1. Introduction

International frontiers and boundaries separate land, rivers and lakes subject to different sovereignties. Frontiers are zones of varying widths and they were common many centuries ago. By 1900 frontiers had almost disappeared and had been replaced by boundaries that are lines. The divisive nature of frontiers and boundaries has formed the focus of inter-disciplinary studies by economists, geographers, historians, lawyers and political scientists. Scholars from these disciplines have produced a rich literature dealing with frontiers and boundaries. A survey of this extensive literature reveals that the following themes have attracted most attention.

National Histories and International Diplomacy

When the histories of nations are unravelled it is plain that most of them did not emerge at one time within a single set of international limits that have remained unchanged. It is the case that many modern African states became independent after 1945 within boundaries that have not subsequently changed. However, research into their pre-colonial and colonial antecedents reveals a varied sequence of frontiers and boundaries. A significant part of the history of several countries concerns the struggle for territory, and the identification of the succession of national boundaries, on a single map, provides a shorthand account of stages in the progression to the present pattern of national states. Sometimes the events, that established new limits, were sufficiently significant to mark the division between important periods in the political history of countries or the diplomatic and military history of continents. This point can be illustrated by Figure 1.1, which shows the boundaries of Greece since 1832, the year when the modern state of Greece emerged from nearly three centuries of Turkish rule. The following commentary is based on the volume on Greece produced by the Naval Intelligence Division (1944). The rebellion began in the Peloponnisos in April 1821, and this area was quickly cleared of Turks. The Greek sailors also enjoyed success against the Turkish navy in the Aegean Sea, but the tide of rebellion had been halted by June 1827 and other foreign powers decided it was time to intervene to avoid continued instability in the region. The destruction of
the allied Turkish and Egyptian fleets by naval squadrons from Britain, France and Russia in Navarino Bay on 20 October 1827, paved the way for an enforced settlement dictated by these countries. In 1830 it was proposed that the northern boundary of Greece should run southwestwards from the vicinity of Lamia to Mesolongion, but Palmerston, the British Prime Minister, then persuaded his allies that the line should run from Pagasitikos Kolpos [Gulf] to Amvrakikos Kolpos (Figure 1.1) Palmerston defeated proposals to give Greece the islands of Samos and Kriti on the grounds that the former was too close to the Turkish coast and the latter was too valuable and had a large Turkish population, that should not be subject to Greece.

On 29 March 1864, six months after Greece had installed a Danish King, Britain ceded the Ionian Islands to Greece. They stretch from Kerkira [Corfu] in the north to Kithira in the south off the west coast of Ipiros and Peloponnisos. These islands had been formed into the United States of the Ionian Islands in 1815, by the Treaty of Versailles and placed under British protection. Their union with Greece followed a unanimous vote of support by the legislative assembly of the islands.

The war between Russia and Turkey in 1877 presented Greece with an opportunity to claim the Greek provinces in Turkish Europe, but the decision to take action was delayed so long that the Greek army could not be deployed before the war was over. The peace treaty signed by Russia and Turkey at San Stefano on 3 March 1878 contained no territorial gains for Greece. Fortunately for Greece the major European powers were dissatisfied with the terms Russia had forced on Turkey. This treaty was revised at the Congress of Berlin, attended by all the major powers in June and July 1878. Although Greece was not represented in Berlin, Britain persuaded its allies to require Turkey to make concessions to Greece along their common land boundary. At first it was proposed that the new boundary should run from Stoupi in the east to the mouth of the Thiamis River in the west opposite Kerkira Island. This would have given Greece the region of Thessalia and most of Ipiros. Turkey could scarcely resist the cession of the former region, with its pronounced Hellenic character, but it managed to retain the areas of Janina and Preveza, that constituted most of modern Ipiros. The arguments in favour of continued Turkish control in these areas centred on their large Moslem minorities. The final treaty was signed on 24 May 1881, although Greece was not a party to these arrangements.

The Greek authorities overplayed their hand in 1897 when they tried to force further concessions from Turkey in Kriti and the mainland. The European powers had to intervene to prevent a Turkish victory, and Greece was forced to cede 11 small areas that had particular strategic interest along its northern boundary to Turkey. The next major territorial advance for Greece came in 1912 and 1913 in wars, first with Turkey in alliance with Bulgaria and Serbia and then with Bulgaria in alliance with Serbia. These advances enabled Greece to move northward to its present boundary and eastwards along the Macedonian coast.