated. Using the Shah's objections as an excuse, Sheikh Ahmed bin Ali Al Thani of Qatar withdrew from the agreement.[132] The British Foreign Office stuck to its old policy on the Persian Gulf nomenclature in this episode, as witnessed in 'Persian Gulf currency minutes' and relevant letters on the subject.[133]

In another development, a conference of information ministers from all the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, held in Abu Dhabi in January 1976, decided to establish an 'Arabian Gulf News Agency'. Iran's well-known and firm opposition to any name other than the traditional 'Persian Gulf' produced vigorous protest in Tehran, coupled with a warning by its foreign minister that Iran would review its relations with all countries that adopted 'this unfriendly act against us'. On 7 January 1976, Tehran recalled its ambassadors from those countries, and the Iranian foreign minister said that Iran 'will not accept the change in the historic name of the Persian Gulf under any circumstances'.[134] In one way or another several Arab countries backed down, but the result was to leave the final decision on the matter in abeyance.[135] The incident revealed how the Gulf naming dispute could complicate matters in the area.

In the 1960s, a number of Arab countries, controlled or propelled by pan-Arabist lobbies, moved to outlaw use of the term 'Persian Gulf', instead making 'Arabian Gulf' obligatory in their countries and in their communications with outsiders. By 1968, all Gulf Arab states, including the emirates, had passed laws or issued decrees to that effect.[136] This was the first step in their efforts to internationalise the new term, at first timidly and, later in the 1990s, aggressively.

In the 1970s, in close alliance with the post-1968 Iraqi Ba'thist regime, Abu Dhabi played an important role in propagating 'Arabian Gulf'. Relations between the emirate and the republic survived the developments that followed the Islamic Revolution in Iran, continuing through the Iran–Iraq War until the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime in April 2003. The Iraqi operational and propaganda machine, in association with the money the UAE provided, was intended to prove decisive in furthering anti-Iran policies in the region and beyond. The Iraqi–Abu Dhabi axis proved useful in projecting the term 'Arabian Gulf' into Western media, business, political and academic quarters, counting on its sympathetic lobby in the West.

Pan-Arabist ideology subsided, and its main proponents became discredited following Nasser's debacle in 1967 and Saddam's invasion of a fellow Arab country in 1991. However, the term 'Arabian Gulf' persisted. There are, nevertheless, some voices of moderation. In December 2009, Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Khalid Bin Hamad al-Khalifa, said that 'the issue should not be overplayed', and that it was 'only about a body of water. I have heard a variety of names, such as Arabian Gulf, Gulf of the Arabs, Persian Gulf, etc. It is just a body of water.'[137] Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, member of the UAE's Supreme Council and ruler of Sharjah, addressed the opening session of an international conference called 'The Gulf in Modern Times: People, Ports and History' on 17 March 2009. He said: 'The Gulf was called by many names in the past, including "Sea of Persia", "Arabian Gulf" or "Persian Gulf". I really like to call it the "Green Gulf"'.[138]

The following story shows the existence of two different approaches in a single Arab country: a stringent versus a moderate view about the Gulf naming issue. In 2010, a senior Kuwaiti minister

came under fire from a lawmaker over the use of term 'Persian Gulf' instead of 'Arabian Gulf' in a booklet issued by the ministry's statistics bureau. 'The booklet included statistics about Kuwait in 2010 as well as pictures and the map of the State of Kuwait,' Waleed al-Tabtabai, a Member of Parliament, said in his note to Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, State Minister for Social Development and State Minister for Housing. 'The map in English had "Persian Gulf" instead of "Arabian Gulf". The map was also posted on the website of the Statistics Bureau. Has there been an investigation into the use of such a name by a government agency? And if so, what are the outcome and the legal action taken against those who are responsible?' In the same way, in June 2010, the country's education minister came under pressure after a college dean took part in a forum that referred to the 'Persian Gulf'. The same Member of Parliament stated: 'The participation of the dean in the forum under this name means that he supports referring to the Gulf as the "Persian Gulf", and this is a challenge to Kuwait.'[139]

Notes

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Chapter Five
The Legal Status of Geographical Names: The Case of the Persian Gulf

It is increasingly apparent that the consistent, regular use of standardised geographical names is an indispensable prerequisite for effective communication across the globe. For all those who deal with the Earth's surface – e.g. armies, government agencies, media outlets, postal services, navigators, businesspeople – geographical names are an essential part of collecting and communicating information effectively. Modern means of communication and the immense progress achieved in the media have also expanded the use of toponyms significantly. Uniquely identified, unambiguous, nationally endorsed and internationally recognised place names are vital to supporting socio-economic sustainable development, environmental management and safe navigation.

Consequently, a body of compulsory and recommendatory law and regulations at national and international levels has been developing since the late nineteenth century. This chapter takes a brief look at the relevant organisations in order to better understand the Gulf naming dispute. The activities of these national and international bodies are important for the issue at hand, as they either deal directly with the term 'Persian Gulf' or have potential impact on the dispute through the way they approach name standardisation.

The Standardisation of Geographical Names

For a geographic entity to be uniquely identified, its designation must be without any ambiguity. This is the goal of geographical

name standardisation. According to the UN, 'standardization is the prescription or the recommendation of a particular graphic form or forms for application to a given feature, as well as the conditions of employment of that form or forms'.[1]

As defined by the 'Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names', international name standardisation consists of:

> … activity aimed at reaching maximum practical uniformity in the rendering – oral and written – of all geographical names on earth (and, in a wider sense, of toponyms of extraterrestrial features), by means of national standardization and/or international convention, including the correspondence between different languages and writing systems.[2]

One practical interpretation holds that standardisation is an effort to ensure that all place names and their associated attributes are accurate, and that there can be little if any confusion about their spellings, locations and official status in a given country. Another relevant UN term is 'standardized name'. It means 'a name sanctioned by an officially or legally constituted entity as the preferred name'.[3]

The need for place-name standardisation, felt throughout history, assumed greater importance in the late nineteenth century. Since then, there has been increasing recognition that international rivalry among the proponents of different names for a given geographical feature can create confusion, misunderstandings and even conflict. Unregulated or casual naming can result, for example, in the use of similar names for different geographical features, or the multiple naming of one specific feature by different authorities or in different languages.

Given the importance of toponyms, governments and multilateral organisations felt a growing need to intervene. This led gradually to the establishment of bodies at national and international levels to advise and facilitate coordination. There are now naming authorities in many countries, and standardisation bodies established by intergovernmental organisations. Their main goals are for each feature to have a unique name written a specific way. Their activities provide a general basis for setting technical rules and procedures

for treating the names of geographical features beyond a single sovereignty.

National Name Standardisation Organisations

In view of the importance and usefulness of regulating or standardising geographical names, national authorities attach importance to ensuring their consistency. Many governments have set policies relevant to the study of place names and, to different extents, regulating them in their respective countries. As a result, more than fifty nations have some type of national names authority.

The first session of the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) was held in Geneva in 1967. Its recommendations encouraged countries that had not already done so to bring order to geographical names. Each national naming authority is given the responsibility to standardise geographical names for government, other national entities and ordinary citizens. The decisions of a national names agency have bearing only on the relevant country. However, such decisions have a long-term impact on the name-standardising trend.

The status of place names from a legal perspective varies considerably. In some countries geographical names are protected by law to the point that they cannot be changed, at least in formal documents, unless appropriate procedures are followed in accordance with respective national law. However, domestic laws stop at borders and cannot necessarily be applied to geographical features that transcend national borders.

In view of the great contribution that national place names boards have so far made to names standardisation, the works of a number of these agencies will be considered in Chapter Six.

International Name Standardisation Organisations

Although the need for standardisation of place names was felt many centuries ago, the first concrete proposal for a worldwide system

of standardisation was made at the end of the nineteenth century by a German geographer, Albrecht Penck. In 1891, at the Fifth International Geographical Congress in Bern, Penck put forward the idea of a world map to the millionth scale, which would include standardised geographical names.[4]

The United Nations, at an early stage of its existence, identified geographical names as one of the areas likely to cause confusion and even conflict among nations. Accordingly, it established bodies to advise it in this regard. Soon the UN developed an international system designed to foster standardised place names, which includes the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), the Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and other, smaller bodies. The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) also covers some aspects of toponymic activity within the UN system.

In the 1948 session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the issue of standardising geographical names was raised – especially with regard to UN cartographic services. A proposal to form a UN group capable of addressing the issues of geographical names in their written form was considered at the First Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and Pacific in 1955, and resulted in the UNGEGN by ECOSOC resolution 715A (XXVII), on 23 April 1959. This resolution intended to encourage nations to become involved in geographical name standardisation. The group requested that the UN Secretary General encourage and provide guidance to nations that had no national agency for the standardisation of geographical names, helping them to establish such agencies. Another request was to ensure the functioning of a central clearinghouse for geographical names, including collecting gazetteers and collecting and disseminating information concerning the technical procedures adopted by member states for standardisation of domestic names. The Secretary General was also asked to set up a small group of experts to consider technical problems of domestic standardisation.[5]

Based on the work of this ad hoc group in New York in June 1960, and upon further consultation with member states,

ECOSOC approved, in 1964, the decision to establish UNCSGN, a periodic intergovernmental conference that aims to facilitate the standardisation of geographical names. The United Nations Statistical Commission organises this conference, which held its first session in 1967 in Geneva. Sessions have been held at five-year intervals since then, at the UN in New York or in a different location. Members of the participating delegations are mainly geographical-name experts from various countries. The most recent conference – the tenth – was held in New York in 2012.

The group of experts invited to help prepare for the conference finalised, during a meeting in March 1966, the specific objectives of the conference. Among them, 18 (d) and 18 (h) fall within the scope of this book:

> 18 (d) Identification of topics, areas and categories of names which currently merit further study, and formulation of principles relating to international standardization;
>
> 18 (h) Identification and discussion of categories of names of features extending beyond the sovereignty of a single country, e.g. oceans, rivers, mountains, undersea features etc., and examination of possibilities of standardization.[6]

The main goal of UNCSGN and UNGEGN is to foster the establishment of national programmes for standardising geographical names, and to promote the consistent use of nationally standardised names at the international level. UNCSGN adopts resolutions that could lead to effective communication, with resulting economic and social benefit. The conference also recognises that there is a link between the necessity for the international standardisation of names for oceanic and undersea areas, as well as the promotion of navigational safety.[7]

UNCSGN, at its second session in 1972, decided to formalise UNGEGN as one of the seven standing expert bodies of ECOSOC to carry forward the programme of cooperation between the sessions of the conferences. UNGEGN has, since 1960, met biennially. The UNGEGN forum gathers a network of technical specialists from

the public and private sectors (cartographers, geographers, planners, geographical information systems specialists, language and linguistics experts), who follow up resolutions of the UNCSGN and ensure continuity of activity among them. UNGEGN experts have the opportunity to discuss the technical, cultural and political issues related to the process of standardising names for government and public use.[8]

The UNGEGN works under the supervision of the UNCSGN, receives secretarial assistance from the UN Statistics Division and is tasked with implementing UN and related naming programmes. It is composed not of national delegates, but of experts representing divisions consisting of individual countries and groups of countries with languages or regions in common. The UNGEGN has twenty-three geographical and linguistic divisions, including Arabic (Arab countries) and Southwest Asia (including Iran), and twelve working groups and special task forces working on different topics. Within the UNGEGN, working groups have been established to deal with particular issues.[9]

These two entities soon became two forums for countries to discuss issues relating to geographic names; identify problems and seek solutions; promote their views; encourage the standardisation of national and international geographical names; disseminate nationally standardised naming protocols at the international level; and resolve differences without conflict. UNCSGN adopted 195 resolutions in its first nine sessions.[10] In its tenth session in 2012, a further eleven resolutions were adopted.[11]

National and divisional representatives participating in UN conferences submit papers on agenda items; already these total several hundred. Thirteen organisations involved with place names attend most of its sessions. UNSCGN has so far issued eight resolutions directly related to the naming of undersea and maritime features beyond a single sovereignty. In order to decide on the international standardisation of the names of international waters, the UNGEGN established a Working Group on Maritime and Undersea Feature Names at the outset, which cooperates with the IHO.

Pursuant to Resolution 22 of the Second UN Conference, the UNGEGN studied existing national and international practices relating to the delimitation and naming of oceans and seas and their subdivisions beyond national jurisdictions, with a view to recommending improvements in existing nomenclatural practices and procedures.

International standardisation is achieved by encouraging the establishment of national authorities and the publication of gazetteers, maps and such like for disseminating standardised names; devising transliteration systems for non-Roman scripts; encouraging countries to prepare toponymic guidelines for editors; and assisting developing countries in their efforts towards standardisation. In general, place-name agencies seek international agreement and cooperation on geographic nomenclature, and coordination among national programmes. One of the UN directives, 'one standard name for each named feature', is intended to eliminate confusion about the nature and location of a given feature.[12]

However, UNGEGN, UNCSGN and the IHO are not decision-making bodies; nor are they arbiters of disputes. The statutes of the UNGEGN clearly state, in Article II (3), that questions involving national sovereignty shall not be discussed.[13] These multilateral bodies are not entrusted with making or enforcing nomenclature decisions, or ensuring compliance. UN policy does not allow them to become involved in naming disputes between states on the use or non-use of geographical names; rather, they try to avoid becoming involved in such politically loaded disputes. UNCSGN is thus not an appropriate forum for discussing the naming of individual features. There is a general understanding among member states that this conference lacks a mandate to discuss and decide the name of any particular geographical feature. The UCSGN and UNGEGN are to promote the consistent use worldwide of accurate place names, and the IHO Convention establishes it as a consultative body of a purely technical nature.

As there is a consensus on the right of national authorities to decide on toponyms within their territories, the above applies to

geographical features beyond national borders. Thus it is a common understanding that discussing the naming of such features should be out of the scope of the UNCSGN. Failing to abide by this practice would lead to an undue politicisation of the conference and the committee, and damage their reputation as academic and technical forums.[14] However, it is acceptable practice for countries to submit their points of view to these bodies for the record only.

This did not stop some countries from bringing their cases to the UNCSGN, however. The German Democratic Republic (East Germany), supported by the Soviet Union, strongly objected to the name 'Bundesrepublik Deutschland' in meetings of UNCSGN, demanding (unsuccessfully) the form preferred by East Germany for its western neighbour: 'Deutsche Bundesrepublik'. The case of the 'East Sea' v. the 'Sea of Japan' is another major case that has been raised in the UNCSGN, as shall be explained later.

The case of the Persian Gulf has never been raised and discussed in UNCSGN. However, Iran once submitted a working paper on the name 'Persian Gulf' to the twenty-third session of the UNGEGN, describing its long historical usage and the legal validity of the term.[15] It did not draw any reaction from other participants. The Convener of the Working Group on Exonyms, in which the working paper was presented, recognised the careful historical content of the paper and noted that countries could not be prohibited from using or creating exonyms.[16]

Name Standardisation within and beyond National Sovereignty

UN place-name bodies recognised from the outset that national standardisation is the prerogative of each country, and an essential basis for international standardisation. They have recommended that the international standardisation of geographical names should be based on national standardisation, which is normally performed by national naming authorities. The first UNCSGN recommended the establishment of a national geographical naming authority in each country 'as a first step in the international standardisation of

geographical names'. It is recommended that those countries that have not yet begun to 'exercise their prerogative of standardising their geographical names on a national basis' should do so.[17]

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, each country has territorial waters extending twelve nautical miles under its full sovereignty, measured from the low-water baselines. Beyond this, to a distance of twenty-four nautical miles from the baselines, is the contiguous sea, over which a coastal state may exercise the control necessary to prevent the infringement of laws and regulations within its territory or territorial sea. The sea beyond the territorial waters to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines is the 'exclusive economic zone'. Beyond these limits are international waters or high sea, falling beyond the jurisdiction of any one country.

The standardisation of names of geographical features located outside the jurisdiction of a particular state has been prone to rivalries and controversies. The international standardisation of toponyms concerns several aspects of place names, including the names of all geographical features that are not under the jurisdiction of one particular country. In the technical language of the relevant bodies of the United Nations, these are called 'features extending beyond a single sovereignty'. They cross international boundaries, forming parts of the seas and extending under their surface, or are located on the moon and other planets. Features that are not completely within the jurisdiction of one country or fall within two or more countries are sometimes called 'international features'.

Among trans-boundary features, the naming of bodies of water has always been more controversial than the naming of other features, for four reasons. First, the naming of bodies of water can be more controversial because they are shared spaces, and mostly surrounded by different sovereign territories. Second, seas are sometimes parts of the cultural/historical identity of sovereign territories adjacent to them. Thus it is often difficult for a nation to fail to exert influence over the naming of a sea close to its land. Third, the involvement of a few indigenous names and a small number of contending countries make the dispute more difficult to sort out. Fourth, also there is

sometimes a perceived relationship between claims to sovereignty and naming practice – a regular source of concern throughout history.

In cases where a feature extends beyond the territory of one sovereign state, or is shared by more than one country, the question arises as to which rules and procedures should govern its naming and how the countries concerned can cooperate on its standardisation. The UNSCGN has so far issued eight resolutions relating directly to the naming of maritime and undersea features beyond a single sovereignty. The UNSCGN is not a geographical naming body, nor is it an arbiter of disputes; however, the principles and procedures that it tries to set can help frame this issue.

The first UNSCGN, in its Resolution No. 8 (titled 'Treatment of names of features beyond a single sovereignty'), recognised that 'some features common to, or extending across the frontiers of, two or more nations have more than one name applied to them'. It considers in its first paragraph that 'it is preferable that a common name or a common application be established, wherever practicable, in the interest of international standardization'. In its second paragraph, it 'recommends that the geographical names authorities of the nations concerned attempt to reach agreement on these conflicting names or applications'.[18]

Another important step by the first Conference consisted of recommending that '[R]egional and sub-regional conferences should be held at appropriate intervals to discuss common problems connected with, and to further the standardization of, geographical names.'[19] Finally, Resolution 25 of the Fifth Conference recommends 'those national geographical names authorities that have not yet done so establish with neighbouring authorities joint or interrelated programs for the collection and treatment of names of features extending across their common borders'.[20] In the case of the Persian Gulf region, not only have the littoral states failed to do anything in this direction, but also they are members of UNGEGN's different geographical and linguistic divisions. Iran participates at the South-West Asian Division, and Arab littoral states are members of the Arab Division.[21]

The Conference, 'considering the necessity of an international standardization of names of geographical features which are under the sovereignty of more than one country or are divided among two or more countries', first 'recommends [that] those countries sharing a given geographical feature under a different name form should endeavour to reach agreement on fixing a single name for the feature concerned'.

Second, it recommends:

> … when countries sharing a given geographical feature and having different official languages do not succeed in agreeing on a common name form, it should be a general rule of international cartography that the name forms of each of the languages in question should be accepted. A policy of accepting only one or some of such name forms while excluding the rest on principle would be inconsistent as well as inexpedient in practice. Only technical reasons may sometimes make it necessary, especially in the case of small-scale maps, to dispense with the use of certain name forms belonging to one language or another.[22]

In the following session of the UNCSGN, in 1977, more resolutions in this regard were adopted. Paragraph 1 of Resolution 20 of the Third Conference, titled 'Names of Features beyond a Single Sovereignty', recommends that 'countries sharing a given geographical feature under different names should endeavour, as far as possible, to reach agreement on fixing a single name for the feature concerned'. It goes on to recommend further in paragraph 2:

> When countries sharing a given geographical feature do not succeed in agreeing on a common name, it should be a general rule of international cartography that the name used by each of the countries concerned will be accepted. A policy of accepting only one or some of such names while excluding the rest would be inconsistent in principle as well as inexpedient in practice. Only technical reasons may sometimes make it necessary, especially in the case of small-scale maps, to dispense with the use of certain names belonging to one language or another.[23]

It should be noted that these resolutions and IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6, which has similar content, are only applicable to sea areas 'under the sovereignty', which means that those resolutions do not apply to the high seas (including exclusive economic zones in this context) such as the Persian Gulf. As the Persian Gulf is an international body of water and an open sea, and does not fall under the purview of any particular country, Resolutions II/25, III/20 and IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6 do not apply.

Disagreement in Name Standardisation

Geographical names sometimes produce strong emotions, especially when disagreements over them have political implications. Establishing rules and procedures for naming international features has always been a goal. The absence of an international convention or any other instrument setting rules and procedures for naming and designating geographical features beyond a single sovereignty harms the process of standardising geographical names, and presents an obstacle to producing maps and other documents for international use. The lack of such agreement helps perpetuate the current naming disputes, among which those with political implications continue to adversely affect regional and international relations and demonstrate the power of geographic names.

There are many toponymic disputes. The effort by Turkey to have its list of maritime features accepted by the international community has always been strongly rejected by Greece, which has its own names for the same features. The drastic differences between Greek and Turkish Cypriots are sometimes are referred to as 'verbal toponymic warfare'. Each community in Cyprus has claimed that the other has attempted to change names, with resulting damage to the cultural heritages of the respective populations.[24]

The case of Greece v. Macedonia/the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was the only toponymic dispute discussed at the Security Council and General Assembly in 1993 following Greece's objection to the name 'Macedonia'. As Macedonia was also the name

of the Greek northern province, Athens worried that the new republic would one day lay claim to that part of Greece. Athens's appeal to the UN resulted in a longer name. While endorsing the admission of the Republic, both the Security Council and the General Assembly recommended that this state be 'provisionally referred to as "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the State',[25] which was agreed by the UN General Assembly.[26]

While some name disputes have political implications, there are also many that are unpolitical, such as those between the US and Canada or the case of 'la Manche' v. 'English Channel'. Out of a number of toponymic disputes involving major bodies of waters, only few are politically charged. Apart from the Persian Gulf naming dispute, there are two other more or less politically charged maritime nomenclature disputes. A brief review of these two cases may further clarify the issue at hand.

'Sea of Japan'/'East Sea'

The body of water surrounded by North Korea, South Korea, Russia and Japan is involved in a major toponymic dispute. This sea area is called the 'East Sea' in Korea, but in Japan and the international community it has been widely referred to as the 'Sea of Japan'. Various geographical names have been used throughout history to refer to these waters, including 'East Sea' and 'Oriental Sea'. 'Sea of Japan' is indicated on ancient East Asian maps, while most ancient Western maps gave this body of water no name. None of these terms has ever been fully established. Back in the early twentieth century, when international efforts were made to standardise geographical names, Korea – having lost its sovereignty – was not able to take part actively in the process. Japan's improved international status also affected the perception of Western cartographers then. Against this background, the 1929 IHO meeting designated this sea area as the 'Sea of Japan' in the first edition of 'Limits of Oceans and Seas', up to the most recent edition published in 1953.[27]

South and North Korea, having joined the United Nations together in 1991, officially raised the issue of the 'East Sea' for the first time at the sixth session of the UNCSGN in 1992, requesting that the toponymy be changed in favour of its Korean name ('East Sea'). Japan objected to this proposal, and has continued to do so ever since. While it claimed that the term 'Sea of Japan' is the preferred name worldwide, the Republic of Korea declared that 'Sea of Korea' or 'East Sea' have enjoyed recognition since Antiquity. The Sixth and Seventh UNCSGN Conferences asked the two sides to consult in order to find a solution. The same request was repeated at the Eighth and Ninth Conferences, held in 2002 and 2007 respectively – yet with no results. The Ninth Conference's Committee on Features Common to Two or More Nations, in its summary, 'encouraged the three countries to continue their efforts to find a solution acceptable to all of them, taking into account relevant resolutions, or else to agree to differ, and to report the outcome of their discussions to the next Conference'. The chairman stated in his summary that 'individual countries could not impose specific names on the international community and standardization could only be promoted when a consensus existed'.[28]

The Republic of Korea stresses that it has made continuous efforts to seek a mutually acceptable solution through bilateral diplomatic and technical consultations with Japan. It claims that the unwillingness of Japan to engage in substantive discussions, and Japan's stated position of 'no flexibility' over the single and exclusive use of the term 'Sea of Japan', have blocked any progress. The Republic of Korea believes that the adoption of the dual terms 'East Sea' and 'Sea of Japan' is the only logical and viable solution, pending agreement on a common name.[29]

On the other hand, Japan insists that the term 'Sea of Japan' enjoys historical validity and is the only appellation for this sea area, and that it has been established historically and internationally. According to the Japanese authorities, this term has been in use not only in Japan but across the world for a long time, and its use has prevailed since the early nineteenth century and has nothing to do with Japanese imperialism. Japan maintains that, according to ancient

maps, 'Sea of Japan' gained currency in Europe and the United States at the beginning of the nineteenth century, at a time when Japan still pursued a policy of isolation and was therefore unable to exert any international influence. Therefore, in Japan's view, no geographical designation other than 'Sea of Japan' is acceptable.[30]

'South China' Sea/'Biển Đông'

The controversy between Vietnam and China over the term 'South China Sea' is less well documented than the cases of the Persian Gulf and Sea of Japan. It is thus not easy to assess its precise status. What is evident is that this naming controversy is overshadowed by the much bigger sovereignty dispute over the same sea area that pits many Southeast Asian countries against China. Maps produced by the Vietnamese government over the past twenty years show that Vietnam uses the name 'Biển Đông' ('East Sea') rather than the Chinese name 'Nanhai' ('South [China] Sea'). The Vietnamese are of the view that 'Biển Đông' is the traditional designation for the body of water off the east coast of Vietnam.

Vietnamese attempts to promote 'Biển Đông' are of relatively recent origin. In 1972, the South Vietnamese government formally recognised the use of the 'South China Sea' toponym, and continued to use it into the 1980s. By the late 1980s, however, Vietnamese maps started to appear with 'Biển Đông' as the sole designation. At present, most provincial maps produced by the Vietnamese government no longer use the name 'South China Sea', whereas Chinese maps do not recognise alternative toponyms. Certain modest initiatives in recent years, such as the formation of the Bien Dong shipping company in Vietnam, are indicative of this country's growing assertiveness on this issue.[31]

General Rules and Procedures in Name Standardisation

Toponymic differences can be addressed effectively and successfully only if there is a consistent and meaningful name standardisation

process, based on agreed principles and specific criteria, policies and procedures. The impact of current and future toponymic disputes and the lack of cooperation among countries is sometimes significant; nevertheless, the international community continues to pursue the goal of establishing rules and procedures. UNCSGN Resolution II/24 (1972) recognises that 'the absence of an international convention or any other international document determining the rules and procedures of naming and designating features beyond a single sovereignty presents an obstacle to production and application of maps and other documents for international use'. It also recognises that 'a special document elaborated under the auspices of the United Nations might provide a general base for adopting technical rules and procedures for the naming and renaming of various kinds of geographical features beyond a single sovereignty'. The resolution thus recommends that 'the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names consider the elaboration of such a document in collaboration with the corresponding United Nations bodies and other international organizations competent in this problem'.[32]

The UN bodies have so far decided on a number of guiding principles and practices, and recommended that member states apply them in the course of dealing with naming issues. Establishing general rules and procedures for naming geographical features, especially those beyond a single sovereignty, has always constituted one of the major preoccupations of national and multilateral place-name agencies. While UN bodies are set up to work towards standardising geographical names, and stay away from political disputes over toponyms, their recommendations on how to standardise toponyms may be referred to in endeavours to resolve outstanding issues. Any progress in this direction can constitute a big help towards decreasing the number of maritime feature designations open to arbitrary nomenclature, and reduce the potential for dispute and conflict.

In principle, maritime areas lying outside national jurisdictions can carry any name applied to them by various linguistic or political

communities. However, it is imperative to select a common single name through the principles and practices established to govern the standardisation of geographical names and help settle disputes.

National and international naming agencies have so far agreed on a number of guiding principles and practices for preserving and selecting geographical names. The following can help address the Persian Gulf naming dispute.

Name Standardisation Based on Current Local Usage

The first UNCSGN recommended that a number of factors be taken into consideration by the authorities when they consider name proposals. They include:

1. Current usage;
2. Historical background;
3. Treatment in multilingual areas and in unwritten languages;
4. Avoidance of more than one name for one feature.[33]

UNCSGN Resolution I/4 of 1967 recommends that, when standardising each geographical name, factors such as 'the name and its meaning according to local inhabitants', 'modern and old maps and other historical sources' and 'census reports, gazetteers and other relevant documents of value' be taken into account.[34] In the same vein, Resolution VII/5 reiterates that 'whenever possible, national standardization be based on current local usage of name forms, collected through field work'.[35] The need to conform to local usage is a policy that almost all names authorities and institutions follow wherever possible. The emphasis on current local usage of names leads to the issue of endonym versus exonym. Nationally standardised names of sea and land features are endonyms, while other names for these features are exonyms. National standardisation of these names is preferable, and facilitates the reduction or elimination of exonyms as recommended by United Nations resolutions. (This issue is further discussed later.)

Standard Reference

'Standard reference' is another basis for decisions over geographical names. When a citizen of the US submitted a petition asking the UN Board of Geographic Names (USBGN) to drop the use of the name 'West Bank' (of the Jordan River), the Board did not study the case, as the matter was within the jurisdiction of the US Department of State. The USBGN held that 'West Bank' was used as far back as 1967 by various publications and organisations, and had become a standard reference and should be maintained.[36]

One Feature, One Name (Univocity)

If possible, the principle of 'one feature, one name' should prevail, with name duplication avoided: no homonyms and no two names for one feature. In general, a multiplicity of names for geographical features creates problems for navigators, the media, businesses, post offices, researchers, etc. Naming authorities at national and international levels are created primarily to overcome the difficulty of selecting one name per feature, and to avoid a situation where two national or international bodies publish maps with different names for the same feature.

It can sometimes be difficult to achieve this ideal, especially in multilingual areas where name usage is divided along language lines. In such cases, the naming authority might choose only one official name, based on specific criteria; recognise and make available for use in other languages one or more names (allonyms), not official but chosen for use in specified contexts; or choose two or more official names (though it is suggested that 'one of the names should always be recommended for international usage').[37]

Avoidance of Name Change

Geographical names perform a significant labelling or reference function, identifying distinct places, features or areas. This function needs a high level of stability in written and spoken forms of names

and their applications. Thus changes in present names should not be made without a very good reason.

Tradition, followed by law, tends to protect toponyms. 'Name change', in the sense of formally changing the proper name of a feature, place or area with long-standing usage by the public, should be avoided – or at least not encouraged. This applies as much to fluctuating domestic political situations as to regional politics. Society prefers the stability of geographical names, as it contributes to the establishment of a stable locational framework in which life can run its orderly course.

The USBGN specifies in its 'Principles, Policies, and Procedures' that it 'does not encourage changes in official geographic names. It will not initiate changes in domestic geographic names except in rare cases such as those involving certain derogatory names and name duplications.'[38]

A major principle of the USBGN is that 'no country can change a traditional name of a feature whose territory is beyond the sovereignty of a single nation'. The USBGN applied this principle, and rules based thereon, in a number of cases, including the consideration of a request to change the name of the Persian Gulf (as explained later).[39]

Postcolonial Sensitivity and Global Intelligibility

Two more principles are important in the naming of seas: global intelligibility and postcolonial sensitivity. The colonial era saw the elimination of most indigenous and local names, and the postcolonial era encouraged the reinstatement of obliterated names. In some cases, a colonial name recognises the global role of a transnational, long-established, highly intelligible name such as the 'Pacific Ocean'. However, in other cases colonial/postcolonial issues need to be addressed and resolved.[40]

'Persian Gulf' is not a colonial name promoted by colonial powers at the expense of an indigenous, local name. Thus it has not been affected by waves of indigenous, colonial and postcolonial naming activity.

The Age of a Given Name

The age of a given name should be considered as an essential criterion because 'a geographical name, as a geographical phenomenon, has been the product of a natural selection process over time'.[41] There has always been consensus concerning the need to apply the oldest indigenous name, and to use this as the determining factor whenever there is a dispute. Older names, i.e., commonly accepted names used for hundreds of years or millennia, are more appropriate than newer names. They are time-honoured and well-established in historical texts, poetry and other literature and in the mass media, to worldwide fame. Schoolchildren become familiar with them. Logic maintains that unnecessary changes would run counter to tradition and create needless confusion.

That is why the fading initial reasons for naming a geographical feature do not lead to change in the relevant place names. The Caspian Sea is still known as the 'Khazar Sea' (*Darya-ye Khazar*) in the wider region surrounding this body of water, even though the ancient tribe of the Khazars (or Hazars) that gave its name to it disappeared long ago. The Adriatic Sea was named for the town of Adria, which was once the major commercial centre in northern Italy. Malacca was the most important town on the strait named after it in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[42] Even though these towns have diminished in importance, the features in question have retained their traditional names.

Referring to the many waves of change to names following World War II as a result of decolonisation, the collapse of the Soviet Union and changes within various countries, one expert emphasises: 'But most of these changes were concerned with place-names. Names of seas are another matter. These names are not seen as belonging to one state because they are exonyms with a long tradition. So there would have to be very good arguments to convince people of a change.'[43]

Another expert observes that the way a geographical name is inscribed on a map must accord with its origins and historical development. He adds: 'The original names of the seas have to be preserved to the greatest possible extent. It is my opinion that the old

names of seas, used in a given historical period, must be preserved in the modern historic maps, atlases and textbooks.'[44]

National and international standardisation agencies have followed the same logic and elaborated the same principles. The first UNSCGN recommended that 'unnecessary changing of names be avoided'.[45] Paragraph E of the IHO's 'Guidelines for the Standardization of Undersea Feature Names' reads:

> In the event of a conflict, the persons and agencies involved should resolve the matter. Where two names have been applied to the same feature, the older name generally should be accepted. Where a single name has been applied to two different features, the feature named first generally should retain the name.[46]

Name age is one of the significant criteria in non-political name disputes, such as those between US and Canada.[47] In the dispute between Japan and Korea over the name of the sea that separates them, each side tries to present historic evidence and prove that its favoured toponym has had longer historical usage. In the sixth session of the UN conference, the Israeli delegate protested that Jordan did not honour the ancient Hebrew names of different places in Jordan.

Trent Palmer maintains that, although coastal states are generally deferred to for 'first dibs' in the naming of undersea features in their exclusive economic zone (EEZ), 'standardization policy usually recognizes exceptions based on long-standing use'.[48]

In light of the foregoing, it is noteworthy that 'about 10 per cent of the names of the 200 largest seas, gulfs and straits stem from Antiquity and an equal percentage from the Middle Ages'.[49] More interestingly, 'the Persian Gulf may be the oldest toponym for a body of water'.[50] In contrast, South Korea and Japan conducted separate surveys on the naming of the waters in ancient Western maps archived in major libraries around the world, and concurred that they were labelled with no geographical name in more than half the maps created before the nineteenth century. Thus the international community shared no common perception or understanding as to the naming of those bodies of water.[51]

Primary Local Usage rule

Following the naming policy adopted by Google Earth, which drew extensive protest from the Iranian community, a post on Google's Public Policy Blog on 8 April 2008 stated: 'Google should not choose sides in international geopolitical disputes. For this reason, we have chosen to implement a uniform policy of "Primary Local Usage"'. It goes on:

> Under this policy, the English Google Earth client displays the primary, common, local name(s) given to a body of water by the sovereign nations that border it. If all bordering countries agree on the name, then the common single name is displayed. But if different countries dispute the proper name for a body of water, our policy is to display *both* names, with each label placed closer to the country or countries that use it.

The rationale Google provides reads as follows:

> When our policy says that we display the 'primary, common, local' names for a body of water, each of those three adjectives has an important and distinct meaning. By saying 'primary', we aim to include names of dominant use, rather than having to add every conceivable local nickname or variation. By saying 'common', we mean to include names, which are in widespread daily use, rather than giving immediate recognition to any arbitrary governmental re-naming. In other words, if a ruler announced that henceforth the Pacific Ocean would be named after her mother, we would not add that place mark unless and until the name came into common usage. Finally, by saying 'local', we aim to reflect the primary and common names used by countries that actually border the body of water, as they are the countries recognized under international law as having a special sovereign stake in it.

Google's Public Policy Blog continues: 'In our view, the *Primary Local Usage* rule generates the optimal combination of neutrality, objectivity, and legitimacy … showing all the names of primary and common use by all the countries bordering a body of water …'[52]

In reaction, Iranians on social media rejected the rule adopted by Google as failing to withstand scrutiny and verifiability by traditional academic rules. They maintained that, in fact, this rule encourages politically motivated geographical naming and renaming, enabling a state to compel or pay off the media to prop up any whimsical, self-serving name, and to pave the way for its adoption by major sources such as Google, contrary to the company's intention.

The 'Primary Local Usage' rule would require a set of explicit criteria and thresholds for decision-making: in terms of 'local use', what percentage of the population using the term would qualify? How would it be measured? Would it be necessary to conduct a poll? Would local media coverage suffice? Would journalistic freedom have a role? Should the size of the disputing rim countries – their shorelines, economies, populations, and so on – play a role? Would a one-off decision suffice to establish local use, or should it be reviewed at regular intervals? And so on.

Iranians opposing the rule adopted by Google have considered that the approach would make independent institutions vulnerable to artificial political pressure. One of them, in a letter addressed to Google, maintained that its 'flippant use of the hypothetical renaming of the Pacific Ocean by a random monarch strikes me as a perfect example of this weak argument. It is a badly disguised analogy to Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabist political ideology that led to the invention of the term "Arabian Gulf" '.

Another reader also commented, on the same blog page: 'If Google Earth had existed just forty years ago, maybe we would have had such lofty bodies of water as the Pol Pot River, Idi Amin Lake, and the Northern Stalin Sea. Maybe even the Red Mao Ocean (1.3 billion Chinese after all).' Another comment asks Google whether, based on this rule, it would allow *'Arvand Rood'*, which is widely used in Iran, to be an alternative name to the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Another reader, referring to Google's argument about all bordering countries' 'agreement', quips: 'I think all bordering countries agree on the name of Palestine instead of Israel for the region between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.'[53]

Geographical Names and Cultural Heritage

Geographical names are a sensitive and essential part of the cultural heritage and national identity of each nation, and a reservoir of social and cultural attributes. Each system of toponyms that includes a wealth of geographical references to places, lakes, seas, rivers, pools, mountains, caves and other features, suggests that certain peoples have inhabited the land for a long time. It is no accident, then, that domination by one nation or state over another has often been accompanied by attempts to deny or eliminate the cultural identity of the subjugated nation through the destruction of its physical or non-material cultural heritage.

Toponyms are a part of people's historical and cultural links with their territory and heritage. They contain historical and cultural information that may not be found in written or unwritten sources. Geographical names may provide insights into the language, environment, history and spatial perceptions of various cultures. They connect individuals to their surroundings, form an integral part of history and are a part of the identity of a local population group. In some cases, they display the oldest part of human cultural heritage, as they have been handed down verbally from generation to generation for hundreds or thousands of years. As Naftali Kadmon puts it: 'In some areas, geographical names are the only surviving elements of extinct languages.'[54]

The historic and linguistic values of place names are now acknowledged, and safeguarding names is a matter of interest to many people and formal entities. This is widely acknowledged in many forums, including in the UN, and many nations act towards preserving place names. Beginning in the second half of the twentieth century, geographical names in relation to their cultural contexts have received wider attention. Since the 1970s, many conferences and meetings have been held around the world to address the treatment of geographical names.[55]

The fact that names are part of a country's national heritage was first drawn to the attention of the UNCSGN by Norway, in 1967.[56] The UNCSGN adopted several resolutions that directly

and indirectly refer to the cultural and social values of geographical names. They include Resolutions II/27, II/36, V/6, V1/22, VII/5, VIII/1 and VIII/9, which, in different ways, address toponyms as cultural heritage. Resolution V/6 recognises 'the importance of geographical names as significant elements of the cultural heritage of nations'.[57] Resolution VIII/9, titled 'Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage', was adopted following the emphasis placed on the significance of geographical names to heritage at the eighth session of the UNCSGN; it urges countries to promote 'a greater understanding among the wider public of the significance of inherited geographical names with respect to local, regional and national heritage and identity'.[58]

The ninth session of the UNCSGN received a report from the representative of UNESCO on the protection and promotion of languages, including geographical names, as part of cultural heritage. The report recalled the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, outlining the procedures for requesting information or assistance in this respect. The conference discussed the vulnerability of geographical names and the necessity of raising public awareness by highlighting toponymy within the UNESCO convention. It attached paramount importance to UNESCO participation in raising awareness, and its support for geographical names.[59]

The conference also discussed Article 2, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Convention, which apply to toponymy, and encouraged wider understanding of the concept. Furthering the acknowledgment of toponyms as a significant aspect of intangible cultural heritage was also encouraged.[60]

In Resolution IX/4, the UNCSGN refers to the 2003 UNESCO convention and recognises that 'toponyms are indeed part of the intangible cultural heritage'. It notes that 'the use of certain toponyms, which provide a sense of identity and continuity, is under a variety of threats', and encourages the official bodies responsible for toponymy to:

a) 'Identify toponyms that meet the criteria for application of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage';
b) 'Submit them to the Committee set up by the Convention, for approval';
c) 'Prepare a programme to safeguard and develop that heritage in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 3, and Article 18 of the Convention';
d) 'Start implementing it.'

In the same resolution, the UNCSGN calls upon UNESCO 'to give sympathetic consideration to requests for support that the High Contracting Parties submit to it for such activities'.[61]

As for the Persian Gulf, we may posit that the name survived because it was a product of Arab and Persian geographical practices as well as the consent of the peoples living on its rim for millennia. The higher stature of Persia in the preceding eras gave rise to the toponym, but it could not have survived without being embraced by all littoral communities, and those who needed to cross these waters to get to the land of the Persians. Therefore it is wrong to suggest, as some do, that the Persian Gulf is the 'historical heritage of the Iranians'. The name 'Persian Gulf' owes its creation and survival throughout the ages to all linguistic and cultural influences that touched the gulf, long before the hideous considerations of ideology, national competition and ownership were injected into the discourse.

The Persian Gulf as a Cultural Landscape

The concept of 'cultural landscape' is another means by which the Persian Gulf naming dispute may be addressed. This concept gained currency all over the world in the late 1990s, after being introduced in 1998 in the Operational Guidelines to the 1972 World Heritage Convention. There, 'cultural landscapes' were included as a category of property (site) that represents the 'combined works of nature and man', incorporated in Article 1 of the Convention. Among the criteria for selecting cultural properties for inscription on the World

Heritage List, cultural landscapes are described as 'illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by the natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces …'[62]

Cultural and physical landscapes are significant parts of any society, and place names are an important part of the landscape. The significance of a geographical feature to public interest, and its position in the cultural heritage of a people, should be taken into account where names are considered. Peoples and states only argue over names that are part of their national imagination, the nation's sense of itself. Seas washing nations' coastlines figure highly among these features. As Janet Blake puts it:

> The modern State is territorial in character with the people and the land united through a shared landscape, history and memories. In this landscape (which may be cultural as well as physical), place-names play a significant symbolic role. Clearly, the choice of name of the bordering sea is not just a cartographical phenomenon, but is a very powerful expression of national identity that combines both key elements of cultural heritage and language.[63]

'Marine landscapes', as Janet Blake believes, 'are typical examples of such cultural landscapes where the interaction between human culture, society and economic activities with the landscape of the shoreline and the sea is strong and where all aspects of life are somehow determined by it.'[64] Place names are an extremely significant element in cultural landscapes, as they reflect the collective memory of people who have inhabited that place over generations.

Based on the description above, the Persian Gulf sea area represents a cultural landscape, created as a result of the interaction between people living on its shores and the physical constraints and opportunities presented by the natural maritime environment. Interaction among different communities scattered along the Gulf's coasts, who were more easily in touch with each other than with people in the interior, was much more pronounced before the

restrictions imposed on their movements as a result of artificial political, ethnic and ideological borders and impediments. Here, as elsewhere, the historical toponym that survived for more than two millennia is an important element in its overall character as a cultural landscape.

'Persian Gulf' as Intangible Cultural Heritage

A historical analysis shows that the term 'Persian Gulf' originated in Antiquity and, unlike many other similar terms, has been immune to variations and transformation. The numerous military defeats, conquests and political upheavals since the fifth century BC did not affect this toponym. While Arab conquerors tried to wipe out place names and even proper names in conquered territories, they did nothing to change the term 'Persian Gulf'.

Given Iran's long history and continuity, place names in general and 'Persian Gulf' in particular carry considerable weight for Iranians. At the same time, the historical continuity of the toponym that has allowed its intact transmission through ages since Antiquity, in parallel with its acceptance all over the world, provides for its recognition as part of international cultural heritage. The definition given in Article 2(1) of the Convention on Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2003 reads:

> The 'intangible cultural heritage' means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, *transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity*, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity … [Italics the author's own.]

This definition provided in the UNESCO convention emphasises the importance of the historical continuity of intangible cultural heritage,

its transmission through generations and its formative role in cultural identity. All these elements are recognisable, as noted above, in the name 'Persian Gulf'.

Article 2(2) then continues by setting out the domains in which intangible cultural heritage is located, of which the first is of direct relevance to the subject in hand. It reads: '(a) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage.' Hence the place name of the *Khalij-e Fars* ('Persian Gulf') is an oral expression in the terms of Article 2(2) (a), 'and should therefore be regarded as constituting part of the intangible cultural heritage'.[65]

The Term 'Persian Gulf' and the UN System

The use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' by some Arab countries, and efforts to internationalise it, led to a series of diplomatic and media disputes with Iran. The use of this term in a UN document in 1971 alarmed Iran and prompted it to take the issue up with the UN administration. In March 1971 it received an endorsement of its view from the Secretariat.

The United Nations system, and before it, that of the League of Nations, have continuously and in a systematic way followed the principle of naming and marking the body of waters separating Iran from Arabia solely as the 'Persian Gulf'. The efforts by some Arab states presented a challenge to this tradition, alarmed the Iranian government and, at times, troubled UN staff. A number of directives were subsequently issued by the UN Secretariat as well as the secretariats of other international agencies.

UN Secretariat Editorial Directives

The United Nations Secretariat, on five occasions, issued editorial directives instructing its staff to use only 'Persian Gulf'. The first was issued in response to the objection filed by the Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations, dated 25 February 1971, against the use

of the term 'Arab Gulf Emirates' in a document of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The Secretariat, referring to Iran's *note verbale*, states in its own *note verbale*:

> It is the practice of the United Nation Secretariat to use in United Nation documents and maps the term Persian Gulf to indicate the body of water between Iran to the north and east and a number of other countries to the south and east. In doing so, the United Nations Secretariat has conformed to a long established usage followed by publishers of atlases and geographical dictionaries.

The *note* further states: 'The content of the [Iran's] Note and of this reply will be brought to the attention of the appropriate officers of the Organization [UNIDO].'[66]

The editorial directive dated 10 January 1990, prepared by Editorial Control at the request of the Chief Editor, reads, in part:

> The term 'Persian Gulf' is used in documents, publications, and statements emanating from the Secretariat as the standard geographical designation for the body of water lying between the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic Republic of Iran, thus following longstanding conventional practice.

According to this directive, documents emanating from a member state or an intergovernmental organisation are exempted from this requirement.[67]

An addendum, dated 24 January 1992, to the above directive urges UN editors that 'care be taken to ensure the appropriate use of this term ["Persian Gulf"]'. It continues that 'for the sake of clarity, always use the full term "Persian Gulf" instead of using the shorter term "Gulf" in repetitions of the term after its initial use in a text.'[68]

A second addendum to the same directive, dated 18 August 1994, urges once more 'that 'care be taken to ensure the appropriate use of this term [Persian Gulf] in documents, publications and statements prepared by the Secretariat'. It continues: 'The full term "Persian Gulf" should be used in every case instead of the shorter term "Gulf", including in repetitions of the term after its initial use in a text.'[69]

An editorial directive dated 14 May 1999 and titled 'Use of the Terms "Persian Gulf", "Gulf" and "Shatt al-Arab"' is addressed to '[a]ll those concerned with drafting and editing United Nations documents and publications'. In its first paragraph, the Secretariat restated its position on the term 'Persian Gulf':

> The term 'Persian Gulf' is used in documents, publications and statements emanating from the Secretariat as the standard geographical designation for the sea area between the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The full term 'Persian Gulf' is always used to designate that sea area when it is first referred to in a text and is repeated thereafter whenever necessary for the sake of clarity.

This directive, in the meantime, allows the use of the term 'Gulf' to identify or refer to the general geographical area surrounding or adjacent to the Persian Gulf, or to refer to the situation around that sea area.[70]

These directives are important, as they reflect the formal view and position of the UN Secretariat and encapsulate the result of deliberations within the UN by political and legal officials and experts. In this respect, the directive referred to above, dated 10 January 1990, makes clear that the Chief Editor makes decisions in this regard 'in consultation with the Office of the Secretary-General and the Office of Legal Affairs'. The directive dated 24 January 1992 makes known that the UN Cartographic Unit also takes part in the reviews that precede the issuance of related directives. They are also important, as the Secretariat is required to base its decisions on and act within certain agreed general principles and procedures that are agreeable to member states. Nonetheless, these directives are not decisions made by the UN deliberative bodies.

The term 'Persian Gulf' is the only geographical naming dispute that is the subject of editorial directives issued by the UN Secretariat. In the case of similar disputes, i.e., the East Sea v. the Sea of Japan, the Secretariat issued only a letter in reply to a letter it received from the Japanese Government on 10 March 2004. In this it asserts that:

> We at the UN Secretariat make it clear that we would abide by the practice of using the term Sea of Japan alone [to refer to the waters between Korea and Japan]; citing two geographical names (i.e. the East Sea and the Sea of Japan) in parallel is against the UN's practice and infringes upon its neutrality.[71]

As noted, in this case – unlike the case of the Persian Gulf – the Secretariat confines itself to issuing a letter, not an editorial directive, to the Japanese mission; it refers only to 'the practice of using …' and emphasises the need to maintain 'neutrality'; none of this is the case with regard to the directives relating to the Persian Gulf.[72]

In parallel with the affirmations sought and received from the UN Secretariat, Iranian diplomats, acting on instructions and with a view to preventing a precedent, protested at every instance in which any name other than 'Persian Gulf' was used. Reference could be made to numerous cases in which the Iranian diplomats protested against or blocked proceedings for the use of any nomenclature other than the full term 'Persian Gulf'. For instance, during UNCLOS III, the delegate of Iran – in reply to the representative of the UAE, who had used the term 'Arabian Gulf' – stated:

> The representative of the UAE had used an improper term in reference to the Persian Gulf, which washed 450 miles of the Persian coast and had been known by that name in books of history and geography published in all languages, including Arabic.

He also added that, while the special character of the region necessitates cooperation, distortion of the fact could lead to tension between littoral states.[73]

On another occasion, Saudi Arabia's request for the inclusion of an item on observer status for the 'Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf Region'[74] drew a reaction from Iran. Before the committee took action, Iran's representative drew the members' attention to the title of the group and expressed his delegation's dismay over the use of nomenclature other than 'Persian Gulf' to describe the body of water between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula. Indeed, he continued, 'Persian Gulf' is the only name for the region

that Iran recognises, and it has been recognised worldwide since time immemorial.' He added that the name was the only standard geographical designation applicable to that body of water used at the United Nations and other global organisations, and its only universally recognised name.

Saudi Arabia's representative replied that his delegation appreciated Iran's concerns. He added that, at the same time, 'Gulf Cooperation Council' was the official name of that organisation recognised by and registered with the United Nations. Saudi Arabia did not wish to change the name of the organisation in the documents it had submitted. Iran might, if it so wished, submit a memorandum on the matter to the United Nations.[75]

UNESCO

Ernesto Melo Antunes, Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, in a letter dated February 1987 to all assistant directors-general and directors of the organisation, recalled the practice of the UN system in referring to the gulf and asked them to follow UN practice, according to which 'when a UN document, a UN publication, a map, etc.' was prepared by the UN Secretariat under its own auspices, 'the term Persian Gulf should be used'.[76] This practice has since been followed in publications and speeches.

UN Cartographic Section

Consistent with the views expressed in the editorial directive, other UN departments adopt the same policy with regard to the name of the Gulf. All maps prepared by the Cartographic Section of the UN Department of Public Information show the name 'Persian Gulf', as several examples demonstrate:

1. Department of Public Information Cartographic Section, map no. 3978, rev. 1, September 1997.[77] This map displays members of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the members of which are fourteen Arab countries of the region.

2. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, map of Iran, no. 3891, rev. 1 January 2004.[78]
3. Department of Public Information, Cartographic Section, map of Western Asia, no. 3978, rev. 1, November 1998.[79]
4. Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, map of the Middle East, no. 4102, rev. 3, August 2004.[80]

Similarly, maps of the Arab countries of the Gulf contain the same terminology, e.g. a map of Bahrain (no. 3868, rev. 2, January 2004); a map of Kuwait (no. 4405, May 2010); and a map of Iraq (no. 3835, rev. 4, January 2004).[81]

The maps referred to above bear a legend that reads: 'The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.' This emphasises that these maps are not the result of a consensus by any UN deliberative body, emanating from the will of member states. Nevertheless, they still reflect the considered position of the UN Secretariat. In this respect, we must recall that the Fifth UNCSGN

> … notes with satisfaction the publication by United Nations of volume XVIII of the World Cartography [in 1986], devoted to the subject of geographical names, which has been distributed throughout the world and acclaimed by Member States.[82]

The Policy of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)

The IHO is engaged in various activities aimed at making navigation easier and safer, including promoting uniformity in nautical charts, publications and documents. At the present time, it has eighty member countries and regions. The principle of marking the body of waters between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula solely as the 'Persian Gulf' has been maintained continuously by the IHO – to take but one example, its Report of Proceedings for its seventeenth conference refers to 'the creation of Area I covering the Persian Gulf'.[83]

The IHO has had an interest in toponyms since the beginning of its work in 1921, on account of its quest for standardisation; different countries had used different languages, and there was a need for charts and publications to be understandable to international mariners. (The IHO Convention declares that one of the main objectives of the organisation is 'to bring about the greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents'.)[84]

In parallel with the UNCSGN, the IHO seeks a consistent policy for handling geographical names and the international standardisation of geographical names. As explained earlier, Paragraph 6 of IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6, like UNCSGN Resolution III/20 of 1977, recommends that

> … where two or more countries share a given geographical feature … under a different name form, they should endeavour to reach agreement on fixing a single name for the feature concerned. If they have different official languages and cannot agree on a common name form, it is recommended that the name forms of each of the languages in question should be accepted …

As explained earlier, these resolutions are only applicable to sea areas under the sovereignty of two or more countries, not to maritime features beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. It means that those resolutions do not apply to international waters (including exclusive economic zones in this context).[85]

The IHO publishes a document called 'Limits of Oceans and Seas', Special Publication No. 23 (S-23), which records the designations and boundaries of the world's oceans and seas. It was produced to promote consistent nautical cartography in the interest of safe maritime navigation. IHO member countries, following several years of discussion, brought out the first edition of Special Publication S-23 in 1929. The second and third editions followed in 1937 and 1953. The edition in force is still the third (1953) edition.[86] In it, the Gulf is referred to as 'Gulf of Iran (Persian Gulf)'.[87] On the World Chart, Sheet 1, the Gulf is also marked (no. 41) as 'Gulf of Iran (Persian Gulf)'.[88] Thus countries that were IHO members in

1953 officially agreed to use this and other terms given to international waters by the IHO for the purposes of international standardisation, and to encourage all countries to use them.

As explained in the preface of Special Publication S-23:

> The third edition of this publication has been drawn up and generally approved by the 1952 International Hydrographic Conference taking into account proposals put forward at various International Hydrographic Conferences up to and including that of 1952, and by certain scientific Institutions, including the Report of a Sub-committee of the Association of Physical Oceanography on: 'The Criteria and Nomenclature of the Major Divisions of the Ocean Bottom', issued in 1940.[89]

Since 1977, intermittent efforts have been made to revise the publication and issue a new edition, to no avail. A revised draft was worked out in 1986.[90] In August 2002, the IHO Directing Committee distributed to member countries a final draft copy of the fourth edition of 'Limits of Oceans and Seas' that did not include two pages concerning the Sea of Japan. A circular letter dated 9 August 2002, attached to the draft, was also issued to member countries to put the final draft of the fourth edition to vote, requesting that they send back their reply to the IHO Secretariat by 30 November 2002.[91] Immediately the government of Japan lodged a strong complaint with the IHO Directing Committee about the use of both 'Sea of Japan' and 'East Sea'. It despatched a high-ranking delegation to the IHO headquarters in Monaco, which expressed a belief that the IHO's procedure was flawed, and strongly requested both a withdrawal of the circular letter and the exclusive use of the name 'Sea of Japan', as it appears in the 1953 edition. The Committee finally agreed to this request and removed the final draft of the fourth edition of S-23 from voting at that time.

In order to make progress in this issue, the president of the conference suggested different options for consideration by interested states. The main option was to 'discuss the possibility of publishing S-23 in two volumes: the first of which would cover all the agreed

issues, while referring to the second volume, which would not be published, the matters that remained unresolved'. It was soon made clear that this suggestion was unacceptable to Japan[92] on the grounds that it could be misleading, creating the wrong impression that a dispute over the name 'Sea of Japan' existed.[93]

The International Hydrographic Bureau has asked its member states to consider establishing a working group in order to prepare a new draft edition of Special Publication S-23 for approval by them, noting that 'this is an important publication, its update is long overdue and there is a need for a new edition as soon as possible'. The inaugural meeting of the new working group was held on 1 June 2009 in Monaco, immediately before the fourth IHO Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference.[94]

General Bathymetric Chart of the Ocean (GEBCO)

The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) is an international group of experts developing a range of bathymetric data sets and data products, including the GEBCO world map and the 'GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names' of July 2010. GEBCO and its gazetteer offer a repository of maritime names. GEBCO operates under the joint auspices of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO and the IHO. Its work is done by an international group of experts in seafloor mapping who develop a range of bathymetric data sets and data products. In its publications and documents, GEBCO uses the toponym 'Persian Gulf', including in the gazetteer and *The GEBCO One-Minute Grid, Centenary Edition of the GEBCO Digital Atlas*.[95]

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) is a UNESCO subsidiary body established in 1961, following Resolution 2.31 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO. It had 147 members in 2014. The IOC's Committee on International

Oceanographic Data and Information Exchange adopted Resolution IODE-XVI.2, establishing a 'responsible National Oceanographic Data Centre (RNODC) for the Persian Gulf Area (RNODC-P. Gulf)'.[96]

The International Maritime Organization

The IMO regularly uses the term 'Persian Gulf' in its publications and official documents, including its Port State Control, its Secretary-General's speech and *IMO News* and *IMO Magazine*.[97] The IMO organised a 'Sub-Regional Seminar on Maritime Security for the Persian Gulf area' in Manama, Bahrain, in April 2007.[98]

Maritime Features, Names and Ownership

When naming a trans-boundary geographical feature, especially a maritime feature, the question has always been whether or not a name associated with a nation can be interpreted in any way as entailing a right to possession and sovereignty, or at least imply control by the nation concerned over the feature in question. On one hand, a perceived relationship between the claim to appurtenance and naming practice has sometime been a source for concern. On the other, the most widespread way of denoting a body of water has generally been to name it after the most distinct land, people, city, etc. close to it. It is thus unsurprising that most sea areas have been named after states, islands, archipelagos, towns, cities, provinces and regions.

A quick review of the names used for international stretches of water, including the ninety-nine names of seas and oceans listed by the IHO, reveals that the practice of giving the name of a piece of land or an ethnic community to an adjacent international body of water has been relatively common, and has not been problematic in the great majority of cases – nor has it suggested appurtenance, sovereignty or control.

In most cases where the names of countries, regions or population groups are part of sea names, their use implies instrumentality: the sea area one should navigate to reach that country, region or population

group. Apart from a few examples, this practice has not had any territorial or sovereignty implications. There are many examples where a dominant power in a region readily accepts a toponym linking a feature to another entity. The name 'Irish Sea' is a good example: it was coined at a time when England dominated Ireland and, therefore, this name could not imply any territorial implication. It was so named simply because the British would use it to travel to Ireland. 'Gulf of Finland' is another example: it has been and continues to be of considerable strategic importance to Russia, as it connects Russia to the Baltic Sea; St Petersburg is located on the Gulf's easternmost shores. But despite the size of Russia and its ascendancy in the region, this Gulf's name has never been an issue. There are many other sea-area examples (e.g. 'Gulf of Mexico', 'Formosa/Taiwan Strait').

Similarly, 'Persian Gulf' was first coined by travellers from the West to the territory of the Persians. Later, Arabs and other inhabitants of the region who needed to make the same journey used a similar term for the same sea area, describing the Gulf they needed to cross to get to the 'Persians'.

A number of other well-known cases in which a sea area is named after an adjoining state are as follows: Arabian Sea, Bay of Biscay, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Denmark Strait, East China Sea, English Channel, Gulf of Guinea, Gulf of Honduras, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Panama, Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Venezuela, Indian Ocean, Korea Bay, Korea Strait, Mozambique Channel, Norwegian Sea, Persian Gulf/Arabian Gulf, Philippine Sea, Sea of Japan/East Sea, Singapore Strait, South China Sea/Biển Đông, Timor Sea.

Moreover, names of states, provinces, cities and regions are given to many such sea areas: Gulf of Alaska, Bay of Biscay, Gulf of Bothnia, Bay of Bengal, Gulf of California, East Siberian Sea, Ligurian Sea, Labrador Sea, Strait of Gibraltar, Bristol Channel, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Aqaba, Gulf of Riga, Gulf of Suez, Sea of Okhotsk, etc.

Islands and archipelagos also account for many maritime names, e.g. Alboran Sea, Andaman Sea, Bali Sea, Balearic Sea, Banda Sea, Celebes Sea, Caribbean Sea, Ceram Sea, Flores Sea, Java Sea, Ionian Sea, Sea of Marmara, Sulu Sea, Solomon Sea and so forth.[99]

The example of the endonym and exonym for the Caspian Sea also notably explains how national or ethnic names for seas have never been intended to imply the right of appurtenance or sovereignty: this sea is still known as the Khazar Sea (*Darya-ye Khazar*) in the wider surrounding region, despite the disappearance long ago of the ancient tribe of Khazar or Hazar, a non-Iranian tribe that dwelt on the northern shores of the sea. It is also likely that the Caspian Sea exonym originated from Greek and Roman sources; the Caspians were 'a pre-Indo-European' ancient people living on the southern coasts of the sea in present-day Gilan, Iran. These people, whom 'Herodotus, Strabo, and other classical authors repeatedly mention', have entirely disappeared.[100]

Likewise, the Etruscans gave their name to the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Caribs, after whom the Caribbean is named, have almost been extinguished. The Chukchi Sea refers to the Chukchi people, who are still there, though they are few in numbers; and the Celtic Sea is a relic of the Celts who once controlled most of Central Europe, but were later pushed to its western periphery.[101]

As noted, there is little evidence of controversy surrounding the overwhelming majority of the names on the lists of sea areas named after nations, ethnic groups and adjacent lands. The Persian Gulf, the Sea of Japan/East Sea and, to some extent, the South China Sea are the only exceptions. In these cases, the naming disputes only arose following political changes in the littoral or regional countries, and when new political movements found it useful to turn naming issues into a political tool in the service of their causes.

The name 'Persian Gulf' was coined when the ancient Persians, dwelling on the northern part of the Gulf, entered into contact with the Greeks and other peoples around the Mediterranean. Thus it existed long before Persia or Iran emerged as a nation – and certainly before the rise of modern nationalism.

The Term 'Persian Gulf' and Legal Documents in Arab Countries

In the past, the Arabs of the Persian Gulf all used that name in their

legislation. The title of one announcement made by such a political entity reads as follows:

> **Royal pronouncement concerning the policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with respect to the subsoil and seabed of areas in the Persian Gulf contiguous to the coast of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, dated 28 May 1949.**

In the seven-paragraph text that follows, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used four times in full and once in its shorter form, 'the Gulf'. A series of similar proclamations was made by other Arab political entities in the lower Gulf, with the term 'Persian Gulf' used in titles and texts. These were issued in 1949 by Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Qatar, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain,[102] and were titled, accordingly, 'Proclamation by Abu Dhabi with respect to the seabed and the subsoil of the high seas of the Persian Gulf, 10 June 1949'; 'Proclamation by Ajman with respect to the seabed and the subsoil of the high seas of the Persian Gulf, 20 June 1949'; 'Proclamation by Bahrain with respect to the seabed and the subsoil of the high seas of the Persian Gulf, 5 June 1949', and so forth.

A review of later documents shows a change of policy on the part of the Arab states of the Gulf. Whereas earlier they had made reference to the term 'Persian Gulf' on their own initiative, in the 1960s and 1970s – when Iran and its Arab neighbours were engaged in the maritime delimitation of continental shelves and debating sovereignty over the islands – the Arab parties refused to make any reference to the same term in the relevant agreements. The titles of some of these agreements in the new period read as follows:

1. 'Agreement Concerning Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Iran and Bahrain', 17 June 1971;
2. 'Agreement concerning the sovereignty over the islands of al-'Arabiya and Farsi and the delimitation of the boundary line separating submarine areas between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran (with exchanges of letters, map and English translation)', 24 October 1968.

3. 'Agreement concerning the boundary line dividing the continental shelf between Iran and Qatar', 20 September 1969.
4. 'Agreement concerning Delimitation of the Continental Shelf between Iran and Oman', 25 July 1974.

And even among Arab countries themselves, the term was employed, e.g.:

1. 'Agreement on the Delimitation of the Offshore and Land Boundaries between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Qatar', 4 December 1965.
2. 'Agreement between Qatar and Abu Dhabi on the settlement of maritime boundaries and ownership of islands, 20 March 1969.'
3. Official proclamation by Iraq concerning the Continental Shelf of Iraq, 23 November 1957.[103]
4. 'Supplementary proclamation concerning the Continental Shelf of Iraq', 10 April 1958 (for text,[104] see: Law no. 71 of 1958 delimiting Iraqi territorial waters).[105]
5. 'Decree by Oman concerning the territorial sea, continental shelf and exclusive fishing zones of the Sultanate of Oman', 17 July 1972.[106]

Arab Arguments in Support of the Name Change

Since the adoption of the term 'Arabian Gulf' by some Arab parties at the peak of the political crisis between Iran and pan-Arab nationalists, they have made no systematic efforts to explain their reasons according to the criteria that govern the appellations of geographical features. As discussed in the previous chapter, most Arab countries – if not all – later followed suit; yet they have shown minimal interest in developing legal or historical arguments in support of changing the name from 'Persian Gulf'.

In 2005, a two-part article co-authored by an Arab and an Iranian provided a rare opportunity to examine Arab arguments for changing the name. In the article, Dr Hassan Ali El-Najjar, Associate Professor

of Sociology and Anthropology at Dalton State College in Georgia (US), argues that:

> From the Arab viewpoint, the Gulf is an Arabian Gulf because Arabs live, at present, on most of its shores. The six Gulf Cooperation Council states are located on its western shores and Iraq occupies its northern shore. Even on the Iranian eastern shores, there are Arab–Iranians, namely the Arabs of Al-Ahwaz … On the southeastern shores of the Gulf, there are still Arabs in the area of Bander Linga, which was once the capital of the Al-Qasimi, who still rule parts of the western shores of the Gulf.[107]

He also maintains that:

> Arab nationalists started to emphasize [the term 'Arabian Gulf'] in reaction to Iranian ambitions to invade smaller Arab states, like Bahrain, and to patrol the Gulf on behalf of the western powers, as the regional coup. Yes, Nasser and Saddam used it, but it has been used by all Arab governments, political parties, and Arab intellectuals everywhere.

He finally proposes that:

> Neither Arabs nor Iranians should try to impose their terminology on each other. The best solution is leaving things as they are. This means that Arabs continue referring to it as the Arabian Gulf and Iranians continue referring to it as the Persian Gulf. Intellectuals, journalists, and politicians of other societies are advised to use both terms with a slash (Arabian/Persian Gulf) to avoid needless problems for themselves.[108]

The above is one of a very small number of written opinions by an identified individual containing arguments *in favour* of Gulf name-changing that this author has come across. Similar views have been expressed anonymously in various forums and Internet discussion pages. As the arguments presented by Dr Najjar include major statements in favour of changing the name, a few observations are warranted.

The principles and rules governing the naming of geographical features, referred to earlier, have been taking shape over the past several decades. The majority status of the inhabitants, coastal length, number of countries and military/economic might are not even remotely considered as criteria for deciding toponyms. This is mostly because they are subject to change and often difficult, if not impossible, to gauge.

Population

The current ethnic composition of the population inhabiting the coasts of a body of water, and changes within it, have never been considered as a criterion for remaining or doing away with a toponym. In principle, this is not the way the toponyms are addressed. Historical and traditional geographical names are relics of the past, and the names persist even if the referred-to population groups are extinct or displaced. Names should not necessarily reflect, in a socially or politically correct way, the status of the features concerned. Even in the case of a vanished ethnic group after which a geographical feature is named, change is not warranted, and in fact it is not customary to change the name. Many examples in this respect are given earlier in this chapter.

Nevertheless, a discussion is warranted on the population inhabiting Persian Gulf shores, just to show the intricacies involved. First, the argument raised by Dr Najjar gives rise to a few questions: does he refer to the total populations of the Gulf-rim countries, or only those who live on its shores? In the first case, the Gulf Arab population combined does not exceed that of Iran. The total population of Arab countries bordering the Gulf is less than 65 million; the total population of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (formerly the GCC) is 33.5 million, plus Iraq's 31 million, which includes the Kurdish population (a 2009 estimate), compared with Iran's 75 million-plus (also a 2009 estimate). If he means the population that resides on the narrow coastal strip, then this would not be easy to calculate unless the depth of the strip

concerned is defined. This is just to expose the difficulty of resorting to such criteria.

Moreover, in the case of the Persian Gulf, a large Iranian minority lives on the lower coast. A considerable part of the population of the Arab littoral states consists of Arabised Persians of Iranian origin. For instance, many Bahraini Shi'is, enjoying majority status, are said to be of Iranian descent. If ethnicity is to be a basis for toponyms, the question arises as to which ethnic group should confer its name. Should the principle of majority apply? And, in this case, how should majority be established? Does it require an internationally monitored census or referendum? And what if, with the passage of time, the defined 'majority' loses its status? Should the name be changed accordingly? If so, how long and how frequently should that be the case?

More importantly, as the Persian Gulf region is rather a civilisational unit, we need to focus on the factors that have, historically, kept this region together. In the past, people living in the coastal areas of the Gulf had closer relations with one another than with those inhabiting the interiors of Iran or Arabia. They developed their own lifestyle and customs, leading to a flourishing hybrid Arab–Persian culture in the Gulf ports. According to Muqaddasi, 'Persian was spoken in the port of Suhar (modern Oman), while in Aden and Jidda the majority of people were Persian but their language was Arabic …' At the time of his visit to Bandar Lengeh in 1889–90, George Curzon remarked that 'the population of the place is partly Arab, partly Persian, partly African, partly nameless hybrid mixture that is found in every maritime town east of Port Said'.[109]

Hot summers, travel required for trade, access to the sea and the absence of settled farmers had created an appropriate environment for groups and tribes on the move between different sides of the Gulf, including all the Persian and Arabian shores. The Hawla groups of Sunni Arabs, who were bilingual and at ease on either side of the Gulf, provide an example of local people who are sometimes referred to as 'Khalijis'.[110] Thus the Gulf littoral population has mostly been either ethnically, linguistically or religiously a mixture, and it would

be rather simplistic to distinguish them as Persians or Arabs, let alone try to turn it into a basis for Gulf nomenclature.

The Length of the Iranian and Arab Coastlines

It is unheard of for name-standardisation experts to regard the length of coastlines as constituting a criterion for naming a geographical feature. For example, Iran should not and could not seek to change the term 'Sea of Oman' into 'Sea of Iran' by arguing that the length of its coast on this sea is much greater than that of Oman. The Indian Ocean rim countries do not challenge, and could not challenge, the name of this ocean based on their coasts being much lengthier than that of India.

The Balance of Power and the Naming Dispute

The relationship between toponyms and political power is another important consideration that requires explanation. Alexander Murphy contends that '[i]t is probable that the toponym *Persian Gulf* went unchallenged for so long because of the relatively recent political organization of Arab states surrounding the Gulf.'[111] Some Arab authors have shown special interest in this matter. Enumerating 'Force[s] that change geographic name[s]', I. M. Zoqurti refers to 'Political, Military, Cultural, Economic, Media, Colonization, Exploration, or simply by the force of time with gradual change and modification over time [*sic*]'.[112]

Connecting toponymy with *realpolitik*, or subjecting it to the supremacy of one nation or another at one time or another, does not stand up to scrutiny. It is true that the historical influence of the Persian Empire helps explain the persistence of the name, as does the lack of a competing well-organised political power in the region until recently. However, the presence of the Persian ethnic group on the shores of the Gulf preceded and surpassed in importance the Persian Empire. The maritime features' names should not depend on the might of political entities in the neighbourhood, or be subject to

the vicissitudes of geopolitics. The examples presented earlier also show clearly that supremacy and political influence have never been criteria for the adoption of a geographical name.

A cursory historical review confirms the irrelevance of political power in the naming of geographical features: at times, the Arabs were dominant in the region surrounding the Gulf, especially during the period following the Arab Conquest. This position of strength, however, did not affect the Gulf nomenclature. Moreover, the Arabs have not been powerful in recent centuries – but other global and regional powers rivalling Iran have been. Among colonial powers the British, despite their Arab protectorates in the Gulf and their desire to contain Iran, never tried to interfere (at least directly) with the Gulf toponym. The Ottomans were an exception – a situation that, as discussed earlier, originated from their acute power rivalry with Iran.

Suggesting linkage between nomenclature and power politics, if accepted, would only bring about confusion and uncertainty, as it would repeatedly subject geographical names to change. If toponyms were to change in proportion to power politics, 'Gulf of Oman' might be contested among Iran, Oman, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, and 'Arabian Sea' between India, Iran and Pakistan, not to mention many other toponyms in other regions (e.g. 'Gulf of Mexico'). Efforts made to standardise geographical names have come about over the past century in order to impede such misdeeds.

International v. Domestic Usage of Nomenclature

In practice, an exonym used within a particular language is acceptable; but it is unacceptable when a party tries to internationalise its preferred exonym. For example, Japan is fully aware that 'East Sea' is used domestically in the Republic of Korea, but it has never challenged this practice. However, attempting to challenge the internationally established name 'Sea of Japan' with 'East Sea' would be a totally different matter. It would set an undesirable precedent.[113] As another example, *'Arvand Rood'* is used in Iran for the Shatt al-Arab waterway, but Iran has never tried to publicise it or have the

international community adopt it. Accordingly, Iranian officials always use the internationally recognised 'Shatt al-Arab' in their international communications.

The fervour with which certain Arab countries have tried to internationalise the use of 'Arabian Gulf' has intensified the difference between them and Iran over the toponym in question. There are differences elsewhere on toponyms, such as *'la Manche'* versus 'English Channel', but these have never assumed such magnitude as a result of one party or both trying to internationalise its preferred name by channelling resources into the attempt, extending domestic law to foreign individuals and entities or renaming sport teams and other public institutions.

Notes

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Chapter Six
Governments and the Gulf Nomenclature

The efforts to change the name 'Persian Gulf' soon added a new layer of anxiety to a Middle East already coping with multiple tensions. This chapter reviews the reactive policy adopted by Iran since this issue emerged, and the actions it has taken. It will also examine how some of the most significant members of the international community have positioned themselves with regard to the Gulf nomenclature dispute.

Iran and the Gulf Naming Dispute

Iran's reaction to the Persian Gulf naming dispute was born out of apprehension regarding Britain's activities. It was believed that the British lent support to the Arabs in the Gulf and Mesopotamia with a view to undermining Iran's territorial integrity and identity by advancing Arabism and separatism. The promotion of Arabic-sounding toponyms by the British and, later, pan-Arabists, was seen in the same light by Iran. Iranian leaders between the 1950s and 1979 considered the radical doctrines of Arab nationalism not only as a threat to Iran's national sovereignty in the Persian Gulf, but also as an anti-monarchical peril.

Following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, almost everything in the region was overshadowed by the Iran–Iraq War. During this period, Arab states did not pursue the 'Arabian Gulf' project strongly, nor were they active with respect to the dispute over the three islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs. This period was an extension of that which followed the British withdrawal from east of Suez, characterised by the absence of global powers in the Gulf area. It came to an end with the cessation of the US's right to locate military bases in some

Gulf Arab countries, which had been granted during the First Gulf War; at the same time, the 'dual containment policy' that Washington had adopted since 1992 came to a conclusion.

The resulting and totally new environment in the region accorded some latitude to the Gulf's Arab littorals and, *inter alia*, allowed them to resume promoting their interests in the Gulf, including with regard to the nomenclature of the Gulf itself as well as mounting other challenges to Iran. All this led to the reactivation of the issue of the three islands, following a long period of dormancy after 1971, and now involved the UAE for the first time as well. There was also greater militancy about the Gulf's name. In this context, the Arabs of the lower Persian Gulf availed themselves of the new opportunity that had arisen from the difficulties that had arisen between Iran and the West. They strengthened their position against Tehran, which further exacerbated the disagreement over the name 'Persian Gulf'.

Iran had reacted angrily to efforts by Iraq and Egypt to change the traditional appellation of the Persian Gulf, and perceived a quest by these countries to gain international acceptance for the term 'Arabian Gulf'. From the outset, Tehran viewed such efforts as part of a master plan to de-Persianise the Gulf and undermine Iran's influence and position in the region.

Iran's View of Its Role in the Persian Gulf

Iranian leaders, whether monarchs or republicans, have always believed that Iran has a natural, historical right to play a major role in the Gulf. This belief is in deference to the realities on the ground, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Iran played a leading role in the Gulf for two millennia before Britain's ascendency in the region;
2. Iran is the only Gulf littoral political entity with state continuity since ancient times;
3. Iran has always been the largest and most populous country on the Gulf's shores;

4. The geopolitics of the Gulf play in Iran's favour: its coastline is the single longest one, stretching the full length of the Gulf's northeastern coast. It is best positioned to oversee navigational channels through the Strait of Hormuz, and has the deepest waters.

In the periods preceding and following the British withdrawal, Iranian authorities maintained that Iran should continue to play a leading role in the region, as it had throughout history. They took this position while relying on Iran's historical and geopolitical position and its real and potential military strengths. The fact that Iran was the only littoral state with a credible navy at the time of the British withdrawal helped it to establish itself as the dominant power in the Gulf.

The view of the former Shah of Iran is noteworthy here. Answering a question, he said in September 1958 that 'Iran's supremacy over the Persian Gulf is a natural thing. We already have this and shall enhance it in the future.'[1] In April 1960, he said: 'We are doing everything we can to regain our historic and natural position in the Persian Gulf.' In his memoirs, published in 1961, he wrote: 'Since we are the dominant power in the Persian Gulf, we must rapidly strengthen our navy.'[2]

At the time, as in the ensuing periods, Iran emphasised the need to reclaim Gulf autonomy from the global powers, and insisted that responsibility for the security of the Persian Gulf should rest only with the countries that surround it. These views found expression in growing diplomatic and media campaigns against the continuation of Britain's military presence in the Gulf and the outright rejection of any foreign forces replacing it. As the British withdrew, the initial US attempt to establish a small military presence in Bahrain in December 1972 faced strong opposition from Tehran. The Shah had already made clear his 'determination to prevent [the] American Navy … from replacing Britain as Bahrain's protector'. The issue was raised in an interview with the Shah in *The New York Times* in March 1969, and the complaint expressed to Minister of the Royal Court Asadollah

Alam by the US ambassador, which is referred to in the 26 March 1969 entry of Alam's memoirs.[3]

Another important aspect of Iran's Gulf policy under the Shah was its quest to maintain status quo *vis-à-vis* the Arab revolutionaries who threatened the established ruling families in the region. Iran wanted to project itself as the capable 'natural protector' of the Arab sheikhs against militant pan-Arabism. This found concrete expression in the Shah's military support to the Sultan of Oman in the face of armed opposition mounted by left-wing guerrillas in the 1970s.

As Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih contend: 'The Gulf has been intimately linked with Persia's nationalist and cultural mythology, and its symbolic dimension in Iranians' perceptions of their past greatness and historical heritage should not be minimized.'[4] And Rouhollah Ramazani suggests that 'historical and economic imperatives dictate that Iran assumes a paramount role in Gulf affairs, no matter who rules Iran.'[5]

A Unanimous Iranian Stand on the Persian Gulf Nomenclature

The Gulf naming dispute is one of the very rare issues on which there is full agreement across the full spectrum of Iranian political and non-political life, whether royal or Islamic Iran, government or opposition, inhabitants of Iran or Iranians in the diaspora. What has especially sensitised Iranians and prompted them to oppose the move was not the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' inside Arab countries; it was, rather, the persistent attempts by some Arabs to internationalise this term, as explained in the following chapter.

Broad unanimity on the Gulf naming issue among Iranians has placed certain constraints on Iran's domestic politics and left no latitude for any government to consider flexibility on the relevant issues. After all, grassroots pressure and public opinion are the most important factors that have influenced various Iranian governments over the past fifty to sixty years, regardless of their political inclinations, to stick to traditional Iranian positions on the Gulf – including its labelling. No Iranian leadership can afford to lag behind in proving its

credentials on issues such as the Gulf's nomenclature and the claim to the three islands. During a televised debate in the heat of the 2009 Iranian presidential campaign between Mehdi Karroubi and the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Karroubi criticised Ahmadinejad severely for agreeing to sit in on the summit on Gaza held in the Qatari capital, Doha, where a banner affixed on the wall of the conference room included the name 'Arabian Gulf'. Ahmadinejad fiercely defended himself on a grammatical basis, maintaining that the word 'Arabian' in the Arabic phrase was an adjective applied to members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and not the Gulf itself.

Note should also be taken that this degree of sensitivity applies only to the Persian Gulf nomenclature. In other cases, including that of the Khazar or Caspian Sea, no similar sensitivity is noticeable. Despite the fact that 'Khazar' is the name of an extinct, non-Iranian, Turkic ethnic group usually siding with the enemies of Iran, the names *'Darya-ye Khazar'* ('Khazar Sea'), favoured by other littoral states mostly of Turkic origin, and *'Darya-ye Mazandaran'* ('Mazandaran Sea') are used interchangeably in Iran. At the same time the term 'Caspian Sea' as an exonym for the same body of water has always been used in non-Persian texts produced by Iranians. In 2001, the Iranian Committee for Standardisation of Geographical Names formally adopted the term *'Darya-ye Khazar'* in Persian and 'Caspian Sea' and its variations in other languages as the formal names for the sea.[6]

Pan-Arabist Security Threat

What made Arab opposition to the term 'Persian Gulf' more disturbing to the Iranian public and government alike was its combination with other issues, such as those recurring between Iranian and Arab radicals and conservatives at different times, as well as Arab territorial claims to the Iranian province of Khuzestan and, later, the dispute over the three islands. The political context, fraught with diplomatic controversies and tensions, has further exacerbated the situation at all stages.

Apart from direct challenges to Iran, a number of developments in the wider region proved worrying. Nasser's confrontational policy against the Baghdad Pact and Iran's overall pro-Western policy finally led to a thriving working relationship between Iran and Israel. Iran had extended *de facto* recognition to Israel after the latter's creation, but the relationship was mostly inactive, and diplomatic representation was irregular. The looming outlook of Sunni Arab hegemony in the Gulf and the threat stemming from pan-Arab nationalism, originating in Cairo and reinforced by the 1958 coup in Baghdad, as well as the Soviet–Arab nexus, was threatening to Tehran. (The resulting discreet cooperation with Israel also included Turkey.) Iran's perception was also based on its sense of isolation, with an increasingly hostile Soviet Union to the north and rising Arab nationalism in the Middle East.

The scale of Egyptian military activity in Yemen, and the imminence of a British withdrawal from Aden, raised the spectre of subversion against conservative Arab governments of the Persian Gulf and threats to Iran's economic lifeline – its oil exports. Imperial Iran mobilised to defend itself against the challenge, and the Persian Gulf was to be the main battleground. Thus Tehran was troubled by the prospect of a powerful and confrontational Arab Union establishing its rule on the Gulf's Arab littoral – a prospect that appeared realistic at the time to most impartial observers. The dream of establishing an Arab unitary or federative state extending 'from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf', with Egypt at its centre and Nasser at its helm, seemed feasible for a time. With 100 million people spread out over continuous land, nearly all Muslims and all speaking Arabic, the necessary requirements for unity seemed to all be there. Had not it been for the crushing defeat that Nasser incurred in June 1967, some kind of Arab unity might not have been too far-fetched. Under such intimidating circumstances in late 1950s and early 1960s, Israel appeared to Tehran as a regional strategic asset.[7]

Iran gave serious consideration to the defence of its southern boundaries, especially by rebuilding the navy destroyed during World War Two. Growing Soviet–Iraqi and Soviet–Egyptian relations also might have implied that the Soviet threat had crossed the

Zagros Mountains and entered the Persian Gulf. These developments preceded Tehran's new approach, according a higher priority to the security of the Gulf region.

The Growing Importance of the Gulf for Iran

Moreover, the challenge to the traditional name of the Gulf, presented with emphasis on its Arab features, arrived with all its implications at a time when this body of water was acquiring unprecedented strategic importance. The littoral states had increasing interests there. Some of Iran's concerns included:

1. The growing geopolitical importance of the Persian Gulf as the only maritime outlet to the world for oil produced by Iran and other littoral states;
2. The need to preserve oil fields and installations, both coastal and offshore, and the increasing role of oil revenue to the Iranian economy;
3. Pan-Arabist rhetoric from Cairo, its increasing focus on the Gulf and the challenge it posed to conservative and monarchical regimes;
4. The 1958 coup in Iraq, which brought pan-Arab nationalism directly to the shores of the Gulf and gave rise to a series of disputes and tensions between Iran and Iraq;
5. The pan-Arab and Eastern Bloc nexus, especially at a time when tension reigned in Iran's relationship with the Soviet Union. Rapprochement between Iran and the USSR after 1962 allowed Iran to further focus and promote its presence in the Gulf;
6. The sensitivities of the period leading to the British withdrawal from the east of Suez and the years following it.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Iranians viewed the effort to change the name 'Persian Gulf' as part of the new security environment, and reacted accordingly. Iranian opposition to the attempted change in nomenclature has been predicated on three premises:

1. The name 'Persian Gulf' is a traditional, time-honoured toponym, and as such a relic of the past and a part of the region's heritage;
2. Name change creates confusion;
3. The perceived project to change the name, which might otherwise have been insignificant, was and continues to be perceived as menacing in the context of the policies maintained by pan-Arabists and later Western-oriented Arab conservative states.

The importance that Arabs have always attached to place names in general had exacerbating effects. The practice dates back to the seventh-century Arab conquest of Persia and the systematic campaign to change Persian place names into Arabic, and has continued in modern times. In 1969, following the revocation by Iran of the 1937 agreement on the Shatt al-Arab, an Iraqi newspaper, *al-Thawra*, wrote that the very existence of the name 'Shatt al-Arab' was 'decisive proof' that it belonged to the Arabs.[8] During the Iran–Iraq War, Iraqi forces engaged in a similar campaign, changing the names of almost every place they briefly occupied.

At the political level, Iran under the Shah tried to foil the policy of polarisation between Arabs and Iranians pursued by pan-Arabists, a strategy aimed at isolating Iran. To this end, Iran needed to avoid antagonising Arab leaders and thus facilitating the recruitment of more Arab nationalists. Iran needed to strike a balance between the degree to which it opposed policies such as the attempt to change the Gulf's name and the imperative of working with the conservative-moderate Arab camp. This is a dilemma that all Iranian governments have had to deal with. The Islamic Republic later sought a similar balance.

In so doing, Iran under the Shah emphasised shared aspirations with the Arab sheikhdoms, which included, primarily, both sides' interest in ensuring the status quo and peace following British withdrawal. Tehran also sought to portray Iraq as the covetous party in the Gulf, and to expose its failure to aid the Arab cause against Israel as well as its connection with an unnamed big power. On the other hand, Tehran spared no effort in taking advantage (with some

degree of success) of ever-present factionalism in the Arab world, both within the camp of the 'radicals' and between the 'radicals' and the 'conservatives'. While ignoring attempts at polarisation, the conservatives sided openly or privately with Iran in the 1970s on substantive security and political issues. Nonetheless, while acquiescing tacitly to Iran's geopolitical ascendancy, they continued to pay lip service to Arab nationalists when it came to the Gulf – including the name 'Persian Gulf', as explained in Chapter Four.

In this context, Iran organised a wide-ranging campaign to counter Arab efforts to publicise the term 'Arabian Gulf'. Iranian officials, including the Shah himself, reacted heatedly to the terms 'Arabian Gulf' or 'the Gulf'. In an interview published in the Kuwaiti daily *al-Seyassah* on 20 January 1976, the Shah protested against the 'childish naming by the Arabs of the Persian Gulf as the "Arabian Gulf"'. This was, he said, 'a fabricated name which does not exist on world maps'.[9] An exchange on the subject between the Shah and David Frost, the esteemed British journalist, is worth reviewing:

David Frost: As you know, I was across from the Gulf, the Gulf that you call 'Persian' Gulf and they call 'Arabian'.
The Shah: Why do you call it 'the Gulf'; you have been to school, haven't you?
David Frost: Yes.
The Shah: What was the name that you've read, during your school days?
David Frost: 'Persian Gulf.'
The Shah: All right.
David Frost [laughing]: Well, they call it 'Arabian Gulf'.
The Shah: Well, they can do many things.[10]

Iran soon adopted a set of policies aimed at thwarting the Arab efforts to advance the name 'Arabian Gulf'. A circular issued by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all Iranian diplomatic representations abroad refers to 'the unintentional or deliberate use of the term "Arabian Gulf" instead of "Persian Gulf"' and instructs them to 'take necessary action to correct such mistake or deliberate move'.[11]

Acting on this instruction, Iranian diplomats everywhere have opposed all references to the body of water concerned by any name other than 'Persian Gulf'. The shortened term 'Gulf' was not acceptable either. In a dispatch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Iranian ambassador to Cairo reported that, pursuant to the instruction he received from Tehran, he spoke with Abdul Khalek Hassouna, Secretary-General of the Arab League, at an Iranian National Day reception: 'I indicated to him that the point I was sharing with him is of a serious nature, and I wished that he could bring it to the attention of his colleagues in the meetings of the Arab League.' Stating that he had advised the Secretary-General that 'through changing the name "Persian Gulf" in few publications and radio programmes, you can't change historic realities', he continued:

> I indicated to him that the attempt to change the name 'Persian Gulf', which is 4,000 years old, is having very adverse effects in Iran and not only hurts the Iranian government, but it upsets any Iranian individual, and [the Arab League] won't benefit from it in any way. I pointed out that if it continues the same way, the Iranian government will have no choice, under pressure emanating from the society, but to revisit its policy of supporting the Arabs in all forums, which has been the case up to this point. The Secretary-General of the Arab League expressed his regret over this matter and promised to raise the issue in Arab League meetings.

The ambassador continued, saying that two days later, on 28 October 1956, Egyptian newspapers – while reporting on the general strikes taking place on the occasion of the arrest of Front de Libération Nationale movement leaders in Algeria, and in other articles – dropped all references to the term 'Arabian Gulf' and instead used 'Persian Gulf'. The ambassador also encloses copies of *al-Ahram*, *al-Akhbar* and *al-Joumhouria* as examples of newspapers that used 'Persian Gulf'; he stated that Radio Cairostation appeared to do the same. The ambassador concluded that, nevertheless, he was unable to give assurances that the new approach would continue.[12]

In a letter sent by the Counsellor of the Imperial Embassy of Iran in Washington, DC on 20 October 1975 to *Aviation Week &*

Space Technology, the Counsellor drew the editor's attention to an article dated 28 July 1975 in which a columnist, former USAF pilot Herbert J. Coleman, had referred to the Persian Gulf as the 'Arabian Gulf'. He expressed his 'astonishment at finding such obvious disregard for historical facts in a journal as technically advanced and reputable [as *AW&ST*])'. He assured the editor that 'the correct name for this body of water is the Persian Gulf and this fact can be amply illustrated by reference to historical evidence, to academic publications or to the works of any contemporary geographical authority'. Responding to the letter, the editor noted: 'The Counsellor was correct. Reference should have been to the Arabian Sea rather than the Arabian Gulf.'[13]

The question of Oman, discussed during the Fourth Committee of the sixteenth session of the UN General Assembly in 1961, was one of the first examples in which the name of the Persian Gulf became an issue at the UN. The Iranian representative on this committee reported to headquarters that he had cautioned the representatives of the Arab countries in advance on the use of the correct name during the meeting, saying that he would be obliged to react and thereby the issue in question would be overshadowed. According to the report, sent to the Iranian foreign ministry by Iran's mission to the United Nations, the advance warning and experience of tense debate in the previous committee session on the same issue positively affected the ambiance. Every Arab speaker except the Egyptian representative used the correct name, 'Persian Gulf'. The report adds: 'The Saudi representative especially, in his statement, cited the name "Persian Gulf" repeatedly … The Iranian representative, using the right to reply, thanked those Arab representatives who had heeded his reminder in the previous session of the Committee, and protested against the continued use of the incorrect term "Arabian Gulf" by the Egyptian representative.' He later suggested that those who claimed to combat imperialism should not act in such a way that reveals their own imperialist approach – a remark that prompted the Egyptian representative to use the right of reply not to discuss the Gulf's name but to refute the doubt cast on his government's anti-imperialist

approach. The Iranian representative again used the right to reply and raised few noteworthy points, as follows:

> One question for the Egyptian representative: why has he changed the historic, time-honoured term 'Persian Gulf', which is widely used across the globe, into the term 'Arabian Gulf', and insists on using it?
>
> Obviously, any government is free to use any name for any geographical feature inside its territory, but no state representative is allowed to change, whimsically, an established geographical name in an international organisation; otherwise the UN would turn into the Tower of Babel, in which people don't understand each other.
>
> The body of water separating Iran from Arabia has been named the 'Persian Gulf' for centuries. Even the British representative quoted passages, in the previous session, from Ibn Khaldun and al-Idrisi, Arab historians, in which both refer to the 'Persian Gulf'; whereas today the Egyptian representative mentioned, for no reason, the term 'Arabian Gulf'. If he has any reason for his claim, he would do better to raise it in the ECOSOC, so, if accepted, all governments can use the new standardised name.
>
> In the last session, the Saudi representative referred to term 'Sea of Oman' as a means to prove the existence of separate territory named 'Oman'. Now, if we changed this historical name, and, for example, referred to it as the 'Gulf of Baluchistan', I would wish to hear the reaction of the Saudi representative on that. After all, we need to apply the same logic in both cases.[14]

As already explained in Chapter Five, Iran took the matter to the UN and received the first endorsement of its view from the UN Secretariat in March 1971.

Foreign ministry communications show that Iranian ambassadors had instructions to raise the matter at the highest levels whenever and wherever the need arose. In a letter, the Iranian ambassador to Jordan refers to his latest meeting with the Jordanian prime minister on 1 May 1960, wherein he presented a copy of the newspaper *al-Urdun* in which 'Arabian Gulf' was used. He states that, according to press reports on 3 May 1960, even Hashim al-Jayyusi, Minister of Finance, used the term 'Arabian Gulf' during a meeting instead of 'Persian

Gulf'. The ambassador registered his protest on behalf of Iran against this action, in general, and to an official of the friendly and brotherly government of Jordan, in particular, and requested that the prime minister prevent the continuation of this practice.[15]

Another report indicates that this ambassador later met the prime minister over a number of issues, including the use of 'Persian Gulf'. According to his report to Iran's foreign ministry, Prime Minister Hazzaʿ al-Majali expressed regret over the issue during this meeting, and stated that 'he had no doubt that newspapers mostly use the term "Arabian Gulf" with no ill intention, and promised to take serious action on that'.[16]

The ambassador, in a follow-up, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, during which he raised the same issue. He concluded that 'the King promised to intervene by issuing the necessary orders'.[17] As explained in Chapter Four, these promises never brought about any result sought by the Iran, because moderate Arab governments did not have enough latitude, owing to pressure from pan-Arab activists inside their territory and in the region. Moreover, they needed to at least pay lip service to the pan-Arabist cause in these cases.

Other Iranian agencies, too, were alerted to the issue and instructed to act or react accordingly. The Central Bank of Iran instructed all official Iranian organisations and departments to refuse to deal with or accept any documents that included the name 'Arabian Gulf'.[18] Don Campbell, a news editor with the Publication and Radio Directorate of Reuters news agency, sent a communication dated 4 December 1962 to Iran's Ministry of Information. In it, he replies to a protest lodged with Reuters about the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' in a dispatch from Bahrain dated 19 November 1962. He replies that the term in the dispatch had been employed in a statement issued by an official local spokesman.[19]

Soon, the controversy over the Gulf label spread to many other areas. For example, a report to the prime minister by the governorate of Bandar Abbas indicates that, based on a police report from the city of Abadan on Iraqi border, a number of smuggled cigarette lighters

bearing a map of the Persian Gulf with the inscription 'Arabian Gulf' had been discovered. The document contains the handwriting of then-Prime Minister Manouchehr Eghbal, ordering the removal of the lighters from the market, pursuing the case and sharing the information with SAVAK, the intelligence agency.[20]

The Iranian government, in a significant move, established the Persian Gulf Department at the foreign ministry in June 1961. This development was indicative of the higher place Iranian authorities now accorded to the Persian Gulf on their scale of priorities. The new department was mandated to assume responsibility for all affairs relating to the Persian Gulf. It sponsored a number of seminars and research projects on the history of Persian Gulf nomenclature, which led to the publication of some literature on the issue, including the proceedings of the Persian Gulf Seminar published in 1961.[21] A collection of old maps of the Persian Gulf is among the early works published jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Sahab Cartographic Publishing House.

Iranian Policy after the Islamic Revolution

After the 1979 revolution, the pattern of Iranian–Arab relations remained fundamentally the same, while the dichotomy in the Arab world persisted. The Islamic Republic government's pro-Palestine and anti-Israel policy, along with its effort to downgrade Persian nationalism,[22] was not successful in healing the divide. Under new circumstances, the same ideologies and East–West outlooks influenced Iranian–Arab relations, but in the opposite direction. This time, the Arab nationalists, led by Syria and Libya, welcomed the Shah's overthrow; the conservative/moderate camp, led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, showed hostility, ignoring the anti-Israel aspect of the Islamic Revolution as well as the fact that Iran had begun to distance itself from its own nationalist rhetoric and the glorification of its ancient heritage. As in the past, Iraq continued with its own specific policy *vis-à-vis* Iran, nurtured by ideology and geopolitical calculation.

Accordingly, the *volte-face* in Iran's policy toward the Arab–Israeli conflict after 1979 did not change Arab-driven efforts to replace the term 'Persian Gulf'. Iran could argue that, as the name change was at least in part a reaction against Iran's pro-Israel position before the revolution, Arabs should now show appreciation for Iran's new and passionate embrace of their pro-Palestine policies.

Thus the situation did not fundamentally change with respect to Arab activism in the Persian Gulf. The Gulf's conservative/moderate states began distancing themselves from Iran. At the same time, Iran found itself on a divergent path from the Gulf states, and on a collision course with Iraq. Up to 1992, only a few factors restrained the lower Gulf states in their pursuit of Arabism in the Gulf. These included traces of Iran's ascendancy in the 1970s; Iran's success during the war with Iraq; the strength of the politico-religious messages of the Islamic Revolution received beyond Iranian borders; and the continued absence of a global power with fixed military-base rights in the Gulf. As in the previous era, the policy of polarisation – this time pushed by conservative/moderate Arabs – could not succeed, as Iran could close ranks with a number of Arab states on the basis of opposing Israel and the West. Iraq continued to be an exception, as it had been under the Shah. It succeeded in gaining support for its war against Iran from conservative/moderate Arabs through a combination of coercive diplomacy, portraying Iran as a threat and itself as a saviour, and the use of Arab nationalist slogans. Arab nationalist governments mostly sided with Iran during the war.

Arab conservative states and media, supporting Iraq in the war, echoed the rhetoric from Baghdad and its claims of a 'defensive war' on behalf of the Arab nation against the 'Persian peril'. The Gulf naming dispute was part of this, this time embraced by moderate/conservative Arab states as their own cause, rather than one imposed on them by Arab nationalists. Conversely, this time the nationalists, including Syria and Libya, aligned themselves with Iran on substantive issues, and found themselves obliged to pay lip service to moderate Arabs issues such as the Arabism of the Gulf and the three islands. On the other hand, claims and

counter-claims about the export of the Revolution made matters more complicated.

For a brief time after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, news items and statements claimed that the new Iranian authorities had suggested changing the name of the Gulf. For example, Libyan Prime Minster Abdessalam Jalloud, at a dinner given for Turkish Prime Minister Mustafa Bülent Ecevit in Tripoli on 27 January 1979, said: 'We are pleased by what we heard from the leader of the popular revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, who said that the Gulf is an Islamic Gulf. This is true. This is an Islamic Gulf and not an Arab or Persian Gulf, because we all fall under the banner of Islam … The Gulf is a bridge which connects the Arabs with their Iranian brothers and makes them one nation, the nation of Islam.'[23]

In the same respect, Gulf News Agency reported on 27 May 1979 that Sadegh Khalkhali, an Iranian religious leader and a judge of the Islamic Revolutionary Courts, 'currently [in the UAE] on a visit, has praised relations between [the UAE] and the Iranian Islamic Republic. During his meeting with Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, [UAE] Vice-President and Prime Minister, Khalkhali said: "Since the triumph of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Gulf has become an Islamic Gulf." '[24] Khalkhali had travelled to the Persian Gulf states to discuss the Iranian Revolution, but Iranian religious authorities later said that Ayatollah Khomeini had not assigned that trip to him.[25]

Despite Jalloud's statement, there is no evidence that Khomeini had ever used such a term with reference to the Gulf. Moreover, a few days after the suggestion attributed to Khalkhali, Ebrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister of Iran's revolutionary interim government, strongly denied any intention of renaming the Persian Gulf as the 'Islamic Gulf'.[26] This suggestion was not received favourably by the Gulf Arabs, either.

In September 1981, when the Arab leaders opposing the Egypt–Israel peace agreement resumed their summit in Benghazi, Libya, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, Iran's foreign minister – attending the summit as an observer – referred to the 'Persian Gulf' in his speech

during the opening session. This met with a complaint from Libya's leader, Muammar al-Gaddafi, who proposed that it should be called 'the Arab–Iranian Gulf' or simply 'the Islamic Gulf'.[27]

Nonetheless, in the 1980s, almost everything remained overshadowed by the Iran–Iraq War and Iran's upper hand in that conflict for the better part of the decade. During this time, the priority for conservative Arabs was to have Iran accept a ceasefire and enter into negotiations with Iraq. Later, a reversal in the war followed by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait drastically changed regional politics. In 1992, with the US military presence established in the Gulf and Iraqi militancy in recession, Arab conservatives focused on Iran. Thus multifaceted differences and disputes erupted that year between Iran and conservative Arabs, most noticeably in the revival of the UAE's claim to the Tunb islands and Abu Musa.

The authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran gradually made their views known about the challenges mounted by Arab nationalists, going on the offensive on a number of issues – including the Gulf naming dispute. They have, so far, been as strict in this respect, as their predecessors were. Then-Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani once said, in an interview:

> It is not at all wise for a group of countries to gather and then decide on their own to change the name of what has been historically known as the Persian Gulf to the 'Arabian Gulf'. What purpose does it serve, when your honourable neighbour is offended or a scene of insecurity is created in the region?[28]

On another occasion, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Rafsanjani (now President) warned his radical opponents in an address to Friday prayers: 'Had we helped Iraq, it would mean that they stayed in Kuwait, that they had a border with us almost all the way to the Hormuz Strait, and the Persian Gulf would be turned into the "Arabian Gulf".' He added: 'Isn't it suicidal?'[29]

In a meeting with the publishers of the *Islamic Encyclopaedia* in 1989, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei referred to the use of the 'fabricated term "Arabian Gulf" ' and said:

> Recently, the Kuwaitis published an *Atlas of History of Islam*. I'm not aware of its content, but it is a large book. Last year, the Emir of Kuwait sent me two copies of this encyclopaedia … This atlas is now being used by almost all Muslims. I say 'almost', because in this book the Persian Gulf is referred to as 'Arabian Gulf'. Even if they pay us, we won't promote it in our libraries or translate it into Persian, because 'Arabian Gulf' is a lie … In one case, they have mistakenly printed one map on which *al-Khalij al-Farsi* ['Persian Gulf'] is used. Everywhere else, in the old maps, they changed 'Persian Gulf' into 'Arabian Gulf', but in this case they missed it. The Persian Gulf/Arabian Gulf debate is not only a national issue, it is a matter of politics and belief, too.[30]

The Gulf nomenclature dispute has since cast its shadow over Iranian–Arab relations. During his trip to Tehran, trying to be diplomatic as he bid farewell, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, congratulated his host on the fine performance by the Iranian football team, and said he hoped it would make all the 'Arab–Persian Gulf region proud during the 2006 World Cup in Germany'. Ahmadinejad shot back: 'I believe you called it the "Persian Gulf" when you studied in school' – a pointed reference to the Emir's education at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in Britain. Seemingly uncomfortable, the Emir said: 'The Gulf belongs to all.'[31]

As well as making clear their views on the Gulf naming dispute, the authorities of the Islamic Republic took measures to thwart proponents of the term 'Arabian Gulf'. These measures, which correspond to similar ones adopted by the Gulf Arab states, demonstrate the magnitude of the problem with which the Gulf littoral states grapple.

Iran decided to prevent vessels bearing the term 'Gulf' instead of 'Persian Gulf' in their name from entering the country's waters. 'As certain countries have been making mischievous attempts to change the true name of the "Persian Gulf", we see the term "Gulf" used in the name of a number of vessels,' said deputy head of the Provincial Ports and Seafaring Authority, Ali-Reza Khojasteh, according to a report in *Iran Daily*. Press TV quoted him as saying: 'These vessels will be prevented from reaching the country's southern coasts from here onwards.'[32]

Iran banned *The Economist* magazine for describing the Persian Gulf as merely 'the Gulf' on a map, state television reported in June 2006. According to its source, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance had banned the importation and distribution of current and future editions. The ban would only be lifted when the journal used 'Persian Gulf', the ministry was quoted as saying.[33]

In January 1991, Iran went so far as threatening legal action against foreign journalists who referred to the Persian Gulf in their dispatches as anything other than 'Persian Gulf'. The official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) quoted the same ministry as saying: 'Journalists should avoid using fictitious names such as "Gulf" instead of the authentic and internationally recognised "Persian Gulf". Those who fail to do so will be treated according to the law.' It did not specify what action would be taken.[34]

In 2006, Iran established a committee to study the prohibition of exports and imports of goods tagged with the name 'Arabian Gulf'. 'Goods that are labelled with the term "Arabian Gulf" are obliterated, and have no right whatsoever to be brought into the country,' said the customs affairs deputy, M. R. Naderi. 'Some countries also compel Iranian exporters to tag their goods with "Gulf" instead of "Persian Gulf". We are also considering our decision on that attempt as well.'[35]

According to Iran's then-Minister for Roads and Transportation, Hamid Behbahani, in February 2010 the Iranian government announced that it would ban airlines that referred to 'Arabian Gulf' rather than the 'Persian Gulf' from its airspace. The airlines of the southern Persian Gulf countries flying to Iran were warned to use 'Persian Gulf' on their electronic display boards – 'otherwise, they will be banned from Iranian airspace for a month the first time, and upon repetition their aircraft will be grounded in Iran and flight permits to Iran will be revoked'. Although the warning seemed to be aimed at airlines based in neighbouring countries, the newspaper reported that Iran also punished a foreign employee of a domestic airline for using the politically incorrect term – a Greek employee of the Iranian commercial carrier Kish Air had been fired for using the term 'Arabian

Gulf' on a display board, and the airline had been asked to apologise over the incident.[36]

Iran's relations with its Arab friends have also sometimes been tense over issues such as nomenclature and the three Islands. Khabar Online – said to be close to Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament – reported that Khaled Mashal, the head of the political bureau of Hamas, used 'the fabricated term "Arabian Gulf" in a speech delivered during a gathering on the occasion of al-Quds Day in Damascus in 2009'. Mashal had said: 'I hope all the Islamic countries from North Africa, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Arabian Gulf, Iran, Indonesia to Malaysia close ranks in the face of the enemy.'[37] This speech drew protest from two Members of Parliament. Ghodratallah Alikhani, referring to Iranians' sensitivities over the matter, called Mashal's statement 'inappropriate', adding: 'Some try to have us and our foes on their side at the same time. We infer that they covet our interests.' Alaeddin Boroujerdi, the head of the Parliament's foreign policy commission, also responded to Mashal's speech, saying: 'His mistake in using the term "Arabian Gulf" is unacceptable.'[38] These reactions are significant, as they occurred despite Iran's close relationship with Hamas.

The Gulf Naming Dispute and Sporting Events

After the *National Geographic* episode, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven, the Gulf naming issue was ratcheted up further on Iran's scale of priorities, and public and private sectors alike paid much more attention to it. Greater sensitivity led to more action, and sporting events were hardly exempted.

Calling off the Islamic Solidarity Games because of the schism over the 'Persian Gulf' label was a culmination of the Iranian–Arab dispute over this issue. The Islamic Solidarity Games is a multinational, multi-sport event, governed by the Islamic Solidarity Games Federation (ISSF) based in Saudi Arabia. In January 2010, it cancelled the games that had been planned for Tehran in April 2010 because of Iran's intention to use the term 'Persian Gulf' on

the victory medals. The ISSF, headed by the president of the Saudi Olympic Federation, Prince Sultan bin Fahd, issued a statement after an emergency board meeting saying that Iran's local organising committee 'unilaterally took some decisions without asking the Federation by writing some slogans on the medals and pamphlets of the Games'. He added: 'Iran did not abide by the rules of the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation … [and] did not follow the decisions taken by the General Assembly of the Federation at a previous meeting in Riyadh.'[39]

Earlier, Saudi Arabia had announced that it would take part in the Games only if Iran used 'Arabian Gulf' in lieu of 'Persian Gulf'. In a meeting held in Tehran, ISSF Secretary General Saleh Gazdar and ISSF Technical Committee Chairman Muhammad Bashir al-Trabulsi asked Iranian officials to remove the term 'Persian Gulf' from all Games medals and brochures.[40]

In response to the demand by the Saudis, an advisor to the Supreme Leader on international affairs, Ali Akbar Velayati, said: 'The issue of the Persian Gulf is so important that Iran should keep its stance even if some Arab countries refuse to attend the Islamic Solidarity Games in Iran.' The former Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, told reporters: 'Iran will not exchange the name of the Persian Gulf with anything, even if some countries decline to take part in sport competitions in Iran.'[41] Following the cancellation of the Games, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said the Federation should reconsider its decision, while insisting that the waterway was indeed the 'Persian Gulf'. 'The logo and naming should be done correctly,' he said, 'based on international norms and regulations and the naming by the United Nations.'[42]

The medals that bore the words 'Persian Gulf' first appeared in 2009, and Iran was asked to change the wording first to 'Arabian Gulf' and then simply to 'Gulf'. However, both requests were refused. In the hope of breaking the impasse, the Games were postponed from October 2009 to April 2010, but, with the opening ceremony in Tehran just weeks away, the ISSF decided that Iran had 'breached the spirit of the games by politicising them' and abandoned the

competition. The statement issued by the Federation read: 'The Federation regrettably declares the cancellation of the games in Iran because the organisers did not comply with the rules of Games and the Federation's bylaws.' The first Islamic Games had been held in Saudi Arabia in 2005. The Games were originally envisaged to show sport's ability to unify nations and overcome political differences. Around 7,000 athletes from fifty-seven countries had been scheduled to take part in the event.[43]

In response to questions from Reuters, the Federation accused Iran of taking 'unilateral measures concerning logos used on printed material and medals'. Secretary-General Muhammad Qazdar said that this was a reference to Iran's planned descriptions of the Gulf. Iran's Committee for the Games criticised the decision, stating: 'In spite of convincing arguments made to the ISSF executive committee [by Iran's committee], regrettably and without presenting any logical reasons, the ISSF committee has decided not to hold the Games with Iran as the host.' An Iranian official told reporters that the Board of Directors did not have the right to interfere in the process of logo and medal designs, and hoped it would reconsider.[44]

Iranian sports associations have been involved in a number of cases relating to the term 'Persian Gulf'. To take one of many examples, the Iranian Football Federation (IFF) protested to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) over what it termed a distortion of the Persian Gulf's name in the nineteenth Gulf Cup football tournament held in January 2009 in Oman. In separate letters sent by IFF president Ali Kafashian to the FIFA and AFC presidents, he protested against the change from 'Persian Gulf' to simply 'Gulf'. He noted: 'The Gulf Cup football tournament is not officially recognised by AFC and FIFA, but the countries used the fake name in the event.'[45] Iran refused to take part in this tournament between Persian Gulf littoral countries because of this disagreement.

The Position of Foreign Governments

The United States

The United States is a relatively young nation that has had the difficult task of naming the geographical features of a vast and mostly uncharted country. Perhaps it is for this reason that the US became the first government to establish an office entrusted with standardising geographical and administrative names.

The United States Board of Geographic Names

Created in 1890, the United States Board of Geographic Names (USBGN) was the first national body set up 'to deal with contradictions and inconsistencies among many names, applications and spellings, which had become a serious problem to surveyors, mapmakers, and scientists, who needed uniform, non-conflicting geographic nomenclature'. The achievements of the USBGN are extremely valuable; it has made a great contribution to human knowledge and to the works of other nations and international organisations in the field of name standardisation. It is, therefore, appropriate to review some of its activities. The executive order issued by President Benjamin Harrison, when establishing the USBGN, reads:

> To this Board shall be referred all unsettled questions concerning geographic names which arise in the Departments, and the decisions of the Board are to be accepted by these Departments as the standard authority in such matters.[46]

The introduction to the USBGN website contains the following:

> It serves the Federal Government and the public as a central authority to which name problems, name inquiries, name changes, and new name proposals can be directed … Any person or organization, public or private, may make inquiries or request the Board to render formal decisions on proposed new names, proposed name changes, or names that are in conflict. Decisions of the Board are accepted as binding by all departments and agencies of the Federal Government.[47]

The Board gradually expanded its interests to include foreign names and other areas of interest to the United States, a process that accelerated during World War II. As well as aiming to establish the principles, policies and procedures for name standardisation, the USBGN also aspires to remove difficulties caused by inconsistent or haphazard naming, and to assure that official US documents contain correct names. Official US bodies, including diplomatic, intelligence and military agencies, rely on the USBGN for accurate names.[48]

In 1932, the first US foreign names policy statement was issued. It provided for usage of local names in the US 'unless there was an existing conventional English version'.[49] By the end of the century, the policy was to 'cooperate wherever possible' with foreign governments to use a local name, with the 'optional use' of conventional English names.[50] Thus use of the conventional English name progressed to use of a local name, retaining the option to use the English name.

The USBGN is among only a few national names authorities engaged in standardising and maintaining a database of worldwide geographic names. Hence parties to a naming dispute usually try to bring their cases to the USBGN's attention. For example, South Korean delegates met with the USBGN in April 2000 in Washington, DC to present their position on dual names for the sea that separates Korea from Japan.[51] Briefings given to US officials by the Central Intelligence Agency rely on USBGN-approved names.[52]

The US Department of State (DOS) is one of the first agencies to become part of the USBGN, and has always played a significant role. The DOS includes the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which in turn houses the Office of the Geographer and Global Issues (GGI). One of the GGI's roles is to provide DOS bureaus with current names. As all US departments are generally required to use formally correct place names in their communications with foreign governments, they also rely on names decided jointly by the USBGN and DOS.[53] Private mapping services in the US also depend on the USBGN for current names.

In the same field is the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), part of the US Department of Defense (DOD) and a

component of the US Intelligence Community. Until 2004, it was known as the National Imagery and Mapping Agency. The NGA produces maps and charts for air and marine navigation, mainly for US military purposes. It produces cartography and related products covering the entire world.[54]

The US is also a pioneer in a careful effort to not only standardise but also unify names. One example is the agreement between the US, Canada and Mexico relating to trans-boundary names, based on the 'one-place-one-name principle', applied by the USBGN to its domestic toponymy.[55]

US Agencies and the Name 'Persian Gulf'

'Persian Gulf' has been the designation sanctioned for US government use since a decision made by the DOS's Board of Geographical Names in 1917. During the Gulf War in 1991–2, 'Persian Gulf' was often in the headlines. Although it has been in use for many years, US military commanders in the region asked that the name be changed to 'Arabian Gulf':

> The name 'Persia' was no longer a country name. US relations with Iran were not good. And the US allies along the western bank of the Gulf generally were opposed to Iran and did not use the name 'Persian Gulf'. In fact, some of those countries did not accept incoming US mail if any addresses referred to the 'Persian Gulf'.[56]

The request was put before the USBGN Foreign Names Committee, which carefully studied the matter. Yet, however interesting under the circumstances, it was turned down. One argument – which has always been a major principle of the USBGN – emphasised that 'no country can change a traditional name of a feature whose territory is beyond the sovereignty of a single nation'. Another argument against the change was 'the existence of a nearby body of water already named the "Arabian Sea" between the western shore of India and the southern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula … The Persian Gulf connects with the Arabian Sea by way of the smaller Gulf of Oman, and confusion

would have been generated by having two major bodies of water with the name "Arabian"."[57]

Other specialised US federal agencies have a similar policy on the name 'Persian Gulf'. The NGA maintains a server – namely, the NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS) – that is the 'official repository of standard spellings of all foreign place names' sanctioned by the Board of Geographical Names. The GNS lists 'Persian Gulf' as the only 'conventional' name for the body of water in question. Underneath this conventional name, a list of unofficial 'variants' is also given, which contains the following names: 'Khalij al-Ajam', 'Arab Gulf', 'al-Khalij al-Arabi', 'Arabian Gulf', 'Basra Körfezi', 'Darya yi Bandar Abu Shehr', 'Khalij Faris', 'al-Khalij al-Farisi', 'Khalij-e Fars', 'Khalij-i Fars', 'The Gulf', 'Gulf of Iran', 'Persian–Arabian Gulf' and 'Persidski Zaliv'. The website containing information on names indicates that 'the geographic names in this database are provided for the guidance of and use by the Federal Government and for the information of the general public'.[58]

'Sailing Directions Pub. 172 Red Sea and the Persian Gulf' is a publication by the NGA. It covers stretches of water from the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Shatt al-Arab waterway between Iraq and Iran. Sections 13 through 17 of this work depict the different parts of the Persian Gulf, beginning with 'the Strait of Hormuz and the entrance to the Persian Gulf' and 'the Persian Gulf – Iran – Bushehr to the Shatt al-Arab'. The last section provides information about tides, currents, winds, weather, depth, navigational hazards, etc. in the Persian Gulf.[59]

The Name 'Persian Gulf' and US Political Expediency

On the basis of recognition by the USBGN and GNS of the term 'Persian Gulf' for US government use, and on the grounds of long-established domestic and global usage, all US agencies in principle acknowledge the term 'Persian Gulf'. In practice, too, it was what all US agencies adhered to unwaveringly until the late 1980s.

Among many changes brought about by the Gulf War in 1991, we can discern a wavering US policy on Gulf nomenclature – such as the request made to the USBGN by some regional US military commanders, referred to above.

Beginning in the early 1990s, and in parallel with the military base rights the US received from some Gulf Arab states, the DOD was among the first to waver on Gulf nomenclature. The US Navy in particular began using 'Arabian Gulf', mainly during the war. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted then: 'Westerners usually use the "Persian Gulf", while Arabs prefer the "Arabian Gulf". Some US military officials, in deference to the Arab partners of the multinational coalition against Iraq, have begun using the "Arabian Gulf" terminology.'[60] At the present time, the more the US federal agencies' mandates are political and the closer they are to the Arab states of the Gulf, the more they waver on the issue.

Their approach to Gulf nomenclature varies when dealing with different subjects, and even units and divisions within a single federal agency display different approaches to the case. There are also signs indicating that the more a 'cold war' between Tehran and Washington sets in, the more American officials have tended to distance themselves from the US's time-honoured recognition of the term 'Persian Gulf'. It seems that, increasingly, they are using this issue to bring more pressure to bear on Iran, in parallel with toughening sanctions.

The DOS and DOD are among the US federal agencies that display, in the most vivid way, the US's prevaricating policy. A review of the literature produced by the DOS shows that its officials are still mostly, and perhaps instinctively, loyal to the term with which they have been familiar for many years since their school and college days. For example, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in her interviews and off-the-cuff comments as well as reports and statements on global and regional issues, has referred to the 'Persian Gulf' or 'the Gulf'; to take one instance, then-Secretary Clinton – in her interview with George Stephanopoulos of ABC on 11 January 2011 – discussed the issue of 'some kind of conflict in the Persian Gulf which would disrupt oil supplies'.[61]

A fact sheet issued by the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, dated 29 June 2012 and titled 'US Relations with Saudi Arabia', addresses 'the two countries' shared interests in the Persian Gulf'.[62] In another major report, titled 'Trafficking in Persons Report 2012', the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons uses the term 'Persian Gulf' in the first instance and 'the Gulf' afterward.[63] The website www.travel.state.gov, which is a service of the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the DOS, uses the 'Persian Gulf' consistently. For example, in the UAE country description, it refers to 'the possibility of terrorist attacks against US citizens and interests in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula'. The page also displays a map of the UAE with the adjacent part of the Gulf labelled 'Persian Gulf'.[64] The same goes for other Gulf countries, each of which is depicted with a similar map. One map from www.travel.state.gov depicts Kuwait and the adjacent part of the Persian Gulf labelled as such.[65]

Despite the official position on the use of the term 'Persian Gulf' in the State Department and the White House, occasionally and in specific circumstances another term has been used to address a different audience. For example, President Barack Obama used the term 'Gulf' in his speech in Cairo in 4 June 2009. Elsewhere, Secretary of State Clinton was 'pleased to announce the appointment of Dennis B. Ross to the position of Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Gulf and Southwest Asia'.[66] The omission of the word 'Persian' appeared to defy official usage by the DOS; only two weeks earlier, it had issued its latest travel advisory for the 'Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf'. The question was whether this alteration was 'intended as an insult or as a signal of a tough line', as Farideh Farhi, a professor at the University of Hawaii, asked.[67] One blogger asked: 'Which "Gulf?" Gulf of Mexico? Gulf of Aqaba? Gulf of Tonkin? Gulf of Aden? Gulf of Carpenteria? There are so many of them!'[68]

On 20 October 2010, at a press briefing on arms sales to Saudi Arabia, Andrew Shapiro, Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs, read from a prepared statement and announced the largest US arms deal in history: a $60 billion contact with Saudi Arabia:

> [The arms sale] will send a strong message to countries in the region that we are committed to support the security of our key partners and allies in the Arabian Gulf and broader Middle East. And it will enhance Saudi Arabia's ability to deter and defend against threats to its borders and to its oil infrastructure, which is critical to our economic interests.[69]

Almost a week later, on 26 October 2010, Kurt M. Campbell, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, briefing on Secretary Clinton's upcoming travel to the Asia-Pacific Region said: 'During the trip we'll be talking about piracy issues in the Arabian Gulf.'[70] As the *Guardian's* former Middle East editor Brian Whitaker commented on these two briefings, the phrase 'broader Middle East' clearly included the contentious stretch of water – why was it necessary to mention the Gulf (Persian or otherwise) at all? Referring to the Campbell briefing a week later, Whitaker opined: 'This is too much of a coincidence to be accidental; it suggests a change of policy.' He added: ' "Persian Gulf" has been the official American term since 1917 and in the absence of any explanation from the state department we can only speculate about why it has suddenly become Arabian. There's no logical reason for it, except as a rather petty gesture calculated to annoy Iran.'[71]

Following a protest by Iranians living in the US and a letter – signed by thousands – to Secretary Clinton, a State Department official 'cautioned against reading too much into the incident', saying there was no 'set policy' on which term to use.[72]

If there was no 'set policy' on which term to use in the DOS and the White House (which would constitute a deviation from formal US policy on Gulf nomenclature), then the US Navy, especially its Fifth Fleet based in the Persian Gulf, would seem to have gone extra miles in using the term 'Arabian Gulf', and was very close to adopting it as its own formal policy. In general, the DOD, initiating a wavering policy on the Gulf name, has gone furthest in pandering to its Arab partners and providers of military bases. Since the late 1980s, proportionate to the increase in military cooperation between the US and Arab Gulf states, the DOD has shown a

growing readiness to please them in what might appear in its eyes to be a mere matter of semantics.

The Pentagon began referring to the Gulf in official statements in September 1987 as the 'Arabian Gulf'. Then, US military units were reflagging and escorting Kuwaiti oil tankers at the height of a 'tanker war' towards the end of the Iran–Iraq War. At the time, a spokesman for the DOD said 'this usage was adopted out of deference to a number of Arab countries'.[73] At the same time, some press reports indicated that 'American military spokesmen in Riyadh were asked by Saudi officials to stop referring to the "Persian Gulf", as it is commonly known in the US. They have now started calling it the "Arabian Gulf." '[74] Gradually, various branches of the US armed forces have issued directives to their members to use 'Arabian Gulf' when operating in the area, partially to follow local conventions or simply to follow local laws that ban the use of 'Persian Gulf'.

At some point, presumably around 2010, the US Navy issued a short style guide that held that Navy editors and writers are required to 'follow the most recent edition of the Associated Press Stylebook except as noted in this US Navy Style Guide'. The following two entries refer to the question at hand:

> **Arabian Gulf: use instead of Persian Gulf**
> **Persian Gulf: use Arabian Gulf. 'Gulf' is acceptable in second reference. Note: The Arabian Sea is its own body of water and should not be confused with references to the Arabian Gulf.**[75]

The style guide is not dated, and there is no indication as to when the two entries about the Gulf were published. However, judging from the massive protests in the Iranian diaspora and by the Iranian government and media, we may assume that the publication date was December 2010 or a little earlier. Lieutenant Myers Vasquez, a Navy spokesman, told journalists he was not sure when the style guide entry was published, or how it first attracted attention. He added: 'The Navy, which operates a major base in Bahrain, has used the term "Arabian Gulf" unofficially for more than twenty years.' He suggested that the term was employed out of deference to US

allies in the region. 'It's not something we just changed,' he said. 'Our partners in the region use it, and so do we.' Reacting to the protests against the entry, the Navy first posted a message on its Facebook wall welcoming discussion. Later, it posted an explanation: ' "Arabian Gulf" is the naming recognized by our regional Arab partner nations and used by the US Navy in the Fifth Fleet area of operations.' It then posted again, stating that 'continuous disruptive posts' were not benefiting the majority of readers, and would be deleted.[76]

Another explanation by a US Navy spokesperson, addressing the protests by Iranians, reads as follows:

> … [W]e are aware of the long and proud history of the Persian people … We are also well aware of the long history behind the origin of the name of the Persian Gulf … The term 'Arabian Gulf' (versus) Persian Gulf is used by naval forces including our regional partners there for years. We use this term in press releases, news stories, and photos coming from the Navy in the region. The often cited Navy Style Guide that says to use the term 'Arabian Gulf' (versus) Persian Gulf is really only applicable to them since commands in their area would be the only naval forces publishing stories in the region. In most other respects (nautical charts and publications for example) the historic name of Persian Gulf is used. We value and respect the partners with whom we serve around the globe, and mean no harm or insult to any people.[77]

However, the term 'Arabian Gulf' does not appear to be used across the military, as indicated in the post quoted above. The DOD's 2009 style guide calls it the 'Persian Gulf', explicitly stating: 'Do not use Arabian Gulf as there is already an Arabian Sea.' The terms 'Persian Gulf War' and 'Gulf War' have traditionally been used interchangeably to describe the 1990–1 war in Iraq.[78] It only points to the confusion arising from attempts to stick to principles while appeasing different parties as required by day-to-day politics.

Examples of the confused use of different names for the Gulf abound. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, in a briefing on 14 November 1997, said: 'Earlier today I signed an order instructing the aircraft carrier, the USS *George Washington*, to move from the

Mediterranean Sea to the Arabian Gulf.' While he used 'Arabian Gulf' in the first instance and 'the Gulf' subsequently, journalists present at the briefing used 'Persian Gulf' or 'the Gulf' in their questions.[79] On 8 October 1997, a journalist asked the DOD spokesman why the carrier *Nimitz* was rushing toward the Persian Gulf. The spokesman's reply began: 'The deployment of our aircraft carrier USS *Nimitz* to the Arabian Gulf …'[80] And so on.

In the meantime, Iran continued to object to the use of any term other than 'Persian Gulf'. Iranians, including those living in the US, staged high-profile protests as well. Following an encounter between Iranian and American naval forces on 6 January 2008, Tehran rejected a message from Washington because it twice used the term 'Gulf' instead of 'Persian Gulf' when discussing the incident between US warships and Iranian patrol boats in the Strait of Hormuz. An Iranian foreign ministry official told IRNA that his government would consider the content of the US message once a 'revised version' was received.[81]

A review of US policy on Gulf nomenclature would be incomplete without taking a brief look at the position taken by the US Congress, which uses the name 'Persian Gulf' uniformly in legislation such as the 'Persian Gulf Conflict Education Equity Act' adopted by Congress on 5 February 1991. In another adopted act, a 'Persian Gulf veteran' is defined as 'a veteran who served on active military, naval, or air service in the Southwest Asia Theatre of operations.'[82]

While the formal policy of Congress is to use 'Persian Gulf' – as reflected in Congressional documents – some members are inconsistent on the matter. For example, in an exchange of letters between then-House Speaker Dennis J. Hastert and the ambassador of Bahrain to Washington, the term 'Arabian Gulf' drew protests from Iran. A letter of complaint maintained that 'such a distortion adversely affects the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of Americans of Iranian descent, not to mention the Iranian people as a whole ...'[83]

We may conclude that 'Persian Gulf' continues to be the official name recognised by the US and, as discussed in the following chapter,

by US academic and cultural establishments. The US Navy's position on usage, as well as some inconsistency exhibited by the DOS, appears to be on account of deteriorating relations with Iran. This situation has allowed proponents of 'Arabian Gulf' to find a more receptive audience within various US administrations, especially where the matter of US forces stationed on Arab soil is concerned. The same reasons occasionally cause some officials from other US agencies to use 'Arabian Gulf' as a calculated gesture to please their Arab counterparts.

The United Kingdom

The history of Britain's approach to the issue of Gulf nomenclature was reviewed at length in Chapters Three and Four. Here, certain aspects of recent UK government policy – or rather, lack of policy – are discussed briefly.

The United Kingdom's naming agency, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for Official British Use (PCGN) has endorsed the term 'Persian Gulf' as the correct name. The PCGN was set up in 1919 to advise the British government on geographical designations for places and features outside the UK. The PCGN also ensures coordination among different government departments by providing approved geographical names.[84] Participating in the PCGN's activities are representatives from the British Broadcasting Corporation Monitoring Service; the Intelligence Collection Group (ICG – formerly Defence Geospatial Intelligence); the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; Defence Intelligence; Government Communications Headquarters; the Hydrographical Office; the Ordnance Survey; the Royal Geographical Society; the Institute of British Geographers; and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.[85]

The PCGN has traditionally worked with its foreign counterparts, such as the USBGN and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, and cooperated in publishing joint works such as the 1994 'Romanization Systems and Roman-Script Spelling Conventions'.[86]

It would recommend, as a general guide, the use of English conventional names or exonyms for features beyond a single sovereignty.[87] This is the principle underlying the endorsement of the term 'Persian Gulf': it is a conventional name for an open sea, beyond a single sovereignty and in part beyond any sovereignty. The term is reflected in some of the first documents the committee issued, in the 1920s, and has been used in its documents and papers ever since. The paper titled 'IRAN: Religion, Nationalism and Toponymy', originating with the PCGN and published in 2003, is an example in which the term 'Persian Gulf' is used.[88]

A letter dated 27 July 2001, from Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State Ben Bradshaw to the Scottish MP Lynda Clark, responds to her enquiry about 'the name for the Persian Gulf'. In the letter, it is specified that 'Her Majesty's Government accepts the advice of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for Official British Use that the correct term for the body of water between Iran and Saudi Arabia is "The Persian Gulf"'.[89]

The adoption by the BBC, from the early 1970s, of the generic term 'the Gulf' in lieu of 'Persian Gulf', spread to some other sections of the British media and to some UK agencies. As in the US, the UK Defence Ministry is at the forefront of those who prefer 'Arabian Gulf' or simply 'the Gulf'. The officials of this Ministry have adopted a wavering policy *vis-à-vis* Gulf nomenclature, similar to that of their American counterparts. This policy has also led to a total lack of consistency in relevant newscasting. In a factsheet released by the UK Ministry of Defence titled 'Operations in Iraq: News and Events, January–December 2008', all three appellations are used, i.e., 'Persian Gulf', 'Arabian Gulf' and 'the Gulf':

1. 21 August 2008: 'A 1940s Lancaster bomber gave a stylish send-off to HMS Lancaster as she left Portsmouth for operations in *the Gulf*.'
2. 20 May 08: 'Royal Navy Mine Countermeasures teams have been undertaking an operation in *the Persian Gulf* to locate …'

> 3. 6 May 08: 'Royal Navy frigate HMS *Chatham* has assumed responsibility for maritime security duties in the Northern *Arabian Gulf* (NAG) …' [Author's italics.][90]

A press release issued on 22 May 2012 by the UK Ministry of Defence is a striking example of confusion, in which all three appellations are used. Titled 'First woman to command a major Navy warship', it gives the officer's biography, which reads, in part:

> Commander Sarah West … spent the next few years qualifying as a bridge watch-keeper, deploying to the Balkans, *the Persian Gulf* and … She helped coordinate UK operations in the *Gulf* … Her time on HMS *Pembroke* included eight and a half months deployed on operations in *the Arabian Gulf*.[91] [Author's italics.]

This is exactly the type of situation that efforts to standardise geographical names have always tried to thwart. Nevertheless, it should be noted that, during the US-led invasion of Iraq beginning in 2003, the term 'Northern Arabian Gulf' was in use in news releases put out by the UK's Ministry of Defence. For instance, in a statement to MPs, Defence Secretary Des Browne said that fifteen sailors and marines arrested by Iran were part of a coalition task force operating 'in the northern Arabian Gulf', under the authority of a UN resolution. Iran issued a formal complaint to the British government in which, it argued, 'the name "Persian Gulf" was distorted'. It reminded the Foreign Office that it was, with regret, a distortion 'repeatedly done by other officials of the UK Ministry of Defence'.[92]

The three appellations for the Gulf are also used on the Foreign Office's website. In the Iran country profile, the Bahrain country profile and the travel advice for Iran, 'Persian Gulf' is used. In the Kuwait country profile, 'Arabian Gulf' is used instead.[93] Nonetheless, Foreign Office officials almost always use the term 'the Gulf'.

As discussed in Chapter Four, over the past two centuries Iran has remained highly suspicious of Britain's intentions, and of British designs on its territorial integrity. Whether illusory or factual, this suspicion has been stoked intermittently by words or actions

attributed to Britain's association with Arab states and commercial considerations. One example was the use of the strange term 'Gulf of Arabia' in a prepared address by Prime Minister Gordon Brown to the UK Low Carbon Economy Summit in 2008. Brown said: 'The North Sea, which has passed its peak in terms of oil and gas supplies, will be turned into the equivalent for wind power of what the Gulf of Arabia is for oil.'[94] Iran's embassy in London criticised the prime minister in a letter sent to the Foreign Office, describing it as another example of Britain's hostile attitude towards Iran.

Certain British institutions, which use any designation other than the standard nomenclature, retract such usage when confronted by Iranians – implying that some of them have acted without any firm conviction. The British Council issued an apology in April 2007 after a complaint by Iranians over a publication on the position of English as a global language. 'As the UK's international cultural relations agency, we acknowledge the sensitive nature of this issue and apologise for any offence that this may have caused,' a spokesman said. He continued: 'In response to the matter, we have changed the content of the online version of our commissioned research English text, and all subsequent reprints of the research will now reflect this change with immediate effect.'[95]

NATO's Place Name Policy

Within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a policy document, 'Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 3689: Place Names Spelling on Maps and Charts', has the function of ensuring that NATO maps and charts produced by member states use standardised or consistent place names. It derives from the need for military units from different countries involved in operations to use same place names on their maps and charts. The STANAG permits some variations of standardised names, and allows cartographers to show different names in parentheses to satisfy local naming customs.[96]

NATO has also issued a document concerning gazetteers, 'Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 2213: Gazetteers'. It gives

instructions that member states must follow in the course of producing gazetteers of their own territories or other areas. The instructions closely follow those defined by the US National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency,[97] which uses the term 'Persian Gulf'.

Russian Place Name Policy

Significantly, the Soviet Union, despite its treaty alliance with Iraq, 'refused to be drawn into the Persian Gulf versus Arabian Gulf controversy and continued to use the waterway's proper name'.[98] In 1967, the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution, the Soviets published an atlas before the British announced their withdrawal from the east of Suez; it identified the 'Persian Gulf', and had the three islands of Abu Musa and Tunbs belonging to Iran.[99] In a joint statement issued following the visit of the Shah of Iran to the Soviet Union in October 1972, 'Persian Gulf' was used. More importantly, the same term was used in the statement issued in April of the same year, following the visit of Saddam Hussein to the Soviet Union.[100]

The later Russian Federation remained largely committed to using the conventional nomenclature. At the present time, it has consistently recognised 'Persian Gulf'. Two examples from many on the website of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs follow.

A press release dated 6 February 2012, issued by the Russian foreign ministry, describes talks between Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov and Khalid al-Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain. It states that they addressed, *inter alia*, 'the issue of collective security in the Persian Gulf'.[101] The term 'Persian Gulf' is also used in an article by Lavrov titled 'International Relations in a Turbulent Zone: Where are the Points of Support?', released to the press on 29 December 2011. In a joint press conference with his American counterpart in Washington on 13 May 2011, Lavrov said: 'Russia, the European Union, and the Arab League and the Persian Gulf states insist that Syrian opposition and the other side would start negotiations …'[102] Meanwhile, a search on the Russian foreign ministry website for 'Arabian Gulf' returns no results.[103]

China's Place Name Policy

In the 1970s, the Chinese government, within the parameters of its 'three worlds' policy, opposed what it called Soviet and American expansionism and supported emerging power centres. It placed Iran (then under the Shah) in the third group, and supported Iran's military role in what the Chinese press referred to as the 'Persian Gulf'. According to a report by the Iranian embassy in Beijing, the newspaper issued by the official Xinhua news agency referred to 'Iraqi policy in the Persian Gulf' in an article about a Chinese state official's visit to Iraq, and maintained that 'Iran and Iraq [jointly] announced that the Persian Gulf region should stay free from foreign intervention'.[104] At the same time, Chinese press commentaries aimed at Arab states in the Gulf used the term 'Arabian Gulf'.[105] Yet a search on the Chinese foreign ministry website for the words 'Persian Gulf' returned five or six results, mostly in joint statements with Iran. A similar search for 'Arabian Gulf' returned none – suggesting that China prefers the term 'Gulf'.

Turkey's Place Name Policy

The policy of the Ottoman Empire on the nomenclature of the Gulf was discussed at length in Chapter Three. Traditional under the Ottomans, the on-and-off usage of the term *Basra Korfezi* ('Gulf of Basra') as an exonym in reference to the Persian Gulf has persisted in Turkey until the present time. However, Turkish authorities have never tried to promulgate or internationalise this term in their interaction, and have always translated it as 'Persian Gulf' in non-Turkish texts and documents – thus recognising its international usage.

A Google search for the term *Basra Korfezi* yields about 35,000 results, with nearly 500 for *Fars Korfezi* (mostly from Persian websites in the Turkish language, such as the Turkish sections of IRNA, the Islamic Republic News Agency and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting respectively). Many news websites, in addition to those related to the Turkish government, regularly use the term *Basra Korfezi*. Examples include the Turkish Historical Society; the

office of the Turkish Prime Minister; the Turkish section of Voice of America; *Zaman* magazine; the Ministry of Culture and Tourism; *Hürriyet* newspaper; the Turkish section of the *National Geographic* online; and the Turkish sections of broadcasters such as CNN and the BBC.

Diplomatic records indicate that the use of the term *Basra Korfezi* in Turkey has not been consistent, and a combination of both *Fars Korfezi* and *Basra Korfezi* has been used. Iranian officials and civilians alike have expressed discontent for many decades about use of the latter term. According to a report sent by Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister's Office,[106] the periodical *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, published in Istanbul, ran an article titled 'The Persian Gulf' on 20 November 1940. A 1961report, by the press attaché of the Iranian embassy in Ankara, states that:

> At the peak of the Kuwait crisis, Turkish newspapers included maps in their stories about the developments. The newspaper [*Hürriyet*] used the term 'Gulf of Basra' for the Persian Gulf, about which I sent a letter to the newspaper's editor-in-chief asking for the [misnomer] to be removed. Checking the records, we discovered that, in the past, the Turkish Military Academy had used the term 'Gulf of Basra', harking back to the Ottoman period, to which the Embassy reacted by submitting a *note verbale* to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and we received a 'favourable reply'.[107]

Referring to the above report, the foreign minister wrote to the prime minister, informing him that instructions had been issued to the Iranian embassy in Ankara to raise the issue with the Turkish officials and check Turkish textbooks to see if the correct name was being used with reference to the Persian Gulf.[108]

The embassy of Iran in Ankara, in its communication no. 1713 dated 4/7/1340, explained that it made the necessary effort to discourage the use of the term *Basra Korfezi*, which, like *Acem halısı* for 'Persian carpet', is a relic of the Ottoman period. Then it states that it sent a *note verbale* to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and received a reply in which the foreign ministry indicated that state radio would henceforth use the term 'Persian Gulf'.[109]

It should be noted that, according to diplomatic records, Iran's attention to the use of 'Gulf of Basra' in Turkey mostly dates back to the early 1960s, i.e. at the peak of Iran's involvement in the nomenclature dispute with Arab nationalist countries.

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Chapter Seven
Non-Governmental Entities and the Term 'Persian Gulf'

The term 'Arabian Gulf' was unheard of outside the Arab world before the 1970s. It slowly began to gain international currency from the early years of that decade, beginning with its adoption by entities doing business with Iraq and Egypt. Pursuant to outlawing the term 'Persian Gulf' inside their territories and replacing it with 'Arabian Gulf' in the 1960s, a number of Arab governments attempted to ensure that the latter label was employed at the international level. In parallel, Arab efforts were assisted by the decreasing influence of Iran as a political and economic priority for many countries in the West following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, together with coverage by journalists based in Arab countries of several crises in the region.

This chapter discusses these efforts, and the reactions they provoked within Iran and in Iranian communities abroad.

Arab efforts to internationalise the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' have taken place mainly through links with the foreign partners of Arab states in the spheres of commerce, politics, the military, the media, academia, sport and the arts. These efforts have not generally been direct – unlike those of the Republic of Korea, for example, which has challenged the use of 'Sea of Japan' and advocates instead the international adoption of a dual nomenclature for this body of water (adding 'East Sea'). Seoul has raised the issue at meetings of the UNGEGN and the UNCSGN; it has also held international seminars on the subject, and finally entered into negotiations with Japan (as explained in Chapter Five). The Korean approach aims to follow the international consensus that 'individual countries [cannot] impose

specific names on the international community, and standardization [can] only be promoted when a consensus exist[s].'[1] No comparable attempts appear to have been made by any Arab states.

As noted, Arab efforts to promote the term 'Arabian Gulf' have intensified over nearly four decades since the Iranian Revolution and the consequent weakening of Iran's relations with the international community. Regional wars in which foreign forces have fought from bases inside Arab territory, along with increases in oil revenue, have also played a role. Moreover, Arab states bordering the Gulf have grown considerably more influential. The emirate of Abu Dhabi alone, in trying reinforce its position within the UAE as the citadel of culture, sport and economic development, opened a branch of the Louvre Museum in 2017, and a branch of the Guggenheim is in development; a government fund, the Abu Dhabi United Group, acquired a controlling interest in the British Premier League football club Manchester City in 2008 for over GBP 200 million and transformed it into a premiership team by 2010; and in 2008, the emirate announced its intention to invest USD 1 billion in film production.[2] Such influence has, presumably, aided the case for the preferred Arab terminology with reference to the Gulf.

Private Entities

As explained in Chapter Three, there is a consensus in academic circles that the use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' was virtually unknown before the late 1950s, when it was popularised by pan-Arabists. Throughout the 1960s, foreigners in partnership with Iraq and Egypt in particular would have been presented with (and at times, no doubt, been required to use) the new name. In the 1970s, during the oil-price boom, the use of 'Arabian Gulf' would have increased – all the more so as the oil industry in Arabia grew and the region acquired a sizeable Western population.

Internationalisation of the term 'Arabian Gulf' has developed in the following ways.

Academia and Research Institutions

Over the past few decades, a number of academic and research institutions have been set up in Arab countries with names such as the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain; the Centre for Arabian Gulf Studies at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia; the Arabian Gulf Studies Centre at Basra University, Iraq; the Centre for Kuwait and Arabian Gulf Studies at Kuwait University; and the Arabian Gulf Centre in Egypt. Not only has the term 'Arabian Gulf' been used in these territories, but its promulgation in the academic sphere and in the relevant literature has surely had the effect of encouraging its use abroad.

In accordance with the preferred terminology in the Arab world, US university campuses located in the UAE omit 'Persian Gulf' from course materials, and, as we shall see, one professor at an American university in the UAE went so far as to influence the National Geographic Society to employ both terms for the Gulf in its eighth edition of the *Atlas of the World*.

Gulf Arab funding is a controversial issue in the US's higher-education sector. According to a professor of education reform at the University of Arkansas, 'Arabian Gulf gifts and contracts to US universities have exceeded $321 million since 1995. That's more than 16% of all reported gifts and contracts from foreign sources.'[3] To put the issue into perspective, it should be noted that the economies of the Gulf Arab countries that donate this money represent less than 2 per cent of global GDP (excluding the US); thus these states' share of foreign gifts to US universities is eight times larger than their share of global GDP.[4] What are they trying to achieve through this type of generosity? The question is pertinent, as influencing US academic and think-tank communities on the Israeli–Palestinian question is no longer as urgent for most Arab countries (especially Gulf Arab states) as it was between the 1950s and 1990s. Issues pertaining to Iran and the Gulf have ranked higher on their scale of priorities since the 1979 revolution in Iran, and ranked higher still following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

From time to time, Arab contracts awarded to American and British higher-education institutions, as well as gifts made to these institutions, are the subject of controversy. In 2006, Georgetown and Harvard came under fire for receiving USD 20 million each from Saudi Arabia for their Islamic Studies departments. Similar programmes at Berkeley and the University of Arkansas have also accepted money from the Saudis. Former Congressman Anthony Weiner accused the Saudis of 'trying to cleanse their bloody hands by taking contributions to institutions like Georgetown and Harvard'.[5]

Donations from Arab states to higher-education institutions in other major Western countries, especially in Britain, are also common. Between 1995 and 2008, eight universities – Cambridge, Oxford, Exeter, Durham, the London School of Economics (LSE), University College London, Dundee and City – accepted more than GBP 233.5 million from 'Muslim rulers and their compatriots'.[6] In March 2011, 'extensive links between the LSE and the Gaddafi family' made headlines in the British press and sparked a media firestorm.[7] Other examples include a donation of USD 14 million by the UAE to the LSE, plus a further USD 4 million to endow the university's Sheikh Zayed Theatre (named after the Abu Dhabi-born ruler whose foundation funds publications and lectures); a payment of USD 119 million to Oxford's Centre for Islamic Studies 'from a dozen Middle Eastern rulers'; and a donation of USD 12.7 million to the universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh by the House of Saud.[8]

It should be noted that Gulf Arab donations, though disproportionately high, are not very significant compared to the huge budgets of higher education institutions, especially in the US. The point is not that this money can significantly influence and alter university priorities and policy; however, it can, potentially, have an impact on the output researchers who specifically work on issues of interest to Gulf Arabs, and on the small circle of Middle East Studies departments and their publications.

There are indications that, in many cases, financial and other pressures such as work permits for researchers, journalists and archaeologists in Arab countries have played a role in inducing

some individuals and institutions to reconsider issues such as the Gulf nomenclature. Examples with regard to different branches are provided in this chapter.

Research institutions in some Arab countries, such as those referred to earlier, have played an active role in establishing extensive links with some universities, think tanks, cartographic centres, etc. around the world; links that require foreign partners, one way or the other, to adopt the new name for the Gulf or at least to avoid using the traditional name. Moreover, some branches of foreign universities in Arab countries are required to omit the term 'Persian Gulf' from their publications. Elizabeth Monroe refers to such mounting pressure: '… [T]here is even a feud about its name, constraining bystanders to call it the Arabian Gulf when talking to Arabs.'[9]

The publication of a number of books, especially from the 1980s onwards, has contributed to the increased ubiquity of the 'Arabian Gulf' terminology. Four such books (published in Europe and North America) are:

1. Pridham, B. R., *The Arab Gulf and the West*, London: Croom Helm and the Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, University of Exeter, 1985;
2. Potts, Daniel T, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity, vols I & II*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991;
3. Rice, Michael, *The Archaeology of the Arabian Gulf, c. 5000–323* BC, London and New York: Routledge, 1994;
4. Olsen, P. R., *Music in Bahrain: Traditional Music of the Arabian Gulf*, Moesgaard: Jutland Archaeological Society (Moesgaard Museum) and the Ministry of Information, Bahrain, 2002.

Efforts by some academics to reconcile their commitments to their Arab sponsors with their need to maintain their academic integrity have led to some awkward situations.

Michael Rice was a British archaeologist who lived in Arab countries for decades. In his book (listed above), he describes Bahrain thus: 'The island lies in the shallow waters of the Arabian (sometimes called the Persian) Gulf …'[10] The parenthetical aside suggests that

the latter is a secondary name, ignoring historical fact. He also writes: 'The Gulf which divides Arabia from Iran … is most generally described simply as "the Gulf"'. However, he admits the confusion that this arbitrary naming may bring about, continuing: 'This results in the infinite confusion of those living in the Americas, to whom the term generally has meant the Gulf of Mexico.'[11]

The use of different terms for a geographical feature (sometimes in a single paragraph, and even in one line) is a difficulty associated with the avoidance of the more common name for the Gulf. Interestingly, when Rice quotes other authors from Arrian and Strabo in the third and second centuries BC to Sir William Flinders Petrie, a British archaeologist of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he uses 'Persian Gulf'. Thus Rice finds himself obliged to use both terms, despite the title of his book. 'Persian Gulf' is referred to in quotations and sources almost as often as 'Arabian Gulf', if headers are not taken into account.

Confronted with the difficulty of using an unconventional name for the Gulf, B. R. Pridham, in his book *The Arab Gulf and the West* (listed above), explains rather apologetically to his readership that '[t]he expression "Persian Gulf" has occasionally been used [in this book] when quoting a reference in an original or legal document. This naturally implies no political prejudice.'[12] Later, with regard to his use of the term 'Gulf' and 'Gulf States', he writes that this 'does not imply a lack of awareness on the author's part that … Western geographers have traditionally characterized the area of water in question as the "Persian Gulf" '.[13]

In his book *Education in the Arab Gulf States and the Arab World*, Nagat El-Sanabary explains: 'The term "Arab Gulf" is used instead of "Persian Gulf" because this book deals only with the Arab states of the Gulf; and also because the Arabs prefer the former term.'[14]

Ali A. Hakim, in *The Middle Eastern States and the Law of the Sea*, notes:

> It is not intended to deal with the controversy regarding the use of 'Arabian' or 'Persian Gulf'. In a work largely concerned with Arab States, 'Arabian' seems more appropriate. However, the term

> 'Persian Gulf', as used in various quotations and documents I relied upon in this book, will remain unchanged.[15]

In fact, on account of Hakim's use of quoted sources, 'Persian Gulf' is used at least as frequently in his book as 'Arabian Gulf', if not more. Another author, Leon Carl Brown, offers the following explanation in a footnote to an essay on Middle Eastern foreign policy:

> Arabs have insisted that this body of water, long known as the Persian Gulf, be called the Arab Gulf. The situation is such that to designate the Gulf as either Arab or Persian becomes a political statement. Seeking to avoid that problem, many simply refer to 'the Gulf' and that available dodge will be adopted here.[16]

One major difficulty arising from the alteration of the standard name for a geographical feature is the potential for distortion. For example, while Rice describes in detail the office of the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, he never cites this title in full. He refers to it as 'the Political Resident at Bushire [Bushehr]' or simply 'the Political Resident', which fails to convey the mandate and jurisdictional limits of this office.[17] He only gives the title in full when citing his source in the bibliography.

The naming controversy has not spared historical texts either. The monograph mentioned in Chapter Three, subtitled 'Historical and Other Information Connected with the Province of Oman, Muskat, Bahrain and Other Places in the Persian Gulf', is a case in point. It is a selection from the records of the Bombay Government concerning Arabia, Bahrain, Muscat and Oman, Qatar, the Pirate Coast and the islands of the Persian Gulf, compiled and edited in 1856 by R. Hughes Thomas with a new introduction given by Robin Bidwell in the 1985 reprint edition. Bidwell, who from 1968–90 was Secretary and Librarian of the Middle East Centre at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge, uses only the term 'Gulf' in his eight-page-long introduction, and consistently avoids the adjectives 'Persian' and 'Arabian'. He also drops the word 'Persian' when referring to official titles such as the 'Political Resident in the Persian Gulf' and

the 'Persian Gulf Squadron'. (Like Rice, he opts for 'Political Resident in Bushire'.)

Also somewhat distorted in the introduction is a quotation from *Britain and the Persian Gulf* by John Barrett Kelly, which reads, in the original: '[Samuel Hennel] was, without doubt, the greatest Political Resident Britain has ever had in the Persian Gulf.'[18] Bidwell prefers to leave out the word 'Persian' in favour of just 'in the Gulf',[19] implying that Kelly himself used only the term 'Gulf'.

This work was reprinted in 1983 under the title *Arabian Gulf Intelligence*, by the Oleander Press, Cambridge. Yet Hughes Thomas's book itself – in its entirety, including every title and subtitle as well as on numerous maps – uses the 'Persian Gulf'. The term 'Arabian Gulf' is non-existent in the original text; nor is it referred to in the introduction. The term is used only once in the new edition of this book of 678 pages: in the title.

In another example, the academic Richard Schofield of the University of London avoids using 'Persian Gulf' in an essay included in *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium* (edited by Gary Sick and Lawrence Potter). He limits himself to 'the Gulf', and also further avoids referring to the 'Political Resident in the Persian Gulf', opting for 'British residency' twice and 'British Residency at Bushehr' once.[20]

In some Arab countries, nearly all the classic works on the Gulf are altered to suit the law and practice when reprinted or translated into Arabic. A few examples follow:

1. In J. G. Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia*, translated under the patronage of the former Emir of Qatar, each instance of 'Persian Gulf' is translated as 'Arabian Gulf';
2. The translation by Abd al-Massih *Eduardovi* into Arabic of *Zondervan Atlas of the Bible* by Carl G. Rasmussen, published by Dar al-Thaqafa, Cairo, contains maps in which 'Persian Gulf' is translated as 'Arabian Gulf';
3. While Maurice Lombard uses *'le golfe Persique'* in his works, the term is rendered as 'Arabian Gulf' in works of his translated into Arabic and published by Dar al-Fikr, Damascus.

4. The UAE, which relies on British archival documents in its territorial claims, uses these documents but deletes the term 'Persian Gulf' or translates it into 'Arabian Gulf'.[21]

Some writers tend to shift the nomenclature back and forth. For instance, Husain M. al-Baharna, who wrote *Legal Status of the Arab Gulf States* in 1968, used the term 'Persian Gulf' at the beginning of his academic career – as in the title of his 1961 PhD dissertation at the University of Cambridge, *Legal Problems of the Persian Gulf States*. (He refers to his dissertation in an article written in 1988.)[22]

Author and academic Daniel Potts is another example, though in reverse. He began by using 'Arabian Gulf', but preferred 'Persian Gulf' by the late 2000s. In his book *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, published by Oxford University Press in 1991, Potts used the term throughout. In another book, he states that 'Carsten Niebuhr passed through the Arabian Gulf … in 1765',[23] yet in the source that Potts cites, the term 'Persian Gulf' is used. (As explained in Chapter Three, Niebuhr always referred to the 'Persian' Gulf.) Yet many of the historical sources Potts refers to in the book are left intact, raising the question as to why a different name should be used in the title.

Potts later stated his position on the Gulf's nomenclature. In an interview on 23 August 2011, he said: 'The name "Persian Gulf" is so well established in historical documents and world public opinion that nobody would be able to change it.' About his works that included the term 'Arabian Gulf', he explained that it was 'a scientific mistake, which was the result of living in Arab countries that refer to the Persian Gulf by another name'. He added that 'the reaction to the move by *National Geographic* led me to deeply reflect on the term "Persian Gulf" and conclude that the name of this body of water has always been "Persian Gulf" '.[24]

In 2010, Potts published an article titled 'The Archaeology and Early History of the Persian Gulf',[25] thus returning to conventional nomenclature. In a 2012 publication, the Potts-edited *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, he uses 'Persian Gulf' in his preface and in his own contribution, 'Fish and Fishing', as well as in two maps depicting archaeological sites and 'modern place-names'.[26]

Joan Oates, a fellow of the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at the University of Cambridge, used 'Arabian Gulf' or 'the Gulf' when working in Arab countries or under Arab patronage for many years, and reverted to 'Persian Gulf' at other times. In *The Rise of Civilization*, co-authored with her husband David Oates and published in 1976, she used the term 'Arabian Gulf'; in a 2012 article, 'Southern Mesopotamia', she uses 'Persian Gulf'.[27]

Thomas Geoffrey Bibby was a British-born archaeologist who unearthed, with his Danish colleagues, the 4,000-year-old remnants of the ancient kingdom of Dilmun beneath the modern city of Manama, Bahrain. He reported his findings in his early works *Testimony of the Spade* (1956), *Four Thousand Years Ago* (1961) and *Looking for Dilmun* (1969), in which he used the term 'Persian Gulf'. In his brief account of the Danish archaeological expedition, written in 1970 for an ARAMCO publication, he uses 'Arabian Gulf' and 'Gulf' interchangeably.[28]

The same back-and-forth can be observed in the works of archaeologist Seton Lloyd. In his publications from 1947 to 1963, he used 'Persian Gulf' consistently but, from the 1970s onwards, he shifted to 'Arabian Gulf'. This change was not limited to his new publications; for example, the revised edition of his classic *Foundations in the Dust* (1947) contained two maps featuring 'Arabian Gulf', replacing the exquisite map in the original that had 'Persian Gulf'.[29] Lloyd reverted to his original approach to Gulf nomenclature and referred to the 'Persian Gulf' in the book *Ancient Turkey: A Traveller's History*, published in 1989.[30]

In light of the 1970 Iranian Revolution and war on the upper coast in the 1980s, as well as the prolonged strained relationship between Iran and the West, scientists have mostly based their activities on the Arab lower coast of the Gulf. As a result, there is probably added pressure to employ the preferred Arab term for the Gulf. A brief review of two scientific fields can help further elucidate the point.

Archaeology

In archaeology, the choice of toponym for the Gulf has long been an issue. The archaeological literature originating in Arab countries has also changed positions on the nomenclature. Since the late 1950s, Arab archaeological authorities appear to have purged the term 'Persian Gulf', and foreign archaeologists working in Arab regions have adopted the alternative name. The use of 'Arabian Gulf' was promoted most vigorously in Iraq. As noted in Chapter Four, the Iraqi Department of Antiquities under Sati' al-Husri and later Naji al-Asil – fervent pan-Arabists – began in the 1930s to discourage the use of 'Persian Gulf'. They instituted the use of *al-Khalij al-Basra* ('the Gulf of Basra') or simply *al-Khalij* ('the Gulf') in Iraqi publications. By the late 1950s, 'Persian Gulf' was vanishing from archaeological literature originating in Iraq, replaced by 'Arabian Gulf'. Gradually, the same line was taken by foreign archaeologists working in Iraq, such as Seton Lloyd, who was a technical adviser to Iraq's Department of Antiquities from 1939–48.[31]

Some later Western archaeologists who worked in Iraq showed little hesitation in using 'Arabian Gulf' first and reverting to 'Persian Gulf' later, as observed earlier. Many tried to resolve the problem by referring only to 'the Gulf' or leaving the Gulf unnamed on their maps, including Nicholas Postgate, Wendy Reade and Henry Wright and Gregory Johnson, who worked in Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s. Some, such as Roger Moorey, used 'Persian Gulf' in publications dealing with Iran and 'the Gulf' in those relating to Iraq, or made use of creative names such as 'Arab–Persian Gulf' as did A. N. Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt.[32]

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a turning point; it led to the closure of many bustling centres for archaeology in Iran, and the departure of foreign archaeologists. In despair, some archaeologists who had worked in Iran sought field opportunities in Arab countries. This migration helped promote a change in the use of the term 'Persian Gulf'.[33]

An earlier generation had the opposite experience. Yousef Majidzadeh, an Iranian archaeologist of high stature, refers in his

article 'The Name "Persian Gulf" and Foreign Archaeologists' to the new policy adopted by Arab countries since the 1960s and 1970s, permitting excavations by foreign archaeological teams on the condition that they use the term 'Arabian Gulf' instead of 'Persian Gulf' in all relevant writing and lectures. While archaeologists working in remote Arab countries such as Egypt could avoid any reference to the Gulf, it was not possible for those working in the Persian Gulf littoral states. This new policy, coupled with instability in Iraq at the time, forced some respected and prominent archaeologists such as Robert John Braidwood and David Stronach to leave Iraq and settle in Iran.[34]

Biology

Similar developments have taken place in the field of biology. The Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain publishes the *Arab Gulf Journal of Scientific Research* in English, with Arabic abstracts that feature articles on the sciences – particularly biology. In recent years, the journal has become popular among foreign researchers seeking to publish their articles. Some, including Professor Wolfgang Frey of the Freie Universität Berlin, had conducted many research projects in Iran before the revolution. Naturally, the citation of original articles published in this journal will include its name and help normalise the use of 'Arabian Gulf'. Even Iranian scientists have no choice but to use 'Arabian Gulf' when citing an article published in the journal.[35]

Academic circles, and cooperation among academic centres, have been affected by the controversy, which crops up frequently as a serious obstacle whenever Iranian and Arab academics attempt to come together to discuss issues relating to the waters that wash their shores. The following example illustrates the extent of the difficulty.

In 1998, in cooperation with several other non-governmental organisations, the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research initiated a project on Persian Gulf security titled 'Human Security and Global Governance' (HUGG Gulf). Conflict over the name of the project was the first main obstacle that had to be overcome. It

was finally resolved by changing it from 'HUGG Gulf' to 'HUGG West Asia'. Arab participants would be unwilling to take part in the project if the region was called 'Persian Gulf', and Iranians would not participate if it were to be called by any name *other* than 'Persian Gulf'.[36]

Encyclopaedias, Atlases and Dictionaries

Reference materials have generally resisted efforts to change established toponyms, although they may be under pressure to reconsider their approach in the case of the Persian Gulf.

As we have seen, the earliest encyclopaedic works that have survived invariably used the term 'Persian Gulf'. Almost all major modern encyclopaedias and dictionaries, such as *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Encyclopaedia Americana* and the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, preserve or have preserved the term. Even Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia consisting of user-generated content, does so, *in different* languages such as English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Dutch, etc., with entries for 'Persian Gulf', *'Golfe Persique', 'Persischer Golf', 'Golfo Pérsico', 'Golfo Persico', 'Persijski zaliv', 'Perzische Golf'* respectively. (Under each entry, it is explained that 'Arabian Gulf' is an alternative name, without a specific entry being allocated for that term.)

Encyclopaedia Britannica's main entry for the Persian Gulf reads: 'Persian Gulf (Gulf, Middle East): Arabic *Bahr Fāris*, Persian *Khalīj-e Fārs*, also called Arabian Gulf, Arm of the Arabian Sea.' Further entries include the following:

> Persian Gulf War (1991)
> The Persian Gulf lowland, from the article Arabia (peninsula, Asia)
> Dilmun (ancient kingdom, Persian Gulf)
> Strait of Hormuz (Strait, Persian Gulf)
> Greater Tunb (island, Persian Gulf)
> Lesser Tunb (island, Persian Gulf)
> Abū Mūsā (island, Persian Gulf)

While a majority of atlases have remained committed to the conventional name for the Gulf, others have pioneered the use of the alternative. *The Times Atlas of the World* – titled *The Times Atlas of the World: Comprehensive Edition* in its eleventh edition and *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* from its twelfth – is a world atlas currently in its fourteenth edition (2014), with the next planned for the autumn of 2018. Up to the 1960s, the atlas referred to the 'Persian Gulf'. In the 1967 edition, it used 'Persian Gulf' on a map of Iran but gave dual names to the Gulf on a different map in the same edition, titled 'South Arabia and other Arab Countries'. 'Persian Gulf' was given as a primary name, along with 'Arabian Gulf' as a secondary name in parentheses and in smaller letters. It also placed the term 'Persian Gulf' in the corner of the map of Kuwait, and depicted the water immediately around Bahrain as 'the Gulf of Bahrain'.[37] The atlas adopted a new approach in its twelfth edition, using only 'the Gulf'.[38]

A sampling of other atlases reveals that 'Persian Gulf' is used in *The Times Atlas of World Exploration* (1991); *The Times Atlas of World History* (1978); *Atlas international Larousse, politique et économique* (1950) (which uses *golfe persique*); *Le grand atlas de géographie* (1992 – *golfe persique* is used throughout, with the exception of one map depicting Iran and the Arab world in which *golfe arabique* is used as the secondary appellation); and the eighth edition of the *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, in which 'Arabian Gulf' appears in parentheses below 'Persian Gulf'.

As cartographic authorities in Arab countries began securing big contracts with Western entities from the 1960s onwards, it is reasonable to surmise that this activity influenced the nomenclature. A report from the Iranian embassy in Baghdad held that 'in the maps the oil companies produce and annex to calendars for use in Iraq and other Arab countries, they refer blatantly to the Persian Gulf as the "Arabian Gulf" '.[39] (One would not expect otherwise, of course.) As another example, the Iranian foreign ministry's Secretariat of the Persian Gulf, in a report to the prime minister's office, refers to 'a map of the Persian Gulf region, drawn and published by Oxford University, in which the name "Arabian Gulf" is used'. The report

adds: 'This map is commissioned and paid for by Sheikh Zayed, the President of the UAE.' The same report indicates that the embassy 'came across an atlas printed by a famous institute in The Netherlands, in which a so-called initiative had been taken, using the term "Perso–Arab Gulf". The company, later and in accordance with policy, explained that it did it to [accommodate Iraqi interests], and that it was ready to [accommodate Iranian interests] also by producing maps for use inside Iran with the sole inscription "Persian Gulf".'[40]

Similar accommodations have persisted for the past five to six decades. John Bartholomew & Son, the well-known British cartographic firm, published two nearly identical maps of the Gulf in 1977, one carrying the 'Persian' name and the other the 'Arabian' one – 'for good commercial reasons'.[41] Such examples suggest that British cartographers may be more amenable than their US colleagues or the United Nations to making such modifications.

News Media

A Lexis-Nexis search of world newswires shows no occurrence of the 'Arabian Gulf' toponym used by the international media until 1977, when China's Xinhua News Agency used it for the first time. The frequency of its occurrence has increased steadily ever since, with fourteen occurrences found in 1980, twenty-five in 1990, and 109 in 1998. Altogether, Lexis-Nexis searches turns up 184 occurrences in major world newspapers between 1980 and 1990; 868 between 1990 and 2000; and 2,471 between 2000 and 2010.

Some Arab public and private entities began encouraging Western sources to use the alternative name for the Gulf very early on through, among other things, their contacts with Western media outlets. Advertisements of events such as automobile races and other tournaments in the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain, as referred to later, have been among major examples. The campaigns were not always successful. The celebrated British author Ian Fleming, then a journalist, recounted in a 'lost manuscript' in 1959 that Kuwait Oil, the state oil company, offered him £1,000 to write a glowing portrait

of the country. Instead, Fleming, formerly the foreign editor of *The Sunday Times*, wrote an 'irreverent piece that shocked the Kuwaiti royal family'. He was paid, but the book was not published. Fleming wrote: 'I went to this tiny state at the head of the Persian Gulf without any prejudices or preconceptions about the area, and so ignorant that I did not know that one must refer to the "Arabian" Gulf … I can understand the pan-Arabian shores are longer than the Persian stretch, but geographical name-changes for nationalist reasons, popularised by Adolf Hitler, do not appeal to me.'[42]

The Iranian Revolution, followed by several crises including three Persian Gulf wars, kept the Gulf in the headlines. Nearly all the media representatives covering these crises were based in Arab countries, which led to an increased use of the term 'Arabian Gulf' or simply 'the Gulf'. The use of such terms at international level was primarily due to the role of the British media.

Following the use of 'Arabian Gulf' by the BBC's Arabic Service beginning in the late 1950s, the BBC World Service decided to adopt the generic term 'the Gulf' as editorial policy. This was an unprecedented move and a big success for Arab nationalists, as the BBC had unrivalled power and influence at that time. Indeed, the ripple effect of this policy had immediate results. *The Times* and *The Economist* followed suit. *The Times*, depending on the climate in which journalists are writing, uses all three appellations.

The Economist also describes the Persian Gulf as merely 'the Gulf'. The use of this term on a map in June 2006 led the Iranian government to ban the magazine's distribution in Iran. In London, the magazine announced it would stand its ground. 'We've used "the Gulf" for a long time, and we have no intention of changing it at the moment,' a spokeswoman for *The Economist* said at the time, adding that the magazine sold about 750 English-language copies in Iran per week.[43] The magazine maintained its position in an 18 February 2010 article titled 'Iraq, Iran and the Politics of Oil: Crude Diplomacy'.

In its style guide, *The Guardian* newspaper in Britain recommends (under an entry headed 'the Gulf'), 'not the Persian or

Arabian Gulf'.[44] Ian Mayes, an editor and former ombudsman of *The Guardian*, referred to an email sent to the newspaper in 2007 in which the writer protested against the use of 'the Gulf' in place of 'Persian Gulf'. Mayes replied that 'despite the urging of the style guide, it is still referred to occasionally as "the Persian Gulf", for example when it is mentioned in a historical context, or when it is necessary to distinguish it in some additional way from any other gulf.' He argued that *The Guardian's* preferred dictionary, Collins, supports the idea that when people say or read 'the Gulf', they generally know which gulf is being spoken of – that the first association of the word, with a capital G, is the 'Persian Gulf'. (The current online edition of Collins does not confirm Mayes' assertion. Collins defines 'Persian Gulf' as 'a shallow arm of the Arabian Sea between SW Iran and Arabia' and gives several examples in which 'Persian Gulf' is used. When searching the online edition for 'Arabian Gulf', one receives the message: 'Sorry, no results for "Arabian Gulf" in the English Dictionary.' When one searches for 'the Gulf', the answer is simply 'the Persian Gulf'.)

Mayes also asserted that 'the preference for calling it "the Gulf" is not something that the *Guardian* has suddenly or arbitrarily introduced. It dates from at least the time of the first Gulf war, which we have referred to as "the Persian Gulf war" at least nine times in the past six years.' He continued: 'On even rarer occasions, we have referred to "the Persian Gulf states", which for some is also a provocative formation. To the Arab states in the Gulf it is the Arabian Gulf. A *Guardian* journalist who was foreign editor for part of the 1990s promoted the term "the Gulf" on his pages because of its neutrality, deliberately avoiding both "the Persian Gulf" and "the Arabian Gulf". It still seems a reasonable course to take and a small matter in the current priorities of the region.'[45]

Elsewhere in Europe, results obtained from a search on *Le Monde's* website show that the phrase *golfe persique* has been used 3,820 times in the newspaper between 1944 and 2016. By comparison, *golfe arabique* has been used 534 times in the same period, mostly in relation to events such as automobile races and other tournaments in the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. A search on the

website of *France-Soir*, another major French newspaper (now online only), returns similar results in terms of Gulf nomenclature.

In contrast with the approach taken by a section of the British media, the US media have generally kept to the traditional name. Addressing the naming dispute in a 1987 editorial, *The New York Times* declared: 'Large, shared bodies of water bear names established by custom. Their universal use is a universal convenience. Hence it is the Gulf of Mexico, not the Gulf of Texas; the Sea of Japan, not the Sea of Korea. The Pacific Ocean is not always pacific, but so what?' Referring to Arab efforts to internationalise the alternative name for the Gulf and the Pentagon's wavering approach, the editorial continued:

> By all means let Arab regimes call the Persian Gulf whatever they wish. But they have no more right to demand compliance from others than do those Israelis who want everybody to refer to the West Bank as *Judea and Samaria*. It's absurd, even mischievous, when Pentagon briefers defer to extreme sensibility and refer to the Arabian Gulf. Doing so ignores long-established usages fixed even within the US Government by its interagency Board of Geographic Names.[46]

Similarly, an article by William Safire, the late *New York Times* columnist, ridiculed Dan Rather – then a news anchor for CBS – for saying '… the situation in the Arabian Gulf, also known as the Persian Gulf'. Safire remarked: 'That's odd; it's like saying *Gotham*, also known as *New York City*.' He ended his article thus: 'If history is used to decide the name, CBS is aware of the ancient appellation: *Sinus Persicus*, for "Persian bend"'.[47]

The Associated Press's style manual is another example of the policy that most media outlets in the US follow. This book, which is used by newspapers and in journalism classes throughout the country, advises journalists 'to use the long-established name for the body of water off the southern coast of Iran. Some Arab nations call it Arabian Gulf. Use Arabian Gulf only in direct quotations and explain in the text that the body of water is more commonly known as the Persian

Gulf.'[48] The 2000 Associated Press style manual holds that 'Persian Gulf' is the 'long-established name', and the best choice.

According to Mani Parsa, a Persian-language teacher living in The Netherlands, television networks in that country barely have any particular policy for naming the body of water in question. They mostly use the historic term (*Perzische Golf* in Dutch), though at times they use 'the Gulf' or 'Arabian Gulf', reflecting the news sources. The use of the alternative labels has increased in recent times. In 2012, more than 4,000 Dutch nationals worked in the UAE, especially in Dubai. It is possible that the expansion of commercial relationships between The Netherlands and the UAE has resulted in a more widespread use of the alternative names in a section of media.[49]

Business

The decreasing influence of Iran on the political and economic priorities of the English-speaking world in the post-revolutionary era led to greater opportunity for the Gulf Arab states, which, meanwhile, gained higher economic and political significance because of their rising volume of trade and investment with the rest of the world. Profit-orientated institutions such as multinational oil companies tend to use the name 'Arabian Gulf' to accommodate the Arab countries they deal with, and to protect their interests. Meanwhile, other entities wishing to be on good terms with both Iranian and Arab countries prefer to use the term 'the Gulf', thus hoping to maintain neutrality.

International corporations doing business in oil-rich Arab states and in other Arab countries have been among the most inclined to indulge Arab efforts to internationalise the term 'Arabian Gulf', and have shown the least resistance in this respect. The trend has been facilitated by global business media reliance on advertisements. These include *AMEInfo*, an online provider of business information in and about the Middle East, founded in 1993 in the UAE; *ANBA*, the online news agency of the Arab–Brazilian Chamber of Commerce in Brazil; and *WebIndia123* in India, all of which use the term 'Arabian Gulf' or 'the Gulf' when publishing in Western languages.

The use of 'Arabian Gulf' is particularly prevalent in the oil industry and its ancillary or derivative industries such as insurance, shipping and reporting services, given that Gulf Arab states are their clients – likewise trade journals and online publications covering the oil industry, such as McGraw-Hill, Platts and Argus Media. *Lloyd's List International* used all three terms ('Persian Gulf', 'the Gulf' and 'Arabian Gulf') interchangeably, depending on sources and where the news originated.

Hotels and airlines also make use of the preferred Arab term. An Iranian activist group that calls itself the Persian Gulf Task Force (PGTF) follows the issue, and contacts businesses in these industries about their choice of nomenclature. A review of one exchange, held in May 2002, is illuminating: Hyatt International Hotels and Resorts, answering an objection by the PGTF over the use of 'Arabian Gulf', refers to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as the source on which it relies for wording, and claims that the encyclopaedia 'refers [to] and employs equally both names for the same sea, while emphasizing the relevance of the term "Arabian Gulf" as a modern-day geographical reference point.'[50] In fact, as discussed earlier, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online retains the term 'Persian Gulf'.

Email exchanges between Hyatt and the PGTF led nowhere. As the latter's website explains, its members provided the 'E-Business Manager' at Hyatt's Europe, Africa and Middle East Division with a number of maps and stated that 'at Persian Gulf Task Force we believe in using facts and material evidence to prove our case to such abusers of the Persian Gulf as the Hyatt Hotels.'[51] In a subsequent letter in July 2002, the group concluded that the reply it had received was unacceptable.[52]

In November 1996, the PGTF attempted to draw the attention of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines to the fact that the electronic map on its inflight monitors displayed the term 'Arabian Gulf'; it further suggested that Iranians should boycott the airline. KLM's Manager of Inflight Communications, in an answer dated 4 December 1996, apologised for any discomfort that KLM and its flight-tracking system might have caused, and explained:

> Our software on the flight tracking system is basically a 'ready made', 'off the shelf' product that can be customised to a lesser or larger extent. Until now, our department was not aware of this specific issue regarding the Arabian versus Persian Gulf. Last week, we contacted the supplier of our software, however, and requested an immediate update without the Arabian Gulf reference. We can now inform you that this update will indeed be made for us in the coming week.[53]

Sport

In 2006, Iran's national football league was renamed the Persian Gulf Pro League, which emphasised the standard nomenclature. A few years later, as explained in Chapter Six, the Second Islamic Solidarity Games – scheduled to be held in Iran in April 2010 – were cancelled following disagreement over the use of the term 'Persian Gulf' in the logo and on the medals. Iran's national football team does not participate in the Gulf Cup of Nations tournament, which is open to teams from countries that border the Gulf, because of Iranian nomenclatural preferences.

Angry over the use of 'Arabian Gulf' instead of 'Persian Gulf' in brochures by the organisers of the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, Iranian officials also threatened to boycott the tournament.[54] (Iran did, ultimately, compete.)

Iranian Grassroots Reactions

Iranians across the political spectrum have shown strong emotional reactions to efforts aimed at relabelling the Persian Gulf. While the issue may be important in terms of its relevance to national heritage and identity, as explained in Chapter Five, it appears that it is also part of a collective struggle to address wider challenges facing the country.

Most Iranians are raised on stories of a glorious past, when Persia, one of the world's great civilisations, managed an empire. The Persian Gulf is a significant factor in their national collective memory; it has become unacceptable to them that, under their watch, a part

of this heritage is being erased. Thus the preservation of a major sea area off Iran's southern coast – at the same time, one of the most vital waterways for Iran and the world – has, increasingly, become a highly emotive issue and one bound up with the question of identity.

It is not easy to unite all Iranians, but the dispute over the name 'Persian Gulf', as we shall see in the case of *National Geographic* magazine, can accomplish this. As a *Times* correspondent put it: 'Everyone from the most devout clergymen to the most fervent modernizers was unanimous in a furious response to what was perceived as a perfidious attack on the country's proud civilization and long history.'[55]

Many passionate, rousing poems and songs are produced to celebrate the Persian Gulf. The lyrics to one of them, the song *Khalij Fars* (*Persian Gulf*) read, in part: 'With every look, I bestow a thousand kisses upon the sky of this land … I breathe the Sefidrud River, the Khazar sky and the everlasting Persian Gulf … My eyes light up with Great Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa …'

As there are controversies and misunderstandings about the terms 'Persia' and 'Persian', including the need to distinguish them from the expression 'Persian' denoting an ethnic group within Iran, some explanations are warranted. As explained in Chapter One, the present-day name 'Persian Gulf' originated with Greek classical writers: Pars, called *Persis* by Herodotus and *Persidis* by Ptolemy, was the major imperial power of the wider region, and the Gulf was the only seaway the outside world had to cross to reach its territory. The ancient Greeks first encountered the Achaemenids from the East, who were originally from the province of Persis; it was the Greeks, therefore, who introduced the term *'Persis'* to Europe as the name of a whole empire.

Later, *'Persis'* evolved from being the name of just one area into 'Persia', describing the entire Persian state; it stopped being a provincial name and became a national appellation, no matter which ethnic group led the country. For example, from the eleventh century and for around 1,000 years, different dynasties of Turkic origin ruled Persia – with no change in the name by which the country was known

to the world. Persia's political, economic and military dominance of the Gulf helped sustain the term 'Persian Gulf' as an obvious toponym throughout 2,500 years of history.

'Persia' and 'Persian', as exonyms, are not ethnic terms; they are historical geographical references that have, throughout history, denoted a land and a nation, not an ethnic group. For centuries, they have had no racial connotations; they have designated a country and a people of mixed ethnic origins, who populated Iran within its frontiers. It is therefore incorrect to suggest that 'Persia' is anything other than a term of historical geographical reference.

In 1935, Reza Shah's government requested that foreign countries cease using 'Persia' in favour of 'Iran', an endonym referring to the 'Land of Aryans', used by the inhabitants for their country since the early Sasanian period (224–637 AD). However, in 1949 the government of Iran announced that, given the widespread use of the term 'Persia' and its variants in other European languages, 'Iran' and 'Persia' were both acceptable.[56] Yet since then there has been a certain tendency, especially among Western scholars, to reserve the terms 'Persia' and 'Persian' for describing ancient Iranians. But 'Iranian' and 'Persian' are interchangeable terms.

There is a wealth of literature as well as maps and documents in Iran, the West and elsewhere about ancient and recent history in Iran, depicting it as 'Persia' and 'Persian'. Iranians believe that these words are relics of their heritage, preserved in historical memory from different societies, linking their past and present. They feel they should not allow the change of the country's name in the 1930s to break the link between present-day Iran and the Persian language, or Persian culture … or the Persian Gulf. In that sense, preserving the term also means preserving Iranians' link to their past and culture as known for centuries.[57]

A campaign organised by Iranian citizens both in Iran and in the Iranian diaspora against the use by *National Geographic* of dual primary–secondary labelling for the Persian Gulf in 2004 was representative. It was a culmination of all that Iranians at the grassroots level have been doing to preserve the term 'Persian Gulf'.

Recounting this campaign, below, should clarify certain other aspects of the Gulf naming dispute. The reaction by the Iranian government was mostly discussed in Chapter Six; here, we review the reaction by private Iranian citizens.

The *National Geographic* Affair

The National Geographic Society (NGS) generated a considerable amount of fury among Iranians when it published the eighth edition of its *Atlas of the World*, in which it included the term 'Arabian Gulf' as a secondary name for the Persian Gulf. The campaign to which it gave rise is important for the following reasons:

1. The reaction to this inclusion was the strongest ever seen with respect to the Gulf naming dispute;
2. It was a very rare case, resonating as it did across a wide spectrum of Iranian political life; it was unprecedented, moreover, in terms of unifying Iranians of all backgrounds around a single cause;
3. Because the campaign was widespread and ultimately successful, it can be regarded as the beginning of a new period of increased attention to the issue.

In all previous editions of the atlas, the body of water between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula had been designated as the 'Persian Gulf'. In November 2004, the eighth edition was published; it used both a primary name, 'Persian Gulf', and a secondary designation, 'Arabian Gulf', on two map plates. 'Arabian Gulf' appeared as an alternative term (in a smaller font and in parentheses). Further controversy ensued, as the atlas also now referred to the three islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs as being 'claimed by the United Arab Emirates, occupied by Iran'. Furthermore, the NGS also substituted Arabic names for two other Iranian islands historically known as Kish and Lavan.

Iranians called directly on the NGS to remove the alternative name. Soon the NGS's email system was overwhelmed by protest letters sent both by Iranians and non-Iranians. The NGS received

tens of thousands of protest emails, phone calls and letters in the post within a month of the atlas's publication. In addition, a petition requesting that the NGS make corrections to the atlas was signed by tens of thousands of people. Many articles were written, and different organisations both within and outside Iran devoted time and energy to this issue. Many Persian websites allocated space to protest against the NGS, with links to various petitions addressing the matter.

Anger continued for weeks. 'A spit in us Iranians' faces!!' wrote a reviewer of the atlas on the Amazon.com website. 'This is you people trying to change and alter history and what is written down for generations!!' Hundreds of reader reviews of the $165 atlas were posted on Amazon, mostly from angry Iranians. 'It is a shame to see what once was a respected journal turned into a political backroom wheeler & dealer and an Arab slave,' read another. Another one claimed: 'The reason … is due to the fact that the Saudi Royal family owns a large amount of shares in all US media and journals.'[58]

The most active bloggers were Iranian. A 'Google bomb' was generated, whereby searches for 'Arabian Gulf' were directed to a site publicising historical facts about the 'Persian Gulf'. Many petitioners were subscribers to *National Geographic* magazine, and had held the NGS in high esteem; the unexpected change seemed all the more confounding to them. Some threatened to cancel their membership and cease supporting the NGS.

A group of academics submitted an open letter to the president and CEO of the NGS, John Fahey, Jr, offering full cooperation for damage control and resolution of the matter. In this letter, the group stated:

> We do hereby register our grave concern and disappointment on the abuse of the new name included which unless it is ameliorated immediately, would not only undermine the credibility of NGS to which each of us have contributed so substantively over the years, but that it would also set a precedent for the world, which its adverse ramifications will remain with us for the ensuing history.[59]

Having cancelled his NGS membership, Touraj Daryaee, Associate Professor of Ancient History at California State University, Fullerton, explained in a separate letter:

> This is not so much because of my personal and national loyalties, but rather due to the wrong and unprofessional decision by your committee to place the name of 'Arabian Gulf' next to that of 'Persian Gulf.' ... If personal (Directorate) or financial matters govern such decisions, then I must say that I am dismayed that such a reputable organization would be pushed to create false names as 'acceptable alternatives' based on unscrupulous decisions. But again, we live in a world where even names can be bought or exchanged for money.[60]

Iranian groups and individuals of different political inclinations attempted to raise their complaints in meetings with the executives of the NGS. At one meeting, held on 7 December 2004 between the leadership of the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC) with Fahey, the NIAC followed up on over 5,000 letters submitted directly to the Society Board expressing concern about the 'legal and historical' abuse of the term 'Persian Gulf'. During this meeting, Trita Parsi, the president of the NIAC, submitted to Fahey a formal letter signed by thirty-six Iranian-American organizations (including the NIAC) requesting the reversal of the dual designation. Reportedly, Fahey agreed to make a few amendments and take several 'corrective' steps. According to the NIAC's president, 'from here on, it was pledged that the National Geographic will use the correct names Kish and Lavan for the Iranian Islands, and the omission of the term "occupied by Iran" for the other sovereign Iranians islands'. However, no understanding was arrived at on the use of the dual nomenclature.[61]

Reza Pahlavi, son of the former Shah of Iran, also met with Fahey on 3 December over the same issue. 'The meeting with Mr Fahey was an in-depth and thoughtful discussion of the historic and academic facts regarding the Persian Gulf,' he said afterwards. 'It was an opportunity to unequivocally express our unwavering national position on the sole usage of the name "Persian Gulf".' He added that

he was 'pleased to have been reassured by Mr Fahey that the National Geographic Society recognises "Persian Gulf" as the undisputed historic name of the body of water south of the Iranian plateau.' Fahey also assured Pahlavi that his organisation was 'respectful and fully cognisant of the level and depth of sentiment among Iranians on the matter', adding that the organisation was in the midst of in-depth study and reflection on the merits of the use of a secondary name for the Persian Gulf.[62]

In Iran, the *Atlas of the World* controversy reverberated across political and social dimensions. The government of the Islamic Republic swiftly banned the NGS from selling its publications in Iran, and the Islamic Guidance Ministry banned *National Geographic* reporters from entering or reporting from the country. Government spokesman Abdollah Ramezanzadeh stated: 'The Iranian government has always vigorously defended the Persian Gulf's identity as well as those of other historical places from any attempt at forgery, which, in any case, will never resolve anyone's problem.'[63]

In parallel with the government's response, or even ahead of them, the Iranian general public reacted. Within a few days, hundreds of letters and articles from journalists, cultural/political activists and ordinary people began appearing in Tehran's main dailies (of different political affiliations), pressuring Iran's government to do something. That reaction finally came in the form of denying entry to the *National Geographic* staff until the 'mistake' in the eighth edition of the atlas was corrected. Some exhibitions of historical maps were set up; essay and painting contests were announced; theatre directors and filmmakers were urged to produce movies showcasing Iran's history; the media paid close attention to the matter; and a motorway of about 120 miles, linking Tehran to Qom, was renamed the 'Persian Gulf Highway'. The Iranian postal service also issued a series of stamps honouring the 'National Day of the Persian Gulf'.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid-Reza Assefi, called upon the NGS to rectify and compensate for the mistake it had made. He said that the Ministry had been following up the issue through legal and diplomatic channels since it had surfaced, and had sent a

protest letter to the NGS. Assefi also quoted Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, saying that 'the Society should apologise and compensate for its mistake'. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's then-Permanent Representative to the United Nations, also communicated with NGS executives, and wrote to Fahey.[64]

Mostafa Tajzadeh, an advisor to Iran's then-President Mohammad Khatami, said in an interview: 'When the Persian Gulf is changed to another name, it doesn't matter what ideology you belong to, it's insulting.' In the early, idealistic days of the Iranian Revolution, he recalled, young revolutionaries considered changing the name to 'Islamic Gulf' in a bid to forge friendships with their Arab neighbours. But the idea was discarded. He added: 'Our pride has kept us going for thousands of years and, for Iranians, prestige is very important.'[65]

The dispute over the Gulf nomenclature had been ongoing for many decades but, until the *National Geographic* episode, it had never aroused much media curiosity. This time, however, the active involvement of Iranian communities worldwide in a campaign against the NGS made things very different. The protest echoed through the international media, and was covered by Reuters, the AP, the BBC, *Time*, Voice of America and many other media outlets. Megan K. Stack of *The Los Angeles Times* maintained: 'They were just two small words, a parenthetical aside on a *National Geographic* map. But that's all it took to get fiercely proud Iranians to rise up this week against what they saw as an attack on their history … So keen was the perceived slight that it brought a fleeting unity to Iran's far-flung political spectrum. From the left to the right to the disaffected, Iranians rallied against the offending American magazine. They blamed the "Zionists", accused the Arabs and lambasted the Americans.'[66] *The Baltimore Sun* quoted Mojtaba Aghamohammadi, an Iranian professor of diversity studies at the University of Phoenix: 'History is not a commodity you buy at Wal-Mart and discard after you get your immediate use out of it.' Iranians identify 'existentially' with the name 'Persian Gulf', he argued, and 'when you mess with people's identity, that's when war begins'.[67]

On Amazon.com, rating of the atlas fell from five to two stars; potential purchasers unaware of the protest campaign's activities could, therefore, conceivably assume that the atlas was not worth its price, with financial consequences for the publisher. In reaction to the protests, the NGS proceeded in a step-by-step manner to resolve the controversy. First, on 8 December 2004, it issued a press release announcing that 'While National Geographic considers "Persian Gulf" to be the primary name, it has been the Society's cartographic practice to display a secondary name in parentheses when use of such a name has become commonly recognized …' This announcement did not show any substantive change in the NGS's position on dual labelling, or on the labelling of the three islands. It only conceded that: 'National Geographic will insert additional clarifying language on the map plates relating to the Persian Gulf in subsequent printings of the *Atlas*, and will add such notations to its online maps.'[68]

Finally, the NGS reversed its decision. On 30 December 2004, it updated the Persian Gulf plate of the *Atlas*, removing the parenthetical reference. The changes, as summarised by a reviewer on Amazon.com, were as follows:

1. The term 'Arabian Gulf' in parentheses has been deleted. Instead, there is a small note that reads: 'Historically and commonly known as the Persian Gulf, this body of water is also referred by some as the Arabian Gulf.'
2. Persian names of all Iranian islands are used. (Kish instead of Qeys, Lavan alone instead of adding Sheykh Sha'eyb in parentheses.)
3. The labelling reading 'Occupied by Iran (Claimed by UAE)' in reference to the islands Abu Musa, and Greater and Lesser Tunbs, was deleted.[69]

These changes appeared on the NGS's website and were to be applied to further printings or editions of the *Atlas*. On the password-protected website available to *Atlas* owners, a 'brief summary of the historical origin of the term "Persian Gulf"' appeared, along with a note on the NGS's place-naming policy.[70] The NGS's amendments, which appeared in its *Almanac of World History* and *Atlas of the*

World 2005, comprised the first retraction of this magnitude in the Society's 117-year history. Moreover, the latest version of the *National Geographic Style Manual,* dated January 2011, explains: 'The historical and internationally accepted designation is Persian Gulf; many Arab countries use Arabian Gulf. If Arabian Gulf is used in text, it should be explained.'[71]

In the heat of the controversy, James E. DiLisio, a professor of geography at Towson University, said in an interview with the *Baltimore Sun*: 'It was all so predictable; I'm surprised the National Geographic got in the middle of it.' He added: 'In the past 10 years especially, Iranian nationalism has resurfaced as a force in the Islamic republic's foreign policy, even among reformers.' DiLisio emphasized that the *Atlas* was considered definitive among geographers: 'If you're after a daily reference, the National Geographic is the one we normally look at.'[72]

Pressure from Gulf Arab quarters apparently played a role in the changes made to eighth edition of the *Atlas*. According to a paper presented by Yearn Choi Hong of the University of Seoul at the Tenth International Seminar on the Naming of Seas in 2004, 'the National Geographic Society had reviewed the dual names of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Gulf in the past, but it did not decide to use the dual names. The issue remerged in 2002 and in 2003, the decision to use the dual names was made.'[73] Yet Harm de Blij, an editor at *National Geographic* magazine, said that following the publication of the seventh edition of the *Atlas,* '… a professor from a university in the UAE wrote to the Society, arguing that this sea area is referred to as the Arabian Gulf in this part of the region and asked that the next edition of the Atlas show it as the Arabian Gulf, not the Persian Gulf. After much deliberation, it was decided to use both names, with Persian Gulf above and Arabian Gulf, in brackets, below.[74]

In its article on the controversy, *The Baltimore Sun* further explained:

> The National Geographic Society has almost always used Persian Gulf on its maps. But about three years ago the Emir of Sharjah, one of the seven United Arab Emirates, made a visit arranged by

> the president of American University, which has business ties with Sharjah. The emir alerted cartographers to the disagreement between the UAE and Iran over the ownership of three Gulf islands – Abu Musa and the two Tunb Islands.

David B. Miller, a senior editor with National Geographic Maps, is quoted in the same article as saying: 'We weren't aware of the dispute.' However, he did recall that the *emir* 'also mentioned that the Arab states along the southern shore call the Persian Gulf the Arabian Gulf'. *National Geographic's* Chief cartographer Allen Carroll was quoted as saying: 'We didn't want to change the name, [but] we also didn't want people to go to our atlas looking for the Arabian Gulf and not find it.'

Hence the mapmakers added 'Arabian Gulf' as an alternative name, in parentheses, beneath 'Persian Gulf', and the three disputed islands were labelled as 'Occupied by Iran (claimed by UAE)'. Miller added: 'We wouldn't recognize any forced occupation or administration of sovereign territory.' The *Sun* article, however, noted that 'furious Iranians pointed out that "the same atlas shows the disputed Golan Heights – captured by Israel in 1967 – not as 'occupied' Syrian land, but as part of Israel, with a dotted line indicating the 'boundary claimed by Syria'".'[75] (The Golan Heights has been administered as part of Israel since 1981, which is not recognised internationally.)

The *Atlas* affair also increased the sensitivities of Iranians and the Iranian government to the matter of naming the Persian Gulf and similar issues. In early 2005, Iran proclaimed 30 April as 'National Persian Gulf Day' (30 April is the anniversary of Shah Abbas's expulsion of the Portuguese from the island of Hormuz in 1622). A decision was also made by Iran's Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution to 'counter the attempts of some international entities and Arabian countries to alter the name of the Persian Gulf'.[76]

The Louvre Affair

Another occurrence that alarmed many Iranians was the fact that the word 'Persian' did not appear in the Musée du Louvre's printed map guides in 2006, when describing the Persian Gulf. This decision

presumably occurred within the context of negotiations between Paris and Abu Dhabi, with the objective of opening a branch of the Louvre in the UAE. (Mention of the Abu Dhabi Louvre first surfaced in November 2006, during a ceremony to inaugurate the UAE campus of Paris-Sorbonne University,[77] and in 2007 France and the UAE signed a thirty-year agreement that included the provision of 1 billion euros to establish the 'premier museum of the Middle East',[78] to which around 500 million euros to cover the construction cost of the museum should be added.[79] The museum opened in 2017.)

Against this backdrop, the absence of the term 'Persian Gulf' in the Louvre's new guide swiftly drew Iranian attention and set off a wave of formal and informal protests. An Iranian foreign ministry spokesman said: 'We have recently become aware of this … certainly, our embassy will object to this and will pursue the case.' Mohammad Reza Kargar, then the director of the National Museum of Iran, charged in December 2006 that the Louvre had changed the name of the Persian Gulf because of Arab economic influence during the 1990s and 2000s.[80]

The Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organisation, as well as the Iranian embassy in Paris, swiftly objected to the omission as well, and several Iranian MPs called on the foreign minister to take vigorous 'diplomatic action in response to France's insult in omitting the name of the Persian Gulf from the Louvre's historic maps'. Apart from the official objections by the government, individual Iranians and non-governmental organisations also protested. An Iranian blogger who visited the Louvre at the time referred to the confusion that reigned:

> Efforts made by certain Iranians were first dismissed outright by those in charge of the Persian history section of the Museum. On later visits Iranian visitors were surprised to see a few of the maps now displaying the *Golfe Persique* label. I also noted that, on the maps which during my previous visit had the strange dual name *Golfe Arab–Persique*, an obvious attempt had been made to erase the word 'Arab' from the label. Despite this they continue to use the obscure word *Golfe* on some of the maps as if there were no other gulfs on this planet!'[81]

The protest lasted for nearly five months, and finally resulted in a reversal by the Louvre. In late April 2007, the museum changed the disputed names on maps and signage in its Islamic Art and Near Eastern Antiquities departments.[82] Ali Ahani, then Iran's ambassador to France, said: 'I visited the Louvre's curator and saw the relevant sections, and asked him to take into account Iranians' sensitivity towards the distortion of the Persian Gulf's name, and requested that he correct the mistakes. The museum's officials recently wrote a letter announcing to the embassy that corrections had been made.'[83]

The Google Dispute

A similar dispute with Google arose over the term 'Persian Gulf', for two main reasons: first, the use of dual names for the Gulf by Google Earth, which added 'Arabian Gulf' on its map in early 2008; second the removal of 'Persian Gulf' from the Gulf map on Google Maps, leaving it nameless in May 2012 and for a few months afterwards.

Unhappy Iranians launched a petition on the Internet in February 2008 soon after the emergence of the first point of contention, protesting against Google's 'arbitrary' action and requesting the 'immediate and unconditional deletion of "Arabian Gulf" from Google Earth'. A total of 1,218,446 signatures were collected up to September 2014.[84]

In February 2008, the NIAC sent a letter to Google's CEO, Eric Schmidt, explaining the background of the issue and requesting that Google avoid becoming involved in the politics of renaming the Persian Gulf.[85] The nearest thing to a reply received by NIAC was an ambiguous post on Google's Public Policy Blog on 8 April 2008, which read in part: 'As the publishers of a geographic reference tool, we believe that Google should not choose sides in international geopolitical disputes. For this reason, we've chosen to implement a uniform policy of "Primary Local Usage".'[86] (This policy has been explained and discussed in Chapter Five.)

Later, Google removed 'Persian Gulf' from Google Maps. Users searching for the 'Persian Gulf' were redirected by Google to its location, but the Gulf was nameless – the only missing maritime place

name. ('Gulf of Oman', for example, was intact.) However, if users clicked on the indicator in the middle of the nameless map of the Gulf, a pop-up window displayed 'Persian Gulf'. The same process did not work when users searched for 'Arabian Gulf'; in that event, such users were redirected to locations in some Arab countries where the term is used for streets, companies and the like.[87]

This response by Google Maps could be regarded as decreasing the visibility of the term 'Persian Gulf'. Google did not publish any information concerning the protest or its resolution. The only visible response came when a Google spokesperson told *The Guardian* that 'the reports were exaggerated and that it had not removed the term Persian Gulf, saying that "the body of water" had not been labelled from the beginning, like many other places.'[88] The spokesperson was further quoted as saying that 'not everything in the world is named in Google Maps, so this shouldn't be such a big deal'. He or she was unable, however, to provide another example, but emphasised that Google did not wish to take sides and would not respond to Iran's accusations.[89]

This dispute led once again to widespread protest by Iranians – with ordinary Internet users and bloggers as well as the media covering the issue. In June 2012, a number of pro-'Persian Gulf' billboards proliferated around Los Angeles, proclaiming: 'It is not the Gulf. It is the Persian Gulf.' According to the outdoor advertising company that placed them, the signs had been underwritten by a wealthy Iranian-American who asked not to be identified.[90]

Iran's foreign ministry intervened again, and described Google's action 'as part of the soft war against the Iranian nation' and as being 'against historical documents'. A deputy minister for Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance accused Google of spreading lies and being unable 'hide the truth' by removing the term 'Persian Gulf' from its services. 'Such actions from organisations such as Google will not bear fruit,' he suggested, 'and their visitors will lose trust in the information they provide.'[91]

In the end, Google Maps chose 'Persian Gulf' as the primary name for the Gulf, with the term 'Arabian Gulf' added in parentheses.

When users search for either 'Persian Gulf' or 'Arabian Gulf', they are directed to the Gulf; the name 'Persian Gulf' appears as the primary name – and as the only name when users zoom out. When the site view is enlarged, 'Arabian Gulf' appears in the larger map underneath the first term, in parentheses and in a smaller font size. Users who click on the map see the phrase 'Persian Gulf, also known as Arabian Gulf' appear in a side window.

Digital Campaigns against the Relabelling of the Persian Gulf

In recent years, Iranians have launched digital campaigns against the renaming of the *Persian Gulf*. Some of the tactics used include the following:

Social networking

Numerous pages dedicated to the Persian Gulf nomenclature have been created on social media such as Facebook.

'Google bombing'

In 2004, the Persian Gulf naming dispute was the subject of a so-called 'Google bomb' by bloggers and webmasters in Iran and abroad, along with hundreds of Persian forums. They organised a massed Web campaign to manipulate the Google search engine. As a result, a search for the term 'Arabian Gulf' in the Google search field generated a spoof message: 'The Gulf you are looking for does not exist. Try Persian Gulf.' In a parody of the text that appears when a webpage is unavailable, the link advised users to 'read some history books'.

Pendar Yousefi, an Iranian designer and blogger who initiated the Google 'bomb', explained how he started his Google bombing campaign to oppose the renaming of the Gulf:

> In November 2004, *National Geographic* published a new edition of their *World Atlas*. In it, they had used the bogus name of Arabian Gulf in addition to the correct name Persian Gulf. So I

> made a mock page (+), resembling a 404 error message which said: *'the Gulf you are looking for does not exist'*. I asked other bloggers to link to that page. The response was simply overwhelming. Within a week, hundreds of blogs and websites had taken part and the Google bomb exploded, creating a frenzy of media hype. It appeared on an AFP article and Yahoo! News. It also made the first page of BBC news page.[92]

More recently, the first return for a search for the word 'Arabian Gulf' in the Google search field directed the user to a Wikipedia link that contained the following:

> Arabian Gulf may refer to:
> - The Persian Gulf, since the 1960s controversially referred to as the *Arabian Gulf* or *The Gulf* by some Arab countries
> - Arab states of the Persian Gulf
> - The *Sinus Arabicus*, a historical name for the Red Sea, in literary works from ancient times to the 19th Century
> - The Arab Gulf (Arabic *Khalij el-Arab*), a large bay near Alexandria, Egypt, also known as the *Arabs Gulf*, *Arabs' Gulf*, or *Arab's Gulf.*

Online petitions

Iranians have occasionally used online petitions in response to relabelling attempts. To take one example, a petition launched to protest Google's mapping in 2008 drew more than 1,200,000 signatures.

Online polls

Polls on the Internet have also occasionally measured the popularity of proposed labels for the Gulf,[93] though clearly such polls are no more than a pastime. Place names and maritime nomenclature are naturally selected over time, subject to specific procedures. The size of a population is never a criterion by which to decide place names.

Hacking

In recent years, digital activity by Iranians in protest against the renaming of the Persian Gulf has entered a more intrusive – and thus unjustifiable and unacceptable – phase: hacking Arab websites that use or propagate the term 'Arabian Gulf'. Ashyaneh, a group of Iranian hackers, has said that it has attacked several Arabic sites on which the Persian Gulf was renamed. An Iranian hacking team director in the southern province of Yazd said that the group claims to have hacked around 100 different sites, including key Arab government, university and company websites, in protest against any new nomenclature for the Gulf. Behrouz Kamalian, director of an Iranian group calling itself the Mafia Hacking Team, told the Islamic Republic News Agency that the group had posted a map captioned 'The correct name is Persian Gulf' on the homepages of newspapers from several Arab countries.[94]

Websites and blogs

Dozens of websites and blogs have also played an important role. The website www.persiangulfonline.org, in operation since April 2007, is a self-appointed Persian Gulf task force that lists various organisations (or 'abusers of the name', as they are called on the website), which have referred to the 'Arabian Gulf' or simply 'the Gulf'. Links are provided for readers to write letters in protest.[95]

Notes

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Conclusion

The controversy over the nomenclature of the Gulf is, as we have seen, not a trivial problem. It is an issue that requires ample consideration on account of the importance of the body of water in question, as well as the areas adjacent to it (along with the significant natural resources to be found there). This issue is a by-product of regional geopolitics and has, in turn, helped foster a climate of distrust between the two ethnic/cultural groups inhabiting the shores of the Gulf. As noted, the controversy has roots in the antagonism between Arab nationalist politics and the former Iranian monarchy as well as in the tensions between Arab moderates and Iran's Islamic Republic.

The place-name dispute originated in the 1950s, with the exigencies of the Cold War at global and regional levels. Anti-Iranian, pan-Arab elements – reinforced later by conflicting outlooks and territorial and diplomatic disagreements – prompted Nasser's Egypt and especially Baʿathist Iraq to promote the term 'Arabian Gulf', or the generic 'the Gulf', internationally. Egypt initiated this controversy mostly for political reasons, while Iraq fanned it largely as part of its nation-building programme as well as for strategic and ideological reasons. Both were trying to define Arab nationalism, *inter alia*, in opposition to the 'Persians' and Iranian nationalism.

In general, the changing of place names because of political or geopolitical motives can result in controversy and confusion. These are more pronounced in the case of the Persian Gulf, because of its importance; the dispute affects a wide range of international and national institutions, organisations and individuals that need to engage with the region and the littoral countries. It is an important issue with serious consequences for the region and beyond.

The dispute was not the only one of its kind to arise during the tumultuous twentieth century. Attempts to change place names followed coups, revolutions and changes of national and local governments and/or ruling elites, and conflicts over nomenclature arose between various countries (e.g. North and South Korea and Japan). In response to the resulting uncertainty, the need for uniform geographical name usage at domestic, regional and international levels became more imperative, and the implications of concurrent contradictory designations have become more serious. Efforts to stabilise and standardise place names – which had, in fact, begun in the closing years of the twentieth century – gained momentum in the twentieth.

The norms and principles that took shape during this process have, as explained in Chapter Five, helped uphold traditional and time-honoured place names in the face of attempts at arbitrary name-changing for political expediency and/or whimsical approaches adopted by new regimes.

Likewise, over the past few decades, more attention has been paid to traditional place names and more efforts made to preserve them as markers of the past that can communicate information about the history and culture of any area of the world. Many place names established by explorers, colonial powers and early immigrants, for example, have been changed back to pre-European names used by native peoples; name standardisation bodies worldwide have encouraged this practice.

Norms and general principles emerging from the process of geographical name standardisation have found acceptance in many cases, and can serve as a basis for decision-making with regard to naming places. Factors such as historical context, avoidance of more than one name for a single geographical feature and the length of time given names have been in use are considered by agencies responsible for making recommendations on name standardisation. They mostly emphasise the role of history in selecting the names of geographical features. One increasing tendency is the attachment of greater importance to the length of time a given name has been in use as an

essential criterion, as place names have generally been the product of a natural selection process over time.

The Gulf naming dispute is arguably the longest-running and most politically contentious toponymic battle in the world. It is regrettable that the parties involved have not considered it in the light of standards developed over the past century and the efforts of the aforementioned agencies to arrive at sensible solutions for place-name conflicts. This controversy over nomenclature must be viewed not only in political perspective, but also with respect to the growing need for standardisation. Moreover, given the psychological barriers it has thrown up between Iranians and Arabs, decreasing cooperation in the major region and increasing tension, no stone should remain unturned in trying to address it. Indeed, the ill will generated by this dispute makes the prospect of clashes over other issues that much more likely.

The growing role of public opinion in this controversy, and the nationalist feelings involved, have already narrowed the margin for intervention by governments and international agencies. In the case of Iran, the government is mostly overtaken by public opinion, and must follow it – as the *National Geographic* case so clearly demonstrated.

The Persian Gulf naming dispute is mainly a by-product of regional geopolitics. History, ethnic and religious differences had no major roles in giving rise to it, and were not the source of rivalry and, at times, adversarial relations between Arabs and Persians. While this author does not believe in the myth of historical Persian–Arab enmity, issues such as this particular naming dispute must be confronted and contained, lest they continue to unleash deep-seated emotions and risk endemic hostility.

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