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INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY

Series A

LIMITS IN THE SEAS

No. 18

CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY: ABU DHABI-QATAR

The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY: ABU DHABI-QATAR

The Governments of Abu Dhabi and Qatar signed an Agreement on March 20, 1969, dividing their respective continental shelves in the Persian Gulf. The Agreement came into force on the date of signing.

Neither country is a party to the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf; however, the two countries have adopted the principle of limited national jurisdiction over the offshore domain of submerged land in general proclamations which give no precise definition to the shelf. The proclamations are:

Abu Dhabi: Proclamation of June 10, 1949
Qatar: Proclamation of June 8, 1949

The Agreement for Settlement of the Offshore Boundary and Ownership of Islands set forth the following principles:

The two parties,

being desirous of reaching a settlement regarding the boundary separating their offshore areas and the ownership of the islands pertaining thereto, and having regard for their common interests and the ties of amity and friendship between them.

Have agreed on the following:

1. The island of "Daiyina" (Dayyīnah) is part of the territory of Abu Dhabi.
2. Both the islands of "Lasahat" (Al Ashāt) and "Shurā'awa" (Sharā'iwah) are part of the territory of Qatar.
3. Neither country now has any territorial claim upon the other with respect to the islands or offshore areas falling outside its agreed offshore boundary.
4. The agreed offshore boundary referred to in paragraph (3) above shall be as follows:

() A straight line from point "A" with geographic coordinates
Latitude North 25° 31' 50"
Longitude East 53° 02' 05"
to point "B" which coincides with the location of al-Bunduq well No. 1 with geographic coordinates

Latitude North 25° 05' 54.79"
Longitude East 52° 36' 50.98"

(ii) A straight line from point "B", as defined above, to point "C" with geographic coordinates

Latitude North 24° 48' 40"
Longitude East 52° 16' 20"

(iii) A straight line from point "C" as defined above, to point "D" at the mouth of the Khaur al-'Adid (Khawr al 'Udayd) on the territorial waters boundary, with geographic coordinates.

Latitude North 24° 38' 20"
Longitude East 51° 28' 05"

5. At the earliest possible opportunity, the points defined above and the lines joining them shall be drawn on an accurate map in two copies and signed by the two parties, showing the definitive offshore boundary between the two countries as herein agreed.
6. The al-Bunduq field is to be equally shared by the parties, and they agree that insofar as the exploitation of the field is concerned they shall from time to time consult each other on all matters pertaining to this field in order to exercise all the rights on an equal basis.
7. The al-Bunduq field shall be developed by Abu Dhabi Marine Areas (ADMA) in accordance with the terms of its concession with the Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and all royalties, profits and other government fees due in respect of the aforementioned field under the said concession shall be equally divided between the Governments of Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

This agreement and the provisional map attached thereto, which shows the boundary points defined above, were signed this first day of Muharram 1389, corresponding to 20 March 1969.

ANALYSIS

The continental shelf boundary (CSB) extends for a distance of 115 nautical miles. There are four terminal or turning points on the CSB and the average distance between the points is 38.3 nautical miles. The CSB is comprised of straight line segments except for a 15-nautical-mile arc around the island of Dayyīnah. The water depth at the boundary points averages 11.8 fathoms, with a minimum and maximum depth of 5 and 20 fathoms, respectively.

An examination of U.S. Naval Oceanographic Office Chart H.O. 3661 (revised October 16, 1967) reveals that certain assumptions may have been considered in delimiting the CSB.

The seaward extent of the CSB is Point A; this is apparently the trisection point that is equidistant from the mainland of Abu Dhabi, Iran and Qatar. To establish Point A as the equidistant trisection point, it is necessary to consider that the shoals close to the Abu Dhabi mainland are a part of the mainland. Ra's Abū al Mushut, Qatar (25° 16' N., 51° 37' E.) marks the only one of the three points shown on the attached map that is equidistant from Point A, and the distance is 79 nautical miles.

Point B of the CSB is 35 nautical miles landward from Point A. The Agreement states that Point B coincides with the location of the al-Bunduq oil well (Point B'). However, the geographical coordinates in the Agreement do not locate Point B precisely on the al-Bunduq oil well, but rather at a site 0.5 nautical miles southwest (see map). This discrepancy could be the result of map distortion.

The positioning of the line connecting Point B and Point C of the CSB ignores the presence of the Abu Dhabi island of Dayyīnah. The line is equidistant, however, at points along its traverse, between the islands of Arzanah, Qatar (24° 47' N., 52° 34' E.) and Sharā' iwah, Qatar (25° 02' N., 52° 14' E.). There are two points along line BC where one or the other of the two islands is 10.5 nautical miles distance from the line. However, a deviation was made in the CSB to place Dayyīnah

in Abu Dhabi territory. The deviation in the CSB is an arc around Dayyīnah which marks the three-mile territorial sea of the island. The distance from Point B to Point C is 35 nautical miles including the 15-nautical-mile arc around Dayyīnah.

Point C of the CSB marks the intersection of the lines from Point B and Point D. The line CD is apparently constructed so as to be equidistant, at selected points, between the shoals which are part of the respective Abu Dhabi and Qatar sovereignties. At a point on line CD, the shoal (24° 40' 45" N., 51° 48' 45" E.) north of the island of Makhasib, is 2.0 nautical miles from the CSB. At a different point on line CD, the south shoal (24° 44' 40" N., 51° 49' 30" E.) of Fasht al Udayd, is also 2.0 nautical miles from the CSB. The distance from Point C to Point D is 45 nautical miles.

The landward terminus of the CSB is, according to the Agreement, the point where the three-mile territorial sea claims of Qatar and Abu Dhabi intersect. The coordinates given in the Agreement (Point D) place the intersection point 1.25 nautical miles inside the actual three-mile limit. Therefore, the correct location of the landward terminus of the CSB should be Point D' as reflected on the map.

The Abu Dhabi-Qatar CSB was not delimited according to the strict application of the equidistance principle. Points A and D are equidistant from the coasts of both states. Point C is simply the intersection of lines B and D and not a point equidistant from the respective countries. The other point of the CSB, Point B, was designated to coincide with the location of an oil well and was selected independent of any consideration of the equidistance principle.

TABLE 1. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ABU DHABI-QATAR CONTINENTAL SHELF BOUNDARY

Terminal or Turning Points	Distance Between Points (nautical miles)	Depth (fathoms)	Abu Dhabi Territory	Distance from Terminal or Turning Points n.m.	Qatar Territory
A	35	15	Das	(24)	(35) Halul
B	35	7	Das	(14)	(21) Sharā'iwah
C	45	20	Dayyīnah	(10.5)	(13) Sharā'iwah
D		5	Mainland	(2)	(2) Mainland