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Book Review. Bahrein Islands--A Legal and Diplomatic Study of the British-Iranian Controversy by Fereydoun Adamiyat

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neighbors' cultures. Dr. Khadduri has at once produced a scholarly, readable, timely and valuable contribution to such a study.

EDWIN M. WRIGHT
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In a lively and interesting narrative, Mr. Adamiyat presents the eventful history of the Bahrein Islands, with some background on the history of the entire Persian Gulf, and, on the basis of the interpretation of historical facts, proceeds with an analysis of the status of the islands from the aspect of international law.

The book, in four-fifths of its length, deals with history, large parts of it being devoted to the diplomatic history of Anglo-Persian relations in the Gulf—an area of strategic importance and rich natural resources.

From immemorial times, as the author states, the islands were a Persian dependency. With the advent of colonialism, they fell into the hands of the Portuguese for a century. After their return to the motherland at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Persia effectively exercised her sovereign rights over the islands and prevented the Dutch and the French from expanding more widely in the Gulf area. The population of the islands was then predominantly Persian, but with the influx of the Arabs, it decreased percentage-wise so as to amount to about one half, according to the estimates of the author. It totals 100,000–120,000 people.

In the eighteenth century, British expansion in the Gulf area increased. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British impact on the Gulf became stronger. Suggestions were advanced to establish a permanent base on one of the islands. In fact, piracy which developed in the area paralyzed British trade. In 1819, the first military British expedition was sent to the Gulf and the pirates were crushed. The next year, an anti-piratical treaty was signed by the British East India Company and the Arabian chiefs of the Gulf, a treaty which was joined by the Sheikh of Bahrein. In the same year the British forces occupied the Island of Kishm on the Gulf, but this occupation was only temporary. In 1822, Capt. Bruce, the British Resident at Bushire, signed a treaty with the Persian Minister of the Province of Fars, in which Persia sovereignty over Bahrein was recognized. Persia attaches great importance to this document, although the treaty was neither authorized nor ratified, and for his unwarranted initiative Bruce lost his post.

In 1860, Sheikh Mohammed of Bahrein declared his allegiance to Persia, but the following year, under British influence, he signed a "Treaty of Peace and Friendship" with the British Resident in the Gulf as an "in-
dependent ruler.” Nevertheless, the Sheikh continued to recognize his dependency on the Persian Shah, which caused British military intervention in 1868, the deposition of the Sheikh, and the installation in this post of his brother Ali. Upon Mohammed’s return to power by force and the ensuing disorders on the island, the British prevented the Persian Government from settling the matters, intervened, arrested the anti-British chiefs, and imposed Ali’s son as the new Sheikh. Persian protests were of not much avail.

By the Acts of 1880 and 1892, the Sheikh of Bahrein engaged himself not to enter into negotiations or make treaties with any state or government without the consent of the British Government. The contention of the British is that those Acts established the British Protectorate over the islands. In 1913, the British “Bahrein Order in Council” classified the islands as a Colony or Possession of the Crown, and introduced the British civil and criminal law of India into Bahrein. The order was carried into effect in 1919 and the administration of the islands fell into the hands of the British Agent on Bahrein. The anti-British chiefs were expelled to India, and the Sheikh who resisted those measures was forced to abdicate. The islands were officially proclaimed as a British Protectorate. New laws were enacted aimed against Persia, such as those on Bahrein nationality, land registration, and passport regulation.

In the meantime the question of oil emerged. The Sheikh agreed to shape his oil policy only with approval of the British Government. In 1925, a British company obtained oil concessions which later passed to Standard Oil and the Texas Co. All those developments were objected to by Persia which complained to the League of Nations and reasserted her claims in the United Nations.

On the basis of those historical facts, the author concludes that Persian claims to Bahrein are well founded. His main thesis is that Persia’s sovereignty over Bahrein was never lost. The islands were never independent. In the light of international law, the Sheikh had no authority to sign any treaty as an “independent ruler.” Besides, such acts were due to British pressure and subsequently denounced. The additional argument is that in most dealings between the British and the Sheikh, including the treaty of 1820, the British East India Company was a party, and the British Government could not derive any legal benefits from them.

On the other hand, the Persian Government never transferred sovereignty over Bahrein to Britain, and never assented to the fait accompli which the British achieved on Bahrein. Contrary to British contention, the author asserts, on the basis of well-collected authorities on international law, that such an assent (whether voluntary or expressed under duress) was necessary for the loss of sovereignty by Iran. Persia did not lose her rights by prescription, as her government did continue and continues to protest against any exercise of British sovereignty over Bahrein.

Mr. Adamiyat’s study should be recommended to any historian, diplomat, and international lawyer.

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