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Small Islands, Big Politics: The Tonbs and Abu Musa in the Persian Gulf

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Small Islands, Big Politics: The Tonbs and Abu Musa in the Persian Gulf

surpasses the subject of the Tribunal to encompass a treatise for subsequent development of international criminal and humanitarian law.

Marco Madriz

HOOSHANG AMIRAHMADI (Ed.), *SMALL ISLANDS, BIG POLITICS: THE TONBS AND ABU MUSA IN THE PERSIAN GULF*, St. Martin's Press, New York, NY (1996); (\$45.00); ISBN 0-312-15910-2; 200 pp. (hardcover).

Despite their small size and lack of natural resources, the islands of Abu Musa and the Tonbs have been the subject of big politics over the years. Global powers, such as the U.S., Russia, and England, have used the islands as a political tool, as have regional powers in the Persian Gulf. Currently, Abu Musa and the Tonbs are the subject of a territorial dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). *Small Islands, Big Politics* presents the Iranian position on this dispute from three different perspectives: historical, geographical, and legal.

Hooshang Amirahmadi, the editor of the volume, takes a historical approach to the problem. Amirahmadi contends that because Iran is the oldest state in the Persian Gulf, its claim to the islands (which he bases on historical claims to the islands as well as a 1971 compromise with the British) outweighs that of the UAE. He ascribes the centuries-long controversy over the islands, the largest of which measures four square miles, to attempts by outside powers to contain Iranian power and influence. The territorial dispute reflects, rather than feeds, tension between Iran and its historical and contemporary political opponents.

Taking a geopolitical approach to the problem, Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh emphasizes the strategic location of the disputed islands off the Iranian coast. He traces the attempts of foreign powers, particularly Britain and Russia, to control the islands as part of their larger policy of containing Iran. These historical trends, Mojtahed-Zadeh claims, form an important backdrop to the current dispute over the islands and illustrate the importance of a peaceful settlement and stability in the region.

In the final two chapters, Davoud H. Bavand and Guive Mirfenderski examine the legal basis of Iran's claims over Abu Musa and the Tonbs, respectively. Both claims rest primarily upon centuries of Iranian claims over Abu Musa and the Tonbs, and other states' recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the islands, which the authors recount carefully. Bavand and Mirfenderski assert that even Britain recognized Iran's ownership over Abu Musa and the Tonbs before the British encouraged the Arab sheikdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah (which would later become part of the UAE) to occupy the islands at the turn of this century. These two authors conclude that

Iran's prior claim to Abu Musa and the Tonbs makes it stronger than the Arab claim.

Small Islands, Big Politics presents a comprehensive survey of the territorial dispute between the UAE and Iran by examining the conflict from historical, territorial and legal perspectives. Although the book does not present both sides of the dispute, it does not claim to do so. Amirahmadi noted at the beginning of the book that although advocates of the UAE's position had been invited to contribute to the book, they had declined to do so. While the authors allude to the UAE's position on Abu Musa and the Tonbs and the arguments in support of its claim to the islands, a more thorough and vigorous explanation of the opposing position would have contributed significantly to *Small Islands, Big Politics*.

Even without a thorough discussion of the UAE's side of the dispute, *Small Islands, Big Politics* makes a useful contribution to the understanding of the dispute over Abu Musa and the Tonbs. In addition to the chapters discussed above, the book includes an extensive bibliography, maps, and reproductions of historical documents which will prove helpful to anyone who wishes to learn more about this territorial dispute.

Amy Eckert

GERD WINTER (Ed.), *EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE*; Dartmouth Publishing Company, Brookfield, Vermont (1996); (\$39.95); ISBN 1-85521-564-0; 443 pp. (paperback).

Environmental law continues to expand internationally. *European Environmental Law: A Comparative Perspective* examines and assesses the fundamental concepts of environmental law in Europe. Divided into five sections, this compilation of essays explores the foundation, the framework and the future role of the environment in the European political arena.

The collection begins by analyzing the command and control model — government definition and regulation of environmental concerns. Part one addresses the need for integration of environmental concerns into policy areas not traditionally associated with environmental law and the relationship with constitutional law, in particular, fundamental rights. Specific components of an environmental regime include: criteria and instruments for regulation; environmental impact assessment; public participation; judicial review; administration and freedom of information, comprise the subject matter of the second section.

Although the command and control model dominates European environmental policy, alternatives to this structure are considered. Focusing on the individual, rather than the government, section three of this book discusses potential reforms. Such changes include network management, financial alternatives, liability schemes and self-