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GULF OF MEXICO OR GULF OF AMERICA?

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Abstract

The Gulf of Mexico was recognized as the ‘Gulf of America’, via Presidential executive order in the United States, from February 2025. Renaming geographical or geological sites based on political or nationalist decisions risks places academics, editors, and publishers in complex situations where fact at one point in time may be labelled as false facts or misinformation at another point in time. Until 27 August 2025, 22 documents indexed in Scopus and 18 documents indexed in Web of Science had employed ‘Gulf of America’ in the title, abstract or keywords. Editors who allow authors to publish the term ‘Gulf of America’ are called upon to offer guidance. It is also important to publish the sentiment of those authors (from the US, Mexico, or elsewhere) who have employed ‘Gulf of Mexico’ in indexed academic papers from February 2025 onwards, since those papers might be interpreted as carrying – at least from a US perspective – an error of historical fact. To get a more granular appreciation of the extent of academic implications of this politically influenced toponym, the first 150 of 645 Google Scholar results (27 August 2025) were manually assessed. The analysis shows that the adoption of the politically imposed toponym ‘Gulf of America’ is confined almost entirely to U.S.-affiliated authors, while Gulf of Mexico remains the prevailing term internationally.

Key words

academic freedom; editorial independence; historical facts; geopolitics; public; toponym.

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1. Introduction: The ‘Gulf of America’ toponym

In this brief report, we take this opportunity of drawing attention to a contentious historical aspect of papers published in recent months, namely their use of the internationally recognized name, Gulf of Mexico (GoM). Our paper emphasizes how political decisions can cause academic quagmires.

New history was literally made on 9 February 2025 on Air Force One. Following a short ceremonial

speech, US President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order (EO) that the Gulf of Mexico would no longer be recognized as such, and was renamed the Gulf of America (GoA), a reclassification that Telesetsky (2025) described as “nonsensical”, while also starting a new national US holiday, the Gulf of America Day (White House, 2025).

In addition to rewriting history with the stroke of a pen, by renaming GoM to GoA, this also allowed presidential restrictions on freedom of the press (Deppe, 2025), with a greater risk of suppressing

media voices or their “pressure” to employ the new toponym (MacMillan, 2025), with some voices also referring to this decision as imperialist (Giraut, 2025; Musset, 2025), “America first” expansionism (Graner, 2025), neo-colonialist (Namboodiri, Agney, 2025), or part of the US’s assertion within the US-China rivalry for global hegemony (Belém Lopes, 2025), with the creation of toponyms being an easy strategy for “powerful actors (state leaders, politicians, or oligarchs)” to transmit and impose nationalist ideas (Basik, 2025). Others yet have argued that it challenges the legality of maritime law (Anyá, Anyá, 2025). Two Mexican researchers posed three questions (Aguilar, Espinosa, 2025):

1) To whom do the oceans belong?

2) Who owns the Gulf of Mexico?

3) What is the Gulf of America? Overnight political decisions, whether they be driven by globalist or nationalist incentives – in this case, the latter – can sometimes have immediate and potentially complex consequences for academics, editors, and publishers, especially if cataloguing of historical information (facts and manipulated facts) becomes a mere political instrument (Olson, 2025).

In some journals, authors with a US affiliation might refer to the internationally recognized GoM as such, and not as the GoA, while others might use the newly anointed name, but this may be perceived as culturally offensive (Charney, 2025), suggesting that academic freedom or personal choice have precedence over political positioning. However, depending on the side of the argument, those on the opposing side might argue that papers that employ one or the other name might constitute a geographical nomenclatural error, or even possibly an error of historical fact – at least from the current US Government’s perspective.

Very importantly, US federal employees or those funded by the US government, including researchers, are required to use The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) terminology whereas others would have more freedom. If all authors of papers published in papers after February 2025 are US federal researchers, and if they use the GoM, would they be in breach of GAO terminology, and does this imply that their papers need to be corrected?

To help us better gauge how the academic literature was accommodating this new toponym, Web of Science (WoS), Scopus and Google Scholar were searched for clues.

2. Methodology and results

A search on Scopus and WoS on 27 August 2025 for ‘Gulf of America’ revealed 22 unique documents, and 645 results on Google Scholar¹. To gain a more granular appreciation of which journals published GoA rather than GoM as a historical toponym, the first 150 Google Scholar results were examined manually (this is the study’s limitation). A total of 46 DOI-indexed documents that employed GoA were identified (Table 1). In all cases, the authors had an affiliation in the US, in one case with as many as 18 US affiliations, but the majority being between one and four, while eight papers had co-authors or collaborators from other countries. It is not clear whether, in those cases, the opinions and positions of the US authors took precedence over those of international co-authors. While 10 of the papers had GoA in the title, the majority included GoA in the abstract or main body of text. Of the 46 documents, most (37) were journal articles and nine were in preprints, mainly Elsevier’s SSRN, including the use of GoA in maps (Fig. 1).

Scopus and WoS claim to carefully select academic content, so the presence of 22 documents on these databases indicates that the use or mention of ‘Gulf of America’ is not restricted to non-peer-reviewed preprints or other documents that appear on Google Scholar. Incidentally, on the same date (27 August 2025), there were 32,783, 24,236 and 1,800,000 results for ‘Gulf of Mexico’ on Scopus, WoS, and Google Scholar, respectively, suggesting that GoM still remains the dominant form. However, considering that just three months ago, in June 2025, there were only 165 results at Google Scholar, and now already 645, it will be interesting to appreciate how these volumes change over the Trump presidency, and beyond.

3. Discussion

What our WoS, Scopus and Google Scholar-based analysis reveals is that research papers have mainly used GoA as a statement of fact and not as a debate. Since a publication is a source of influence, even more so if they are open access and as preprints, we believe that “advertising” GoA may influence readers to employ this term as well, including US authors. It could even be argued that academic journals could be perceived as being used – in this case, for the toponym GoA – as political instruments of neo-colonialist US policies, through the dissemination of politically forced historical facts, especially if one considers that journals are international platforms of the dissemination of science and knowledge.

¹https://scholar.google.co.jp/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=%22Gulf+of+America%22&oq=. Search also includes full texts.

Tab. 1. Academic papers including the term “Gulf of America” as a statement of fact

DOI	Journal / preprint (*)	Publisher	Authors' countries' (# US affiliations)	Location(s) in paper (**)	In Scopus?	In WoS?
https://doi.org/10.1093/mcfafs/vtaf009	Marine and Coastal Fisheries	Oxford University Press	USA (18 affiliations)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2025.125157	Journal of Environmental Management	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1093/najfmt/vqae004	North American Journal of Fisheries Management	Oxford University Press	USA (1 affiliation)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2025.107444	Fisheries Research	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2025.107464	Fisheries Research	Elsevier	USA (2 affiliations)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1002/gdj3.70014	Geoscience Data Journal	Wiley	USA (2 affiliations)	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3389/feart.2025.1577336	Frontiers in Earth Science	Frontiers SA	USA (3 affiliations), China, Norway	Title, abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1645/25-11	The Journal of Parasitology	The American Society of Parasitologists	USA (1 affiliation), South Africa	Title, abstract, body	Yes	No
https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-6597204/v1	Research Square *	Springer Nature	USA (2 affiliations)	Title, abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1007/s00227-025-04684-7	Marine Biology	Springer Nature	USA (11 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1562581	Frontiers in Marine Science	Frontiers SA	USA (2 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1002/edn3.70074	Environmental DNA	Wiley	USA (2 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-14099-5	Scientific Reports	Springer Nature	USA (1 affiliation)	Title, abstract	Yes	No
https://doi.org/10.5334/cjme.129	Current	Ubiquity Press	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	No	No
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5401575	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (4 affiliations)	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1093/mcfafs/vtaf013	Marine and Coastal Fisheries	Oxford University Press	USA (2 affiliations)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1628084	Frontiers in Marine Science	Frontiers SA	USA (3 affiliations)	Abstract	No	No
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5202741	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	No	No

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DOI	Journal / preprint (*)	Publisher	Authors' countries (# US affiliations)	Location(s) in paper (**)	In Scopus?	In WoS?
https://doi.org/10.3390/jmse13030403	Journal of Marine Science and Engineering	MDPI	USA (2 affiliations)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1645/25-22	The Journal of Parasitology	The American Society of Parasitologists	USA (1 affiliation), South Africa	Abstract, body	Yes	No
https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1575151	Frontiers in Marine Science	Frontiers SA	USA (1 affiliation), Australia, Italy	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3354/meps14784	Marine Ecology Progress Series	Inter-Research Science Publisher	USA (4 affiliations)	Abstract **	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpolbul.2025.118110	Marine Pollution Bulletin	Elsevier	USA (3 affiliations), Saudi Arabia	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1175/MWR-D-24-0213.1	Monthly Weather Review	American Meteorological Society	USA (3 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3390/oceans6010012	Oceans	MDPI	USA (2 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1645/24-145	The Journal of Parasitology	The American Society of Parasitologists	USA (2 affiliations), South Africa	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3354/meps14829	Marine Ecology Progress Series	Inter-Research Science Publisher	USA (2 affiliations)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1007/s12237-025-01568-3	Estuaries and Coasts	Springer Nature	USA (2 affiliations)	Abstract, body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1101/2025.04.29.651281	bioRxiv *	openRxiv	USA (3 affiliations)	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1080/00431672.2025.2502305	Weatherwise	Taylor & Francis	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	No	No
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5294555	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (3 affiliations)	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.61551/gsjfr.55.2.131	Journal of Foraminiferal Research	Cushman Foundation for Foraminiferal Research	USA (4 affiliations)	Abstract	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2025.107377	Fisheries Research	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5195230	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation), Ireland	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hal.2025.102933	Harmful Algae	Elsevier	USA (4 affiliations), Spain	Body	Yes	Yes

Tab. 1. Academic papers including the term “Gulf of America” as a statement of fact

DOI	Journal / preprint (*)	Publisher	Authors' countries' (# US affiliations)	Location(s) in paper (**)	In Scopus?	In WoS?
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2025.107377	Fisheries Research	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5195230	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (1 affiliation), Ireland	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hal.2025.102933	Harmful Algae	Elsevier	USA (4 affiliations), Spain	Body	Yes	Yes
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5401575	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (4 affiliations)	Abstract, body	No	No
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5261440	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (7 affiliations)	Abstract, body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1111/faf.12906	Fish and Fisheries	Wiley	USA (7 affiliations)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3390/w17152327	Water	MDPI	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pclm.0000530	PLOS Climate	PLOS	USA (10 affiliations)	Body	No	Yes
https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2025.1575151	Frontiers in Marine Science	Frontiers SA	USA (1 affiliation), Australia, Italy	Body	Yes	Yes
https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5289468	SSRN *	Elsevier	USA (7 affiliations)	Body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.5334/cjme.128	Current	Ubiquity Press	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	No	No
https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.8829	International Journal of Climatology	Wiley	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.1029/2024GL113597	Geophysical Research Letters	Wiley	USA (1 affiliation)	Body	Yes	Yes
https://doi.org/10.14358/PERS.24-00050R2	Photogrammetric Engineering & Remote Sensing	American Society for Photo-grammetry and Remote Sensing	USA (2 affiliations)	Body	Yes	Yes

Notes:

1. Search date: 27 August 2025; entries listed in order of discovery on Google Scholar.
2. Search term: https://scholar.google.co.jp/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=%22Gulf+of+America%22&oeq=
3. Although there were 645 results, only the first 150 were manually verified.
4. Inclusion criteria: journals articles with a DOI, or preprints; only original research (as much as possible); English papers.
5. Exclusion criteria: reports, proceedings or conference papers, book chapters, data sets, theses, news items, political editorials, and blogs. Even if there were reports with a DOI, such as US government reports (BOEM, NOAA, etc.), these were excluded from the analysis. Opinion papers were excluded, even though they may have been published in indexed journals with a DOI, although some were cited in our paper's text. Papers that included GoA in the reference list (e.g., in document titles) were excluded. We ignored whether authors also used GoM and whether they provided any explanation for the use of GoA.
6. * = preprints; ** = document whose full text could not be accessed to confirm the location of GoA in the text (the authors were contacted for a copy of the texts).
7. Abbreviations: GoA, Gulf of America; GoM, Gulf of Mexico

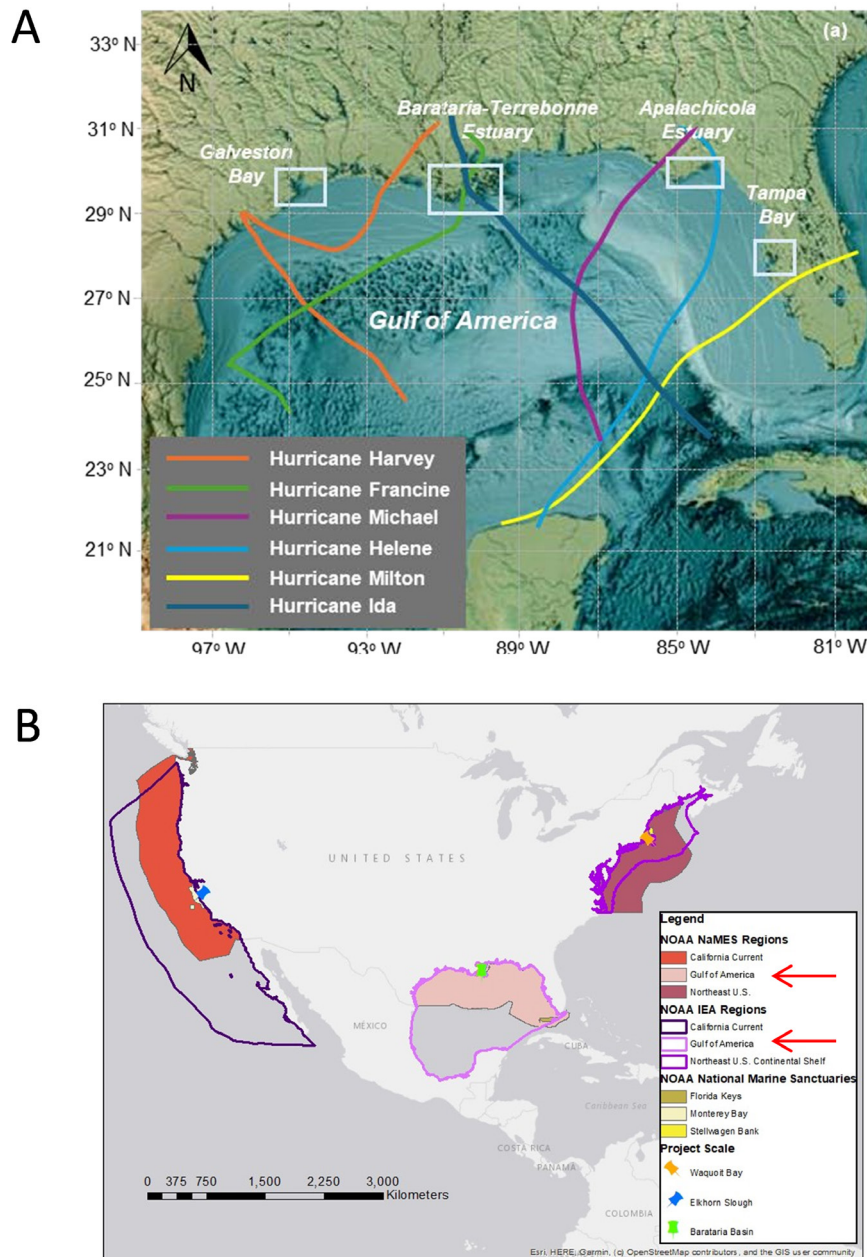


Fig. 1. Use of 'Gulf of America' in maps in academic papers. Two examples in SSRN preprints are shown. (A) DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.5261440 (Fig. 1a); (B) DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.5289468 (Fig. 1) (red arrows). CC BY 4.0.

We noticed that many of the papers justified their choice by a statement similar to the following "U.S. Gulf of America (formerly the U.S. Gulf of Mexico; hereafter "Gulf"" or "Gulf of America (formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico)", as well as some convenient political neutrality by at least one publisher, as a publisher's note: «Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations» (DOI: 10.1007/s12237-025-01568-3).

Academics, editors, and publishers have to manage political decisions, such as whether to name Taiwan as such, or as the Republic of China (Teixeira da Silva, 2024), not knowing whether the use of a politically

influenced term places them at risk of making an "error of historical fact," depending on the entity or country proclaiming the "fact." Authors are thus very much left to their own devices when it comes to having to use such terms. Journals' instructions for authors generally do not carry specific guidance, or they might – to defend their editorial independence – make disclaimers that distance themselves from political decisions. The US President's EO may thus be at odds with editorial standards in academic journals, although the rapid increase in papers in ranked and indexed journals, as testifies the cases in Table 1, suggests otherwise. It is unclear whether American

academic societies – and their academics – are under pressure to adopt GoA, and cease using GoM.

This political nationalist decision may appear to be restricted to the US and Mexico, but international authors who might have employed GoM in academic papers after February 2025 may find themselves in an uncomfortable situation where they may be requested to adjust the term to GoA, especially if the journal is published in the US by a US Government entity, or to correct GoM to GoA, which is not unlikely

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in the current climate of corrective measures to the academic literature (Teixeira da Silva, 2022).

Disclaimer

An earlier version of this paper was published as an SSRN preprint: <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5379834>.