

Persian Gulf Historical Documents Databank

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The Persian Gulf, in Western Asia, is an extension of the Indian Ocean located between Iran (Persia) and the Arabian Peninsula. The Persian Gulf was the focus of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War, in which each side attacked the other's oil tankers. In 1991, the Persian Gulf again was the background for what was called the "Persian Gulf War" or the "Gulf War" when Iraq invaded Kuwait and was subsequently pushed back, despite the fact that this conflict was primarily a land conflict. The Persian Gulf has many good fishing grounds, extensive coral reefs, and abundant pearl oysters, but its ecology has come under pressure from industrialization, and in particular, oil and petroleum spillages during wars in the region. Historically and internationally known as the Persian Gulf, this body of water is sometimes controversially referred to as the Arabian Gulf or simply The Gulf by most Arab states, although neither of the latter two terms are recognized internationally. The name Gulf of Iran (Persian Gulf) is used by the International Hydrographic Organization.

Geography:

This inland sea of some 251,000 km² is connected to the Gulf of Oman in the east by the Strait of Hormuz; and its western end is marked by the major river delta of the Shatt al-Arab, which carries the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Its length is 989 kilometers, with Iran covering most of the northern coast and Saudi Arabia most of the southern coast. The Persian Gulf is

about 56 kilometers wide at its narrowest, in the Strait of Hormuz. The waters are overall very shallow, with a maximum depth of 90 meters and an average depth of 50 meters.

Countries with a coastline on the Persian Gulf are (clockwise, from the north): Iran, Oman (exclave of Musandam), United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar on a peninsula off the Saudi coast, Bahrain on an island, Kuwait and Iraq in the northwest. Various small islands lie within the Persian Gulf, some of which are the subject of territorial disputes between the states of the region.

Extent:

The International Hydrographic Organization refers to the gulf as the "Gulf of Iran (Persian Gulf)", and defines its southern limit as "The Northwestern limit of Gulf of Oman". This limit is defined as "A line joining Ràs Limah (25°57'N) on the coast of Arabia and Ràs al Kuh (25°48'N) on the coast of Iran (Persia)".

Oil and gas:

The Persian Gulf and its coastal areas are the world's largest single source of crude oil and related industries dominate the region. Safaniya Oil Field, the world's largest offshore oilfield, is located in the Persian Gulf. Large gas finds have also been made with Qatar and Iran sharing a giant field across the territorial median line (North Field in the Qatari sector; South Pars Field in the Iranian sector). Using this gas, Qatar has built up a substantial liquefied natural gas (LNG) and petrochemical industry.

In 2002, the Persian Gulf nations of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, produced about 25% of the world's oil, held nearly two-thirds of the world's crude oil reserves, and about 35% of the world natural gas reserves. The oil-rich countries (excluding Iraq) that have a coastline on the Persian Gulf are referred to as the Persian Gulf States. Iraq's egress to

the gulf is narrow and easily blockaded consisting of the marshy river delta of the Shatt al-Arab, which carries the waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers, where the east bank is held by Iran.

Naming dispute:

In the 5th century BC, Darius the Great of the Achaemenid dynasty called the Persian Gulf "Draya; tya; haca; persa: Aitiy", meaning, "The sea which goes from Persian." In this era, some of the Greek writers also called it "Persikonkaitas", meaning the Persian Gulf. Claudius Ptolemaeus, the celebrated Greco-Egyptian mathematician/astronomer in the 2nd century called it "Persicus Sinus" or Persian Gulf. In the 1st century AD, Quintus Curtius Rufus, the Roman historian, designated it "Aquarius Persico" – the Persian Sea. Flavius Arrianus, another Greek historian, called it "Persiconkaitas" (Persian Gulf).

During the Sassanian dynasty and the time of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad and the 4 caliphs, the name invariably used was the "Persian Sea." This was continued by the Umayyads and Abbassids, while during the time of the Ottoman empire, both "Persian Gulf" or "Persian Sea" were used, and occasionally Ottomans utilized the term "Khalij of Basra" or "Basra Kurfuzi" to refer to Persian Gulf, meaning the Gulf of Basra.

Among historians, travellers and geographers of the Islamic era, many of them writing in Arabic from the 9th to the 17th century, Ibn Khordadbeh, Ibn al-Faqih, Ibn Rustah, Sohrab, Ramhormozi, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Farisi al Istakhri, Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali al-Mas'udi, Al-Mutahhar ibn Tahir al-Maqdisi(d. 966), Ibn Hawqal, Al-Muqaddasi, Ibn Khaldun, Mohammad ibn Najub Bekiran, Abu Rayhan Biruni, Muhammad al-Idrisi, Yaqut al-Hamawi, Zakariya al-Qazwini, Abu'l-Fida, Al-Dimashqi, Hamdollah Mostowfi,

Ibn al-Wardi, Al-Nuwayri, Ibn Batutta, Katip Çelebi and other sources have used the terms "Bahr-i-Fars", "Daryaye-i-Fars", "Khalij al-'Ajami" and "Khalij-i Fars" (all of which translate into "Persian Gulf" or "Persian Sea").

Until the 1960s Arab countries used the term "Persian Gulf" as well, however with the rise of Arab nationalism (Pan-Arabism) in the 1960s, most Arab states started adopting the term "Arabian Gulf" (Arabic: العربي الخليج, al-Khalīj al-‘Arabī) to refer to the waterway. However, this naming has not found much acceptance outside of the Arab world, and is not recognized by the United Nations or any other international organization.

The United Nations Secretariat on many occasions has requested that only the term "Persian Gulf" be used as the official and standard geographical designation for the body of water. Historically, "Arabian Gulf" has been a term used to indicate the Red Sea. At the same time, the historical veracity of the usage of "Persian Gulf" can be established from the works of many medieval historians.

At the Twenty-third session of the United Nations in March–April 2006, the name "Persian Gulf" was confirmed again as the legitimate and official term to be used by members of the United Nations.

History :

For most of the early history of the settlements in the Persian Gulf the southern shores have been ruled by a series of nomadic tribes. During the end of the fourth millennium BC the southern part of the Persian Gulf was dominated by the Dilmun civilization. For a long time the most important settlement on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf was Gerra. In the 2nd century the Lakhum tribe, who lived in what is now Yemen, migrated north and founded the Lakhmid

Kingdom along the southern coast. Occasional ancient battles took place along the Persian Gulf coastlines, between the Sassanid Persian empire and the Lakhmid Kingdom, the most prominent of which was the invasion led by Shapur II against the Lakhmids, leading to Lakhmids' defeat, and advancement into Arabia, along the southern shore lines. During the 7th century the Sassanid Persian empire conquered the whole of the Persian Gulf, including southern and northern shores. Between 625BC and 226 AD the northern side was dominated by a succession of Persian empires including the Median, Achaemenid, Seleucid and Parthian empires. Under the leadership of the Achaemenid king Darius the Great (Darius I), Persian ships found their way to the Persian Gulf. Persian naval forces laid the foundation for a strong Persian maritime presence in Persian Gulf, that started with Darius I and existed until the arrival of the British East India Company, and the Royal Navy by mid-19th century AD. Persians were not only stationed on islands of the Persian Gulf, but also had ships often of 100 to 200 capacity patrolling empire's various rivers including Shatt-al-Arab, Tigris, and the Nile in the west, as well as Sind waterway, in India.

The Achaemenid high naval command had established major naval bases located along Shatt al-Arab river, Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen. The Persian fleet would soon not only be used for peacekeeping purposes along the Shatt al-Arab but would also open the door to trade with India via Persian Gulf.

Following the fall of Achaemenid Empire, and after the fall of the Parthian Empire, the Sassanid empire ruled the northern half and at times the southern half of the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf, along with the Silk Road were important trade routes in the Sassanid empire. Many of the trading ports of the Persian empires were located in or around Persian Gulf. Siraf, an ancient Sassanid port that was located on the northern shore of the gulf, located in what is now the Iranian province of Bushehr, is an example of such commercial port. Siraf, was also significant

in that it had a flourishing commercial trade with China by the 4th century, having first established connection with the far east in 185AD .

Islands

Persian Gulf is home to many small islands. Bahrain an island in the Persian Gulf, is itself a Persian Gulf Arab state. Geographically the biggest island in the Persian Gulf is Qeshm island located in the Strait of Hormuz and belonging to Iran. Other significant islands in the Persian Gulf include Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Kish administered by Iran, Bubiyan administered by Kuwait, Tarout administered by Saudi Arabia, and Dalma administered by UAE. In recent years, there has also been addition of artificial islands, often created by Arab states such as UAE for commercial reasons or as tourist resorts. Although very small, these artificial islands have had a negative impact on the mangrove habitats upon which they are built, often causing unpredicted environmental issues. Persian Gulf islands are often also historically significant having been used in the past by colonial powers such as the Portuguese and the British in their trade or as acquisitions for their empires.

Wildlife:

Wildlife of the Persian Gulf is diverse, and entirely unique due to the gulf's geographic distribution and its isolation from the international waters only breached by the narrow Strait of Hormuz. Persian Gulf has hosted some of the most magnificent marine fauna and flora, some of which are near extinction or at serious environmental risk. From corals, to dugongs, Persian Gulf is a diverse cradle for many species many of which depend on each other for survival.

A great example of this symbiosis are the mangroves in the gulf, which require tidal flow and a combination of fresh and salt water for growth, and act as nurseries for many crabs, small fish, and insects; these fish and insects are the source of food for many of the marine birds that feed on them. Mangroves are a diverse group of shrubs and trees belonging to the genus *Avicennia* or *Rhizophora* that flourish in the salt water shallows of the gulf, and are the most important habitats for small crustaceans that dwell in them. They are as crucial an indicator of biological health on the surface of the water, as the corals are to biological health of the gulf in deeper waters. Mangroves' ability to survive the salt water through intricate molecular mechanisms, their unique reproductive cycle, and their ability to grow in the most oxygen deprived waters have allowed them extensive growth in hostile areas of the gulf. Unfortunately however, with the advent of artificial island development, most of their habitat is destroyed, or occupied by man-made structures. This has had a negative impact on the crustaceans that rely on the mangrove, and in turn on the species that feed on them.

One of the most unique marine mammals living in the Persian Gulf is *Dugong dugon*, commonly referred to as the dugong, or the "sea cow". Called "sea cows" for their grazing habits, their mild manner and resemblance to the livestock, dugongs have a life expectancy similar to that of humans and can reach lengths of up to 3 meters. These gentle mammals feed on the sea grass and genetically resemble the land mammals more than the dolphins and the whales. Despite the simplicity of their grass diet, new developments along the Persian Gulf coastline, particularly artificial island development in Arab states, pollution particularly by oil spills caused during the "Persian Gulf war" and also due to occasional oil spills, and uncontrolled hunting has had a negative impact on the survival of the dugongs. After Australian waters with some 80,000 dugong inhabitants, waters of Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, and Saudi Arabia have some 7,500 dugongs

remaining, making the Persian Gulf the second most important habitat for the species. Dugong's current number is dwindling and it is not clear as of now how many are currently alive or what their reproductive trend is. Unfortunately, ambitious and uncalculated construction schemes, political unrest and an ever present international conflict, and presence of the most lucrative world supply of oil, along with lack of cooperation between Arab states and Iran, has had a negative impact on the survival of many marine species, including dugongs.

Coral is another important inhabitant of the Persian Gulf waters. Corals are vital ecosystems that support multitude of marine species, and whose health directly reflects the health of the gulf. Recent years have seen a drastic decline in the coral population in the gulf, partially owing to global warming but majorly due to irresponsible dumping by Arab states like UAE and Bahrain. Construction garbage such as tires, cement, and chemical by products have found their way to the Persian Gulf in recent years. Aside from direct damage to the coral, the construction waste creates "traps" for marine life in which they are trapped and die. The end result has been a dwindling population of the coral, and as a result a decrease in number of species that rely on the corals for their survival.

The Persian Gulf is also home to many migratory and local birds. There is great variation in color, size, and type of the bird species that call the gulf home. One bird in particular, the kalbaensis, a sub-species of the kingfishers is at the brink of extinction due to real estate development by cities such as Dubai and countries such as Oman. Estimates from 2006 showed that only three viable nesting sites were available for this ancient bird, one located 80 miles from Dubai, and two smaller sites in Oman, all of which are in the process of becoming real estate developments. Such expansion would prove devastating and could cause this species to become extinct. Unfortunately for the kingfisher, a U.N. plan to protect the mangroves as a biological

reserve was blatantly ignored by the emirate of Sharjah, which allowed the dredging of a channel that bisects the wetland and construction of an adjacent concrete walkway. Environmental watchdogs in Arabia are few, and those that do advocate the wildlife are often silenced or ignored by developers of real estate, most of whom have royal family connections and huge energy profits to invest. The end result has been sacrifice of a beautiful yet delicate ecology that has been in harmony for hundreds of years, for structures that are erected only a few years, yet will have a lasting detrimental effect.

Almost no species in the Persian Gulf is spared from the real estate development of UAE and Oman, including the hawksbill turtle, the flamingo, and the booted warblers, mainly due to destruction of the mangrove habitats to make way for towers, hotels, and luxury resorts. Even dolphins that frequent the gulf in northern waters, around Iran are at serious risk. Recent statistics and observations show that dolphins are at danger of entrapment in purse seine fishing nets and exposure to chemical pollutants; perhaps the most alarming sign is the "mass suicides" committed by dolphins off Iran's Hormozgan

province, which are not well understood, but are suspected to be linked with a deteriorating marine environment from water pollution from oil, sewage, and industrial run offs .

The Persian Gulf is also home to over 700 species of fish , most of which are native to the gulf. Of these 700 species , more than 80% are coral reef associated, and directly or indirectly depend on the coral reef for their survival. Overall, the wild life of the Persian Gulf is endangered from both global factors, and regional, local negligence. Most pollution is from ships; land generated pollution counts as the second most common source of pollution, ranging from mercury, to acidic or basic toxins.

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Persian Gulf is one of the most important marine transit channels in the middle east. This channel has always been considered by developed countries because of its political, economical and military importance. The name of this channel has been in negotiation by Arab countries. There are too many historical maps and documents about the characteristics and history of this channel. In this project, we have developed a web based application for one of the most famous and important atlas called " Persian Gulf - Atlas of Old & Historical Maps (3000 B.C. - 2000 A.D.)". This application is a compact and customized content management system which is able to manage the contents of maps and documents entered in the system. This system could be developed for more related documents. An application designed for maps as a fliping page book which contains few tools for document management and searches. Users can search maps and documents based on their characteristics, authors and map designers. This package has been developed using ASP .Net technology and Microsoft Silverlight has been used as a tool for high quality graphical operations.

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