

# **Territorial changes in Greece and postage stamps**

## **A case of applied international law since 1830**

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Each **border**, as any medicine, can be  
both a cure and poison, and  
therefore, it can be a matter of dosage

Régis Debray

The **postage stamp** is ideal propaganda.

It passes from hand to hand and from city to city,  
reaching the most distant areas of the country and the  
farthest countries in the world

Carlos Stetzer

### **Abstract**

Since its foundation, in 1830, and up until 1947, the Greek state expanded dramatically. Greek borders often remained secure and stable; yet there were times were marked with failure of sovereignty. Expansion in relation to the state's national integration and homogenization agendas, created new zones of contact and novel relations at the borderlines of each new territorial area, namely those belonging to Greece and her neighbours. This article attempts to offer a taxonomy of the changes of the Greek territorial sovereignty and the political exertion of power with territorial characteristics and envisages to shed light on the bonds between political power and territory. Postage stamps can be seen as evidence-markers of the genealogy of the territorial changes in Greece, based on the violent or peaceful ways of acquiring land, the occupation of Greek territory or failure thereof, non-state power, the occupation of foreign territories, the Greek military presence abroad or the foreign military presence in Greece.

Keywords: *Greece, territory, borders, sovereignty, postage stamps*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Territory and state sovereignty**

Changes in the territorial territory enclosed within the borders make up the history of the territory, a story rich in claims, conflicts, acquisitions, certainties and upheavals. A story full of blood, inequality, progress and destruction, peace and war, all undertaken in the name of gaining national territory, imperialist expansion or defending territorial integrity. The strict territoriality of the state in Europe (with the exception of colonies) from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards imposed both the territoriality of law and the retreat of personal law (subordination to law based on religion). It was only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when states were able to consolidate the tenacity of their borders with the Treaty of Locarno (1925) and later by the enforcement of the United Nations Charter<sup>1</sup> of 1945. Gradually, the concept of territorial integrity has incorporated two different ideas, territorial sovereignty and soil conservation (Elden 2006, 758), and with peaceful means. The continued and peaceful expression of territorial sovereignty is an idealized picture, but international law cannot be considered to downgrade a right such as territorial sovereignty as the category of an abstract right without specific ways of exercising it<sup>2</sup>.

The evolution of political and legal theory around power conveyed the view of the territory: from the territory-subject and the territory-object of the era of monarchies, it evolved into the territory-boundary of state power and finally into the territory as its essential legal title of state jurisdiction (Dinh 1999, 411). In any case, however, the exclusive jurisdictions of the state cannot be understood without the territory and the people who exercise the real links with the land. Of course, this exclusivity has real limits. It is difficult to find in international practice the absolute form of sovereignty, as coercion and commitments with or without the consent of the state, thereby rendering sovereignty relative and malleable until it fades and loses its elements, exclusivity and correlation with the state itself, in the marginal case that this is abolished or replaced by another state.

The territory is limited within its borders; it is directly accessible and subject to state sovereignty and its political organization, but simultaneously, it is expandable through legal and illegal means. The land, after all, is the material body of the state. Thusly, the violation of borders is considered an aggressive action against the territory and inevitably against the state itself.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Article 2(4) of the Charter, States must refrain from any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of another State.

<sup>2</sup> Permanent Arbitration Court, Las Palmas case, 1928, Judge Max Huber (Dinh 1999, 469).

From another perspective, the land is determined by its functions, for example, as a safe haven but also as a sensor of international coexistence. These functions fluctuate as they are shaped by law and politics, as well as the perceptions that organized society has of the position of the political community. The territory offers the community of citizens of the state a sense of distinct “homeland”, and a sense of the permanent character of this arrangement (Gottmann 1971, 156). Furthermore, it is the home and the hearth of “us”, as opposed to “others”, in terms of national, political and state, separating the territories from the power of the states. At the same time, it offers the opportunity to supplement or be supplemented with the land located on the outer side of the border and ultimately in relation to the rest of the world.

In the 19th and mid-20th centuries, territorial claims were legitimized by referring to the myth of the national genealogical tree and the national root maintained by “divine providence” as a natural evolution of things. In this way, organized pressure groups and governments themselves were committed to “national integration”. When this happened on both sides of the border, conflicts became inevitable. But how is it possible to free territory from this very narrative when the very concept of “liberation” remains at the centre of aggressive national ideologies? (Peckham 2001, 151).

The violence that led to the creation of new nation-states and the demarcation of borders between them, such as in the Balkans, is entwined with the preeminent prioritization of the importance of national borders. It is a constitutional force that precedes the state. This violence is atoned for, justified and sanctified in retrospect, depending on the outcome.

In this way, it is similar to the violence that led to national homogenization and the expulsion and elimination of national “others”. Of course, this violence should not obscure the changes that have taken place historically. These changes have been shaped by the states’ political weight, military power, and the intermittent domination of borders.

A typical example is the transition of the territory of the Ottoman Empire to the contemporary “Turkish national territory”, a political project whereby Turkish nationalism and modern Turkey emerged. All Balkan states nurtured irredentist projects. Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and Albania shaped their own irredentism as a national program. Greek nationalism and the Greek state were historically developed in this context, but they have also co-created it. The retreat of the Ottoman Empire from the wider Balkan region allowed the development of national claims in a dynamic ethnic relationship and not as a result of an “awakening” of nations. So, the claims were built step by step to establish a nation-state in which they could establish a legitimate claim based on national territory (Kitromilidis 1990, 34). Mutual claims should be clarified, as it does not mean double sovereignty over a particular territory. The historical presence of mixed populations - a constituent element of the Empire - could then establish claims on all neighbours for successive territorial claims.

Inevitably, the Balkans and Greece found themselves at the focal point between three empires, the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire and the Russian Empire. The rivalry between the Balkan states and the Ottoman Empire has also attracted the interest of Italy and the two major colonizing empires, France and Britain, which have been influential throughout the transition to nation-states in the region.

The present article attempts to offer a taxonomy of the changes of the Greek territorial sovereignty and the political exertion of power with territorial characteristics and envisages to shed light on the bonds between political power and territory. Postage stamps can make these bonds visible.

## **1.2. Sovereignty through the postage stamp**

Since the issuance of the first postage stamp, it was clear that this small piece of paper is much more than proof of the fee paid for the transport service. It is a symbol of the state and a reflection of the will to dominate or exercise political power. The stamp can express a will to dominate even if there is no state or regardless of the chances of state consolidation. Especially in cases where borders are changing or consolidating new power, the stamps are the first exponents of this change, as the heralds of the new status quo. This finding is particularly relevant in the years before the 1950s when communication through the written text was a vital tool for exercising political power and territorial sovereignty.

Stamps became not only a means for the transmission of ideological and political ideas but also of structuring the material reality of society of which they were a product of (Kallen 2002, 82). The postage stamp, intended to keep in touch with the general public of the users of the postal services and the collectors, and this way acquire the status of a new means of communication. Therefore, this tiny instrument has been a part of material culture from a very early age, conveying messages of various ideologies by the usage of a systematized code. Rich in symbols and internal tensions in terms of its sign and interpretation, it undergoes ideological manipulation (Scott 2002, 6), attributes ideas and includes qualities that allow it to submit ideas according to the circumstances, the issuer and its recipient. Finally, it often creates impressions that surpass the capabilities of speech. In short, it visualizes political power and clarifies sovereignty.

States, national liberation movements and revolutions seek to legitimize and promote their self-image. The stamp is a useful tool for this purpose (Hoyo 2010). It enables the state of origin to become known; it declares its name and the authority that issued it and selects the micro-text language, the alphabet, and its value in a specific currency. Its message is understood on the first level through its image, colours, shapes, or symbols (Child 2005, 114). The image, accompanied by minimal written text, conveys a clear but supple message. Especially in the case of new territorial sovereignty, it is a key reminder to users, that is, to the people, about the new territory and the new power. It is clear who now rules the land and its inhabitants, who are subject to the authority of the issuer of the stamp, in other words, the potential users of the stamp. A prerequisite for this change is that there is a pre-existing or established postal network.

Finally, the stamp consists of a means of exertion of sovereignty. Not only symbolically but also materially as an act of applied state power over territory and people, as soon as the

new administration is settled. Stamps, postmarks, and overprints are significant markers of sovereignty, especially in cases of territorial transition (Brunn 2011).

## 2. The Greek territory and people: Inside, outside and about borders

In the age of nation-states, borders and territorial sovereignty are renegotiated, especially before the end of the Second World War. Borders have a heavy “historical authenticity” (invented by national ideologies) as they are inextricably linked to the very phenomenon of the state. This is especially so for the Balkans, a focal point where vying interests abounded from all empires, on a territorial and a metropolitan level, and whereby the consolidation of nation-states did not occur without tensions and military conflicts. In Greece, the claim of borders and national territory was often associated with pursuing an unfulfilled mission. Something was always left open for settlement, but the “narrow” geographical boundaries of the peninsula did not allow for any extensions without pushing against the neighbour's territories. Ethnological mixed areas and extended regions coveted by three of four national movements simultaneously fueled irredentist movements from all sides, shaping mutual enmities (Skopetea 1999; Klapsis 2019).

By the middle of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all neighbours, new and old, tried to expand as much as possible by raising the banner of their own ethnic principle, their own exclusive truth. The Greek case is rich with activity concerning the issue of sovereignty and national territory, already with the explosion of the revolution of 1821 and the establishment of the state in 1830. One could certainly wonder whether the continued redefinition of Greece's borders with its neighbours yielded a given and inevitable result of negotiation and war. What shaped the Greek borders? And finally, what could legitimize the revision of the “immutable” lines on paper that define Greek sovereignty, including the Greek people? The main territorial changes of Greece in 1864, 1881, 1913, 1919, 1920/23 and 1947 (Dimitrakopoulos 1991) are related to the pursuit of enlargement of the territory based on the “national territory” (Divani 2000).

In Greece, changing borders and exercising state sovereignty, as well as other forms of political or military power, on the ground, can offer an alternative perspective on the ancestry of the Greek borders. In addition to nation-states, the Great Powers, with their own geostrategic interests in the region, also had claims for control of the territory. With the change of borders and the practice of naturalization en masse, which followed each annexation, the population living on the inner side of the new borderline becomes a people (i.e. citizens of the state) and is divided into a majority and minorities according to ethnic criteria. Ethnic, religious and linguistic otherness among the new Greek citizens was not welcome, and often assimilation policies were



Special issue for the celebration of 100 years since the establishment of the Greek state, 1930

enhanced. In times of war, violence underpinned the program of national homogeneity (Kostopoulos 2007; Embiricos 2011).

The Greek case offers a wide range of cases concerning the changes of the borders that were finally secured in favour of Greece (annexation of Ionian Islands, Thessaly, New Lands, Thrace, Dodecanese) or which were pursued unsuccessfully (Southern Albania, Ionia, Eastern Thrace). Others were achieved temporarily by another state (Western Thrace by Bulgaria, Castellorizo by France and Italy, three-zone occupation by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria). The changes in Greece's borders can be differentiated between those that were crucial and insignificant, permanent and temporary, or of historical cardinal importance; those that were occasional or failed; those that can be considered successful today and those that were mistaken. These assessments are undoubtedly Greek-centric, as any of the above-mentioned views imply the opposite could be true for states that have gained or lost from the territorial changes. Subsequently, the uncertain assurance of the status quo for Greece meant the possibility of expansion for the neighbour. Additionally, the successful territorial expansion for Greece meant the territorial contraction or cancellation of the other side's claims. The decade of 1912-1922 offers plenty of examples of fluid and ambivalent claims and ambitions fought by the Balkan states for gaining sovereignty and territorial control over the same lands.

Power can also be wielded extraterritorially through organs of the state, mainly the military, ending state power abroad with the participation in international missions or operations. Greece has experienced doubly this form of power by welcoming friendly forces to its territory that effectively limited its own sovereignty. The reverse case regards Greek military forces when participating in military operations abroad after World War I and after World War II.

Greek postage stamps are witnesses of all forms of territorial changes. On the one hand, they express the ideological positions of their issuers and reflect the dominant national ideology juxtaposing far and recent history (Kallen 2002; Gounaris 2003; Vardopoulou 2016; Lialiouti 2021). On the other hand, stamps, Greek or foreign, constitute a direct means of exercising political power or sovereignty over the Greek territory (Tsitselikis 2021). After all, stamps can be seen as evidence-markers of the genealogy of the territorial changes in Greece.

In the following chapters, I am going to discuss the changes of the Greek borders or cases of political exertion of power with territorial characteristics classified in seven distinct categories in which sovereignty, full or partial, is the key point of analysis as regards acquisition of territory and change of borders: Bloodless annexation, annexation after war, annexation after a transitional period of autonomy, incomplete or failed occupation, friendly military presence, military occupation by enemy states, partial exercise of administration of a given territory. Throughout these categories, stamps will be indicatively presented as auxiliary signs of the immediate establishment of the new sovereign, or at least they reflect the presence of political power.

### 3. Safe and bloodless annexation

The expansion of the state's territory in the form of annexation, and even without bloodshed, is perhaps the safest for the local population and the economy conclusion of a claim arising from the imposition of political power on the negotiating table. If indeed, this were to occur without difficulty, as a result of third-country compromises, then even better. Actually, Greece experienced this case of change of borders several times in its history concerning the annexation of the Ionian Islands (1864), of Thessaly (1881), of Crete (1913) and of the Dodecanese Islands (1947). Regarding the Ionian Islands,



Ionian state, 1859.

they were ceded to Greece by the British to ensure the change of the king of Greece. The unwanted Otto had to leave the throne and was replaced by George (from Denmark). In the second case, in fact, the Greek army's failed invasion of Ottoman territory sixteen years later led to the temporary occupation of Thessaly by the Ottoman army. Due to reasons of international balance of power again, the region, although lost in the Greek-Ottoman war, was returned to Greece (1897) with minor territorial losses. The preservation of Thessaly proved to be secure, nonetheless diplomatically dishonourably, but also costly. Crete was annexed by Greece in 1913, as the Cretan state was dissolved voluntarily, and the Dodecanese islands were attributed to Greece after an Italian occupation that lasted since 1911. As cases of transition, not from the Ottoman Empire, they will be discussed in the following chapter. In all these cases, stamps were issued immediately after the new sovereign was established. The Ottoman stamp issued especially for the troops in Thessaly during the short term re-occupation of the region in 1897-1898 is illustrative of the political uncertainty of sovereignty, which was regained by Greece.



Ottoman postage stamp issued during the reoccupation of Thessaly, 1898

#### 4. A not-so given sovereignty safeguarded: The *New Lands* and territories in transition

The consolidation of Balkan nationalism and the emancipatory aspirations of all states towards



Special stamp series used at the New Lands marked with strong Christian and historical references

their neighbours under the collapsing Ottoman Empire led to a series of events of diplomatic processes and complex military conflicts (1912-1918). The military confrontation had multiple consequences for the consolidation of state sovereignty of Greece, Serbia, Romania and especially Bulgaria over Ottoman territory. War also engendered the establishment of a new state, namely Albania. The borders between them were



Greek stamp with special overprint used only at the New Lands

neither given nor distinct based on the principle of ethnicity, as the sea

in some cases (as in Southern Greece), which manifested an undeniable restriction imposed by geography. Nonetheless, the mix of linguistic, religious and ethnic characteristics of the populations in Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace left open the ethnographic geographical area of the national groups under formation to a great extent. Through maps and censuses, the war of ethnography played a crucial role in the diplomatic confrontations (see Annex). The borders were drawn based on the balance of power of the allied opponents having as catalyst their economic and strategic interests and the aspirations of the Powers. The Ottoman unity of ethnic pluralism had to be transformed as soon as possible into national unmixing through a linear homogeneity that would make up the separate Balkan states with common borders. Of course, ethnic overlap, as a common secret, would be inevitable. The religious and ethnically mixed populations in Macedonia, Epirus, the islands of the Eastern Aegean and Crete, after many centuries, experienced the fragmentation of the hitherto single economic and cultural space and the uncertainty concerning their future. Nevertheless, the Greeks among them saw the dream of the union with Greece being fulfilled.



Stamp of the Free State of Icaria, 1912

The 1<sup>st</sup> Balkan War broke out on October 17, 1912 and ended with the Treaty of London on May 30, 1913 which sealed the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and its territorial withdrawal from its Balkan dominion, except for the part of Eastern Thrace on the line of Enez (Ainos)-Midye (Medeia). The treaty provided for the withdrawal of the Empire from Crete, leaving the fate of the islands of the Eastern Aegean unregulated, as well as the border between the victorious



Italian Dodecanese, 1934

However, intra-Balkan rivalries led to a new war. The brief but critical Second Balkan War began on June 10, 1913, at the initiative of Bulgaria and against its former allies. With the



decisive participation of Romania, a truce was signed at the end of July, and the negotiation between the victors and defeated Bulgaria in Bucharest began. The Treaty of Bucharest signed a month later came to "correct" the territorial claims of Greece, Serbia, Romania and the



Stamp of the Cretan State, 1900. Strong reference to ancient Greek past and Christianity.

Ottoman Empire against Bulgaria, which ultimately lost Eastern Macedonia to Greece and Adrianople and the "Karaghatch triangle" to the Ottoman Empire (Galinos 1991). However, Bulgaria maintained its sovereignty in Western Thrace.



French occupation of Castellorizo. French stamp overprinted with "OF" [ : occupation Française], 1920

The territorial status of the islands of the Eastern Aegean, which Greece had occupied since the autumn of 1912, remained pending as the Ottoman Empire did not recognize it as Greek territory. After lengthy negotiations, the Allied Forces issued a joint

statement on 13 February 1914 whereby they recognized Greek sovereignty over most islands (see Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesvos, Aghios Efstratios, Psara, Chios, Samos, and Ikaria). This recognition, however, provided that Greece would withdraw its army from Northern Epirus. Tenedos and Castellorizo would be returned to the Ottoman Empire.

It is important to highlight that Greece was careful not to circulate its regular stamps in occupied territories. The Greek authorities issued special stamp series or postmarked Greek or foreign stamps for usage in territories under occupation until the annexation was ratified by an international treaty.



Greek administration of Kavala, overprint on Bulgarian stamp, June 1913

One of the most complicated cases of changing borders is those in which a territory enjoyed political autonomy for some time, then an occupation or exercise of sovereignty of a third state intervened, and finally, the territory was abandoned and annexed by Greece. The complexity of rotation and succession consists of varying degrees of autonomy and superimposed third state power. Today, one could discern a feature of deterministic succession; these lands were destined to be incorporated into the Greek national territory. However, a closer look may have shown that the historical situation was particularly shifting and that the possibilities for territorial integrity were open. The

succession cases of this type concern Samos, Crete, Mount Athos, the Dodecanese, the case of Castellorizo and finally, Western Thrace, which offers the richest example of changes in territorial regimes. Some of the former Ottoman islands had enjoyed a special status of autonomy under the suzerainty of the sultan (Samos) or enjoyed a quasi-sovereignty (Crete). The Dodecanese islands were occupied by Italy in 1911 and then fully annexed in 1923. Ikaria island enjoyed a self-proclaimed autonomy before joining Greece in 1912. In all these cases, stamps and postmarks were used showing the transitional legal status or the aspirations of the governments (Feenstra 2001; Anagnostou 1992; Perdikis 2015).

## 5. Incomplete, temporary and unsuccessful Greek occupation of foreign territory



Greek administration, overprint on Bulgarian stamp, during the temporary occupation of parts of Thrace, August 1913

The fate of the claims set by the Greek governments and of any neighbouring rival state seeking territorial expansion could never be certain from the outset. Consequently, diplomatic or military efforts have had temporary repercussions in some cases, leading to further upheavals and loss of territorial gains in favour of the neighbouring

state or in gains pertaining to any of the Powers. In order to understand the permanence marker and the extent of the territorial changes, one must look back at the political colour of the expectations of the Greek governments for the expansionist aspirations at the end of the Balkan Wars. The new expectations of World War I should be taken into account

and, ultimately, the aspirations of the Greek governments as far as international diplomatic relations allowed in the implementation of the Treaty of Sevres, before and after the Greek elections of November 1, 1920, should also be scrutinized.

The uncertainty about the demarcation of the Albanian-Greek border is related to the intervention of the Entente Powers and Austria-Hungary finally leaving parts of Southern Albania outside Greek territory. Eastern Thrace was probably a more certain case for Greek territorial aspirations, which ultimately failed. Karaağaç, a strategic point west of Evros-Meriç-Maritza river, already having a strong history of alternating sovereignty (Ottoman, Bulgarian, inter-allied, Greek), was annexed in 1923 by Turkey.

The Asia Minor Disaster of 1922 is the sharpest reversal in expectations for territorial expansion. Besides from the Smyrna zone, all the other territories of Asia Minor that were under military occupation for one to three years were lost for Greece. In fact, Imvros and Tenedos, under relatively more stable Greek administration (but also with the participation of the British and French armies during World War I), passed through the Greek New Lands to the territory of the Turkish Republic.

Some small parts of territory in Macedonia and Epirus were handed over to the neighbouring state with the finalization of the borders (in 1913 and 1920, respectively). Moreover, the island of Sasson in the Gulf of Avlona was ceded to Albania for the sake of diplomatic guarantees to secure other more important territories for Greece.

The stamps of all these regions reflect the aspirations of their editors and remain historical evidence of the shifts of sovereignty. The case of the Government of Northern Epirus established in 1914 between two phases of Greek occupation is one of the most eloquent among others. Stamps also show the differentiations between occupation and sovereignty: the usage of Greek stamps and postmarks at the zone of Smyrna and of the Ottoman stamps at the



Government of Autonomous Epirus, 1914



Greek occupation of Kütahya, unofficial overprint on Ottoman stamp. 1921



The most known case of this category concerns the presence of the Entente in Greece from March (Limnos) and October (Thessaloniki) of 1915 until the beginning of 1919. The allied force was partly behaved as an occupation force and partly as an ally. The intervention of Entente in the internal affairs of the country was direct and, in many cases, harsh. Finally, after the victory against the Central Powers the allied presence was considered in light of the security of the country's territory. An additional case is the hosting of the Serbian army and government in Corfu and Thessaloniki (1916-1918).

A few decades later, the British administration in the Dodecanese was not necessarily transitional as it was ultimately destined to be proved. The allied British presence and involvement in the political affairs of Greece during the post-war period, which quickly resulted in the Civil War, is also exemplary of overlapping state authorities over territory. The replacement of Great Britain by the United States in 1947 rendered the American factor a

crucial leverage relating to the outcome of the Civil War and the establishment of a long-lasting yet fragile political balance. The controversial ally then pushed Greece to join NATO and accept the establishment of US military bases on its territory.



Bulgarian allied post of Thessaloniki, March 1913

## 8. Enemy occupation.



German military stamps, "Post of the islands", Oct. 1944

Enemy occupation is undoubtedly the ultimate eradication of state sovereignty. The exercise of power by a third state negates political independence and exerts total control over the territorial sovereignty of the state under occupation. Thus power, territory and people are subject to the political will and military power of the conqueror. Of course, occupation can be divided into categories, depending on the temporality-permanence, the aspirations of the occupier, the intensity of the political intervention and the possible expectation or implementation of the annexation, i.e. the change of borders in favour of the conquering force. If the occupation is a product of military confrontation, the control of the territory is linked to the final outcome of the war and its legal implications. If the occupation is secured by a truce or



Italian occupation of the Ionian islands, 1941

peace agreement, the previous territorial regime will be more likely re-established.

The modification of territorial integrity by a hostile power in the Greek case can be observed in the Bulgarian annexation of Western Thrace (1913-1919)<sup>3</sup> and Eastern Macedonia during World War I operations (1916-1918) and in the one-month occupation of Corfu (1923) by allied Italy. The occupation of Greek territory and even the partial annexation of Greek territory during the Second World War (1941-1944) is the most blatant case of loss of state factors with different territorial regimes imposed by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria.



Overprinted Italian stamp, occupation of Corfu, Sep. 1923

Through stamps and overprints, one can detect Italy's aspiration to exercise more than occupation powers in the Ionian islands (Konstantinis 1965) and establish a territorial zone of quasi-sovereignty from Rhodes to Corfu, comprising Eastern Crete.

<sup>3</sup> Western Thrace was annexed by Greece after it was handed over by the allied forces in 1919.

## 9. Temporary exercise of political territorial power

Controlling the territory is the main challenge of political power exercised over the people. Adversaries in a civil conflict struggle to maintain or expand their territory in which either new or old power is effectively exercised. The control over the land entails control over the inhabitants. The intensity of diversified forms of non-state political power in Greece, in some cases, led to the fragmentation of the state's territorial sovereignty. The central political power of Greece was disrupted, either as an expression of the aspiration to overthrow the legitimate government or as a revolution aiming at imposing a new way of governing. Violence has played



Stamp issued by the government of Thessaloniki, backed by the Entente, Feb. 1917

a significant role as a threat or as leverage in imposing a new state of affairs through the disintegration of political homogeneity.

Examples of temporary exercise of political power over the land and the people are the Venizelist revolution in Crete (Therissos, 1905) and, of course, the National Schism, that is, the quasi-civil war that was complicated by the involvement of the Entente forces and the establishment of the government of Thessaloniki (1916-1917). The two examples have great qualitative differences, but the common feature is the rupture of the single territoriality of the central government. In both cases, the respective temporary revolutionary governments issued their own stamps (Mylonakis 2016; Mylonakis 2008).



Stamp issued by the Revolutionary Committee of Therisso, 1905



Stamp issued by EAM, Feb. 1944

During the Axis military occupation, strong resistance armed groups exercised political power with shifting territoriality and even intense rivalry (see EAM against EDES). In parallel, the exiled Greek government and army in Cairo and London (1941-1944) exercised extra-territorial political power or at least claimed



the continuation of the Greek state. Finally, in post-occupation Greece (October 1944 -

Overprint by EAM, administration of Lesvos, Sep. 1944

August 1949) in a highly volatile political scene with sharp contrasts, rivalries and especially violence, political power was exercised by different actors, despite the temporary agreement for a smooth transition after the occupation.

During the occupation, the partisan forces (mainly ELAS and EDES) intended to circulate their own stamps in the territory under control with no success (Pylarinos 1976; Hazapis 2008). After the liberation, the exercise of political power continued during the period of the EAM administration, while at the same time, the central government of Athens had undertaken the

central command. For a short period, stamps and censorship marks depict the parallel and ambivalent exercise of power that ended up in the Civil War.

## **10. Conclusion**

Greece's territorial changes were marked by the establishment of a new legal status in each case we have seen separately in seven categories. These territorial changes, ratified sooner or later by international law, had legal, political and economic, social or ethnic characteristics. International law norms forged border changes, and also themselves have been changed during the violent period of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within the fluidity of territorial changes and the contested political power, Greek or foreign stamps functioned as messengers of the new territorial ruler, as it travelled within and outside of the limits of the territory. Postage stamps, overprints and postmarks disseminated the message and regularized the pursuits of its publisher.

The territorial changes that make up the genealogy of the Greek borders were always related to a programmatic process of "homogenization" and of "national completion" which referred to the new residents of the territory but also sent a strong message to those who remained outside. The contradicting expectations that the new changes brought, just as the will to keep the existing state, marked residents within and outside of the borders. Yet, the newly drawn borders created zones of contact and hence novel relations at the borderlines of each new territorial area, those belonging to Greece and her neighbours.

The changes in Greece's borders can be differentiated between those that were crucial or insignificant, permanent or temporary, or of historical cardinal importance; those that were occasional or failed; those that are considered successful today and those that were mistaken, which are certainly Greek-centric. The borders have changed significantly, bilaterally exclusionary, determined by the course of history whose next steps are yet to be seen.

## ANNEX: Ethnographic maps as borders indicators

The delineation of the ethnic characteristics of the inhabitants of a territory clearly indicates the extent of its boundaries outside the borders of a territory that may be the subject of claims and emancipatory policies. Mapping ethnic affiliations (through language or religion) the Balkan governments attempt to reinforce and validate the national mindset by objectifying the national area having a uniform color. People and territory co-exist, and the state should identify with them as much as possible. National characteristics are certainly variable parameters over time although each national point of view maximizes them for its own benefit (Karavas 2002). This occurred in the late 19th century and early 20th century when Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, for example, tried to determine the national foundations, in terms of language, religion or national consciousness, in the territory they claimed (Wilkinson 1951). In other cases, the ethnographic cartography visualizes shared territories, new boundaries, lost lands, or new sovereignties. Elsewhere it presents a sense of loss and somewhere else a sense of national arrogance. Of course, this depends on the publisher of the map and its reader.



Ethnological map by professor Sotiriadis (1918), reflecting the Greek views, submitted by the Greek delegation at the Conference of Paris 1919



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