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THE EASTERN QUESTION OF EUROPE (1815-1878)

Background to the eastern question.

The term eastern question generally referred to the conflicts or wars that characterized the European continent over the Balkan areas (Eastern Europe) that were under the Sultan of Turkey of the ancient Ottoman Empire. The European great powers of the time namely Britain, Russia, Austria, and France had diverging views over the states of the Turkish (Ottoman Empire) which called for the Global concern hence the term **Eastern question**. Specifically the term Eastern question has been correctly used to refer to the decline of the Turkish/ Ottoman Empire and the consequences of its decline on the European continent.

The Turkish Empire was an extensive Empire that had initially swallowed many strategic places in Eastern Europe such as Greece and Syria, northern Africa and Asia Minor especially between 1456 and 1800. It was intact, strong and feared by many European powers up to the nineteenth century when it started crumbling.

The Turks were Muslims of Asiatic origin who had entered Europe in 1356 and consequently conquered Constantinople the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453. They were aggressive and in the course of their expansion, they conquered the peoples of the Balkan peninsular i.e. the Serbs, the Rumanians, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, and the Albanians. They even extended their influence to Africa I. e. Egypt, Tripoli (Libya), Tunis (Tunisia), Algeria, as well as the island of the Ionian isles, Cyprus and Crete even large stretches of south Russia including Crimea came under Turkish rule.

However, the Turkish power began declining towards the end of the eighteenth century because of internal and external factors. It had been evidently clear that turkey could not satisfactorily solve all her internal problems by herself minus the intervention of other powers. It up on this background that the Czar of Russia referred to the Ottoman Empire or Turkey as **“the sick man of Europe”**.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the empire was characterized by civil strife, nationalistic and religious movements among others. Such unfortunate matters in the nineteenth century made the czar to refer to the Ottoman Empire as **“a sick man of Europe”** this called for international intervention into the affairs of the Ottoman Empire that affected international relations leading to the famous Eastern question. **The question was, who was going to take over from the Turks, when, where, and to what extent?**

Overall, the Eastern question comprised of the following major events:

1. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire itself i.e. The Ottoman Empire as a sick man of Europe, effects and the reactions or policies of the major powers towards the Empire.
2. The Greek war of independence (1821- 1833)
3. The Syrian question and the subsequent treaties (1831-1841)
4. The Straits convention of 1841
5. The Crimean war of 1854-1856 and the subsequent Paris treaty of 1856.
6. The Berlin conference/ congress of 1878.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. (TURKEY AS SICK MAN OF EUROPE).

By the 15th and 16th centuries, the Turks had been an aggressive and an expansionist power and had created an extensive and heterogeneous empire in Europe which was very strong and indeed the strongest Empire in Europe at the time if not the whole world but it could only survive on a strong political, social, Economic and Military power. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Empire was on a steady decline, which prompted Czar Nicholas I to describe her as “a sick man of Europe” and in 1833, he suggested the sharing of its spoils to Prince Metternich of Austria and Lord Palmerstone of Great Britain. Actually at the beginning of the twentieth century, the empire was no more. **The Ottoman Empire that once had its headquarters at Constantinople and captured many territories by dwarfing many powers was declining tremendously and had developed a lot of weaknesses that justified her as ‘a sick man of Europe’ and account for its disintegration in the nineteenth century. They were either from within (internal) the Empire itself or outside (external) it and they include the following;**

The Empire failed to effectively administer its large size. The extensive nature of the Ottoman Empire that covered up to Crimea in Asia, Austria in Europe and

Algeria in north Africa made it cumbersome to control and administer the Empire effectively which was worsened by the corrupt and inefficient government officials who exposed the Ottoman empire to attacks by her subjects in the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa where its influence was felt. Consequently, the tributary state rulers like the Egyptians and the Greeks started rebelling against government of the Ottoman Empire and acting independently e. g the war of Greece independence of 1821 to 1833. This was a symptom of sickness within the empire that had once been administratively strong and intact before the nineteenth century. This opened way for the death of the empire in the nineteenth century.

The growth of nationalism within the empire; in the nineteenth century the Ottoman empire became characterized by many nationalistic struggles where by many subordinate states struggled for independence which disorganized the empire e. g the Serbs revolted in 1804 and 1815, the Egyptians under Mohammed Ali threatened to secede by 1805, the Greeks revolted between 1821 and 1833 and the Balkan states revolted from 1879 and 1889 among others. All these revolts weakened the empire and inspired the vassal states to break away e. g Greece in 1833; Albania, Serbia, Wallachia, and Moldavia were almost independent by 1830. The result was that the Empire was dragged into many fronts to suppress many rebellions, which had not been the case before the nineteenth century. Such political unrest that characterized the empire due to the increased forces of nationalism is a justification that the empire was sick and had to collapse.

The increasing economic problems within the empire; by the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth century the Ottoman empire became characterized with economic difficulties especially the financial crisis arising out of the corrupt officials and the exploitation of her subjects especially in taxation system. The administrators imposed heavy taxes on the subjects and the methods of collection were so much brutal yet the tax collectors took up most of the Revenue. The sultan lacked an effective / efficient hand in taxation system and due to the economic difficulties that characterized the empire to the extent of negatively affecting the infrastructural and military development of the empire that attracted resistance against the administration that led to the imperial decay of the Ottoman Empire thus being referred to as the “sick man of Europe”.

The loss of trade monopoly: From 1456 when the empire was formed, Turkey was the greatest commercial nation that dominated trade across the Mediterranean and Black sea in the far and near east of the European continent. However, in the nineteenth century, the empire lost her monopoly in trade as her foreign trade in the Far East and Mediterranean Sea steadily declined which deprived her of the

needed wealth to sustain the military and political organization capable of sustaining an extensive area. This was worsened by the fact that European powers such as Britain, Russia, and France became interested in the Balkan region and aggressively took over the trade rights, which further worsened the economic difficulties and undermined the military strength of the empire leading to the decay of the Ottoman Empire hence being referred to as the “sick man of Europe”.

The loss of military strength: By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire could no longer hold and maintain the very many nationalities together because of the increasing military weakness. She failed to rival the ever-increasing military power of the other continental European powers especially Russia and Austria and on many occasions, she could no longer register any foreign military glory like it used to. She was defeated on two occasions in an attempt to capture Vienna from Austria and above all most of the provincial states like Egypt were creating more powerful armies than the Ottoman sultan and were even taking over some territories from the Empire e. g Mohammed Ali of Egypt forcefully occupied Syria in 1831. The military weakness of the Ottoman Empire was amplified by the fact that the Ottoman Sultan's army had been recruited from different nationalities and could not be relied up on since in most cases it fraternized or compromised with its brothers to rebel against Turkey. Such military decay justifies that Turkey or the Ottoman Empire was indeed “a sick man of Europe” in the nineteenth century and was bound to collapse.

The social and religious discriminations by the Moslem Turkish rulers who persecuted the Christian subjects. Socially, the Ottoman Empire lived in religious divisions with the Orthodox Christians as subjects and the Muslim Turks as rulers. However, it is sad to note in the nineteenth century the Christians were discriminated against in terms of participation in the general administration of the empire, the Orthodox Christians catered for their own education and other social services yet they paid very high taxes that were harshly collected. This was worsened by the fact that the Muslim rulers on religious grounds became hostile to the Christians, which sparked off revolts by the Christian subjects against the Turkish rulers' e. g in Greece between 1821 and 1833. This gave an excuse for the intervention of western European powers like Russia, France, and Britain in the empire in guise of being sympathetic to her. Such a situation had not been common before the nineteenth century and its occurrence in the nineteenth century is a justification of the sickness of the empire that was bound to collapse.

The emergence of the educated elites: these were mostly youths who did not agree with the conservative and oppressive Turkish administration. They demanded for

social, political, and economic reforms and even prayed for nationalistic movements whose activities they were ready to finance. The educated elites offered the leadership and fueled criticisms against the Turkish rule, which incited rebellions against the empire in demand for independence and western democracy. It is important to note that this had not been familiar in the empire before the nineteenth century and it is sad to note that the government of the sultan refused to listen to the demands of the educated elites and fueled criticisms that increased nationalism within the empire rendering it sick and bound to collapse.

The continuous interests and interventions of the great western European powers into the affairs of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. Before the nineteenth century, it was not common to see any intervention of European powers into the Turkish Empire because they feared and respected her especially in the military field. However, in the nineteenth century, the major European powers of the time of Britain, France, Russia, and Austria having different interests in Turkey they started to penetrate into the Empire. These powers expanded at the expense of the Turkish Empire e. g Austria expanded and took over Hungary, Russia took over Bessarabia by 1820 and was desperately in need of taking over the whole of Turkey, Britain ambitiously wanted the monopolization of the far Eastern trade, and France nursed economic desires in the Middle East. Such divergent expansionist interests drew Turkey into conflicts with one of the powers at a time or even the great powers themselves conflicted within the Turkish empire e. g in the Crimean war of 1854-1856 which worked down the Empire in the nineteenth century leading to its decay and disintegration and justifying that she was indeed "a sick man of Europe".

While addressing the Turkish Empire as a sick man of Europe, there is need for considerations to be put forward though to a smaller extent to show that she was not very sick but they also helped to disintegrate the Ottoman Empire and these include the following:

The extensive nature of the Turkish Empire itself; the Ottoman Empire had extended to Asia eastern Europe and Northern Africa such that it was being felt in three Continents. There was no way such a large Empire could exist without revolts and it was not surprising for such nationalistic revolts to come up since they were being felt elsewhere in Europe e. g in France and the Austrian Empire. This also worked down the Empire when they attracted the interests of other European powers in the pretext of controlling and curing the Empire's sickness before she died. What is important to note is that they ended up fueling the sickness and disintegrating the Empire.

The strategic location of the Empire; The Ottoman Empire was located in an economically viable area which should have attracted (and actually did) the interests of European powers in order to cultivate the economic gains e. g Britain merely feared to lose her Mediterranean and far east trade to rival European powers such as Russia and France. Such strategic location merely attracted the interests and conflicts of other powers with in the empire to disintegrate her while in actual sense her sickness was an exaggerated one.

The increasing interests of the European powers in the empire; all the European powers had divergent interests within the Turkish Empire because they were rival powers e. g Russia wanted to spread her influence over the Balkans hence supported rebellions to weaken and fasten its collapse. In addition, Austria expanded and took over Hungary at the expense of the Ottoman Empire while Britain nursed economic interests in the area. This rivalry drew Turkey into conflicts with other European powers one at a time, which aggravated her sickness and further led to its disintegration.

The spread of western ideologies into the Ottoman Empire; the ideas of western democracy especially emphasized by the French revolution of 1789 continuously filtered into the Empire and increased nationalistic sentiments amongst the subjects within the Ottoman Empire which increased the struggles against the Empire e. g the Greek war of independence thus the sickness and disintegration of the empire in the nineteenth century.

All said and done, the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire to a larger extent was ” a sick man of Europe” characterized by social, political and economic problems from within and outside despite a few excuses and it actually disintegrate leaving various consequences on Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth Century’s.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

It led to the collapse of the congress system; the system practically died out in 1822 at Verona because of the outbreak of the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833. This revolt was a result of the weakness and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire that divided the members of the quintuple alliance over a common approach.

It led to the attainment of independence of some vassal states of Turkey. At the beginning of the nineteenth century most African territories formerly under the Ottoman Empire such as Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria broke away, European states like Greece became independent by 1833, and Wallachia and Moldavia acquired their independence in 1856 after the Paris peace conference and subsequent treaty.

It furthered the outbreak of revolts in the Empire. The weakness of Turkey increased Nationalism especially within its subject states which incited revolts in Greece, Syria, Morea, Moldavia and Romania among others resulting into the famous Balkan crisis of the nineteenth century.

It laid foundation for the outbreak of the first world war of 1914-1918. It is sad to note that the Balkan crisis increased Balkan nationalism that attracted the attention and eventual intervention of other European powers within the region with divergent interests thus they ended up conflicting amongst themselves and laid a fertile ground for the outbreak of the first world war in 1914.

It affected the economy and standards of living of subjects. The disintegration of the Turkish Empire attracted various revolts that led to a standstill in the economic activities, fueled bankruptcy and the empire could not provide the necessities since she was not participating vigorously in trade like before. The result was that social facilities could not be provided which affected the standards of living of people. In fact up to the twentieth century Turkey was still one of the poorest countries in Europe and her people were backward.

It led to the summoning of various conferences and signing of various treaties. In an attempt to save the Ottoman Empire from disintegration and the increased interest in the region, the European statesmen called various meetings and conventions leading to the eventual signing of treaties such as the London convention of 1840 and the straits convention of 1841 championed by Lord Palmerstone, the Paris peace treaty of 1856 by Napoleon iii of France and the Berlin conference of 1878 by Otto Von Bismarck of the united Germany Empire.

It increased European interest and policies towards the Ottoman Empire. On realizing that the empire was about to collapse, all major European countries of the time aimed at beginning from where the Turkish Empire would end. Therefore, each European great power pursued different policies and interests within the Ottoman Empire. It is sad to note that the different policies ended up putting the

European powers into conflicts within the Ottoman Empire e. g the Crimean war of 1854-1856. All this worsened international relations in Europe.

POLICIES OR INTERESTS OF THE EUROPEAN GREAT POWERS TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.

The weakness and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century became an international question that attracted international attention. Therefore the great powers of Europe at the time like France, Russia, Britain, Austria and Turkey herself pursued different policies towards the Ottoman Empire as follows;

RUSSIA (CZAR NICHOLAS 1)

- Russia pursued an expansionist policy towards the Balkans. She claimed that the Turkish empire was sick because of her imperialism and called for international attention which eventually worsened international relations between the major European powers that generated conflicts such as the Crimean war of 1854- 1856.
- Russia also had economic ambitions that made her expand into the Balkans. She wanted control over Constantinople the most strategic city and the straits of bosphorous and the Dardanelles thus interrupting the British trade over the Mediterranean sea. She went to the extent of closing the straits of Bosphorous to all war ships, which annoyed Britain, and the result was the outbreak of conflicts such as the Crimean war of 1854-1856. It is important to note that because of Russia's intentions to undermine Britain, she showed no diplomacy towards the British ambassador at Constantinople, which also worsened the relations between the major European powers.
- Russia also had a strong desire of protecting the Balkan people who were mostly Orthodox Christians and Slavs in race. She regarded Constantinople as the headquarters of the Orthodox faith, which she had to protect. This also drew her into the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire thus putting her into conflicts with other major European powers.
- Russia's expansionist policy made her develop claims over the holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which she claimed that she was the rightful guardian thus drawing her into the Ottoman Empire and making her conflict with France.
- Her expansionist policy led her into signing the treaty of unkiar skellessi with turkey in 1833. This gave her greater influence in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire that threatened the interests of other greater powers especially Britain and France that worked hard to ensure that Russian influence was reduced in the region and the end result was the outbreak of the Crimean war.

- Her expansionist policy led to her occupation of Wallachia and Moldavia. She refused to withdraw from the territories and thus attracted the attention of greater European powers especially Britain and France resulting into the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856.
- Russia's expansionist policy led her into destroying the Turkish fleet at Sinope in 1854, which was meant to weaken Turkey's naval power to have greater influence in the region. This also attracted the attention of the greater European powers such as France, Britain and Turkey against her resulting into the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856.

FRANCE (LOUIS NAPOLEON III)

- After 1815, France was anxious to gain her glory and prestige which she had acquired during the French revolution of 1789 which forced the French rulers especially Napoleon III to take interest in the affairs of Eastern Europe particularly the Ottoman Empire.
- France also wanted Turkey intact to safeguard her commercial interest especially in the Mediterranean Sea. France preferred the integrity of the Ottoman Empire maintained and that is why she made an alliance with Turkey against Russia's expansionism into the Balkans.
- She was also interested in protecting the holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which were associated with the birth of Jesus Christ, yet Russia had the same interests. This resulted into a religious conflict, which erupted into the Crimean war of 1854-1856.
- France also had the support of the Catholic Christians who were suffering under the Ottoman Empire. This was because she claimed to be the guardian of the Catholics and her interest in the Balkans was to support the fellow Catholics from mistreatment of the Muslim Turks.

BRITAIN (LORD ABERDEEN)

- Britain pursued economic imperialism. She therefore wanted to maintain her dominancy in the Balkans against any intervention by the great powers such as Russia and France, which were likely to jeopardize her commercial interests. The result of this was the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856.
- Britain wanted to destroy Russian influence, which was the greatest threat to her interests in the region because of her expansionism. She therefore made efforts to destroy the treaty of Unkier Skelessi that had given Russia greater influence in the region. Besides, she involved herself in the making of temporary treaties in the Balkan region such as the 1827 London treaty, 1829 treaty of Adrianople and the Straits

convention of 1841. Most of them were intended to keep her greater influence in the region in the disguise of preserving the Ottoman Empire.

- Britain fuelled quarrels and conflicts between France and Russia by supporting France's claims over the Holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The aim of this was also to isolate France from Russia to weaken Russia's influence in the region and the result was the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856 against Russia.
- Britain wanted the Ottoman Empire maintained for the interest of maintaining European balance of power. No wonder she allied with Turkey and even encouraged her to send an ultimatum to Russia so as to withdraw her forces from Wallachia and Moldavia, repent for her actions at Sinope and the British Ambassador Lord Stratford De Redcliff also behaved undiplomatically at Constantinople with intentions of fighting Russia and destroying her influence in the region before she could jeopardize European balance of power. This however culminated into the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856.

TURKEY (SULTAN MAHMOOD II)

- Turkey continuously declined in her military strength and the administration; she had actually failed to effectively administer the extensive Ottoman Empire, which attracted the attention of European great powers in the region. Thus, she ended up making alliances with western European powers like Britain, which fuelled conflicts in the region.
- Turkey pursued repressive policies towards her subjects and other nationalities which also attracted the attention of other nationalities thereby attracting the attention of the European great powers especially Russia and France into the region and conflicts leading to the outbreak of the Crimean war of 1854-1856.
- Turkey failed to make economic, social, and political reforms. As a result, there was increased interest of the European powers into the region and conflicts like the Greek war of independence and the Crimean war.

Austria for her part wanted the cosmopolitan Empire of Turkey maintained because she feared the spread of nationalistic sentiments into her empire, which was also cosmopolitan or heterogeneous in

nature. Therefore, she did not expand and did not contribute to the increased forces of nationalism and within the empire actively.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS;

1. Account for the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire by the second half of the nineteenth century.
2. Why and with what consequences was Turkey referred to as the sick man of Europe by the second half of the nineteenth Century?
3. “The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was primarily as a result of her internal weakness”. Discuss.
4. To what extent was it justifiable to refer to the Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe by the second half of the nineteenth century?
5. Examine the policies of the great powers towards the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century.
6. Why was Turkey regarded as a sick man of Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century?
7. “A sick man of Europe” How far was this true of Turkey in the nineteenth Century.
8. To what extent was Turkey a sick man of Europe?

THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1821-1833)

Greece was one of the states under the over Lordship of the Turkish or Ottoman Empire. Turkey acquired her as early as the fourteenth century when turkey had overwhelming appetite for colonies. The Greeks belonged to the orthodox religion which was closely related to the Russian faith and on the onset the Greeks were considered a privileged community in the Ottoman empire for they enjoyed freedom of worship with their own leadership in church, had access to their own education, participated actively in trade and commerce thereby becoming a wealthy community in the empire and in fact the government of the Sultan had an official position preserved for the Greeks. Nevertheless at the closure of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Turkish administration that was crumbling had become corrupt and inefficient and in spite of the privileges the Greeks had enjoyed, they came out to demand for separation and national independence at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the famous Greek war of independence of 1821-1833.

The Greeks were by no means the worst treated of the Sultan's subjects (fairly treated). The Greeks enjoyed certain privileges, which made their lot more tolerable than had been expected. They were allowed complete educational and religious freedom. The head of their church(the Patriarch) having a recognized government position, they were exempted from military service, an exemption which was theoretically a great disorder and in practice a considerable advantage as they thus monopolized commerce and became wealthy. Nevertheless, they had certain misgivings that prompted them to revolt thus, the Greek war of independence.

CAUSES OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

The desire for independence and self-rule by the Greeks. The Turks seized sovereignty of various states including Greece. Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century the Greeks were an enslaved community subject to the arbitrary rule of the local governors in the Ottoman Empire who were corrupt, oppressive, and repressive. "We the Greeks have reached a stage where by we must either regain our independence or extinct from the scene of European history. This is a historical law governing human nature". Remarkd a Greek historian

This made the Greeks to come up in the struggle against the Turkish over lordship to regain their sovereignty in various aspects of their lives such as:

- a) Politically, any attempt or protest by the Greeks against the Turkish leadership was suppressed with a lot of brutality and force. This was because the Turks considered themselves conquering heroes and never wished to give the Greeks a breathing space to have their political sovereignty.
- b) Economically the Greeks were denied participation in commerce leading to the emergence of a powerful wealthy middle class amongst the Greeks who advocated for economic reforms and economic independence.
- c) Socially the Greeks were denied freedom of worship. They were looked at as inferiors and hence pagans who could not fit in the Muslim community hence they wished to have independence in religious affairs.

- d) The Turks never attempted to absorb the Greeks in their own administration, which also influenced the Greeks to demand for self rule. It was out of such need for independence that the Greeks began a struggle in 1821, which was partially aided by the major powers, and finally their independence recognized by 1833.

The religious differences between the Greek Orthodox Christians and the Muslim Turks. The Greeks were uncomfortable because they were being ruled by non-Christians i.e. the Muslim Turks who were discriminative and ignored the religion of the Greeks. Because of these religious differences, various aspects of life of the Greeks were affected leading to the war in the following ways:

- a) The Greeks were denied freedom of worship by the Muslim Turks and the desire for freedom of worship occasioned the Greek war of independence e.g. the people of Morea were specifically revolting in order to attain religious freedom.
- b) On religious grounds, the Greeks were still discriminated against by the office barriers who did not respect the Greek Christians whom they regarded as infidels or pagans and second hand citizens, servants and people of low status. Apart from the major leaders of the Orthodox Church, many Greek Christians were not given respect as office barriers on religious grounds.
- c) The Greeks were not allowed to attend Muslim schools and gain high ranks in the army on religious grounds. To make matters worse, the Turkish Muslim used the Turkish army to suppress and oppress the Greeks whom they considered immoral because of their faith leading to the outbreak of the Greek war of independence of 1821-1833.

The social mistreatment of the Greeks by the Turks. The Greeks were socially mistreated by the Turkish Muslims who inflicted a lot of social injustices against the Greeks through continuous arrests, imprisonment and persecution or excitement based on religious differences. The Greeks working in the civil service were always under the Turkish Muslims and had little say in the affairs of social life. They did not attend Muslim schools and were therefore not promoted. Many who were socially discriminated took exile in countries like Britain, France and Russia and played a big role to occasion the Greek war of independence of 1821-1833 against the Turks.

The desire by the Greeks to revive their ancient glory. In the Medieval past or ancient history, the Greeks were known for innovations in Europe. They had a recorded history of having been the pioneers of sports and democracy, they had a

developed culture and language, they are reported to have been the pioneers of Olympic games, they were a centre of philosophy and education where arithmetic and civilization is said to have begun and they had developed customs and beliefs. All these made the Greeks to look at themselves as being superior to any body in the world. Nevertheless all this past glory had suffered because of the Turkish annexation and harsh administration, which made the Greeks nationalistic in the early nineteenth century with the desire to revive their ancient glory leading to the occurrence of the Greek war of independence of 1821-1833.

The growth of forces of nationalism and liberalism within the Turkish Empire. By the nineteenth century, there was massive growth of liberal and nationalistic feelings throughout Europe and more so the Turkish Empire. The Greeks particularly detested foreign domination and wished to have their independence recaptured. Forces of nationalism or revolution germinate whenever conditions prove conducive, whenever people feel that History is repeating itself, the future will be undoubtedly. This holds true throughout the history of humanity. In fact, by 1821 when the Greek war of independence begun, nobody in Europe wanted to be ruled by another. Besides people preferred democratic governments with parliaments in place. The provinces of the Turkish Empire elsewhere were breaking away; national agitation for independence had reached an alarming rate and therefore Greek nationalism was increased by 1821 leading to the outbreak of the Greek war of independence.

The influence of the Earlier French revolution of 1789. The positive effects of the French revolution of 1789 influenced the Greeks to revolt between 1821 and 1833. The French revolution gave birth to the spirit of nationalism and liberalism through its catchwords of liberty, equality, and fraternity that were later to inspire the oppressed people of Europe against the oppressors. It ought to be recalled that the Greeks were among the oppressed people under the Turkish Empire who had been denied parliamentary democracy, they were socially discriminated and economically isolated all of which the French revolution had fought against in France and achieved which influenced the Greeks to also revolt between 1821 and 1833 in the famous war of Greek independence.

The desire for economic reforms by the Greeks. At this material time there was emergence of a powerful elite and middle class amongst the Greeks. They had been exposed to commerce and education, civilization and had accumulated a lot of wealth leading to the emergency of a powerful wealthy middle class which unfortunately suffered and succumbed under the corrupt rule of the Turks who grabbed their wealth through heavy taxation and oppressed them economically.

This made the wealthy Greeks to provide ideas, leadership and finance to the revolt besides they provided philosophical ideologies through the media by sensitizing the Greeks about the harsh rule of the Turks and when the revolt broke out in Morea in 1821 they gave strength and moral support until the Greeks gained partial independence in 1827 and full independence in 1833 with a desire for economic reforms.

The declining military power of the Ottoman Empire. By 1821, the famous Ottoman Empire had terribly declined in terms of her military. The empire had no stable army to prevent the growth of nationalistic sentiments and she had a weak administration that encouraged different nationalities to break away including the Greeks. The military weakness of the Turkish government encouraged the Greek nationalists led by the elites and middle class to put up revolts by 1821 in the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, which later on spread to other Greek territories and continued up to 1827 when the Greeks gained partial independence that was fully recognized in 1833.

The role played by exiled Greeks. The exiled in Britain, France, and Russia helped to occasion the Greeks war of independence. They developed liberal ideologies and were nationalistically conscience about their country's domination by foreigners. They developed societies aimed at liberating the Greeks e.g. the Society of Friends under Alexander Hypsilanti a Greek army officer serving in Russia identified with the nationalists after soliciting for foreign support from Russia and provided the long awaited leadership for the revolt. In fact he expressed the love for independence of the Greeks and together with Hit aria Phi like they led revolts in the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia that were neighbouring Russia and proclaimed the two territories independent of Turkey before planning to invade Greece itself. Their activities motivated the people of Morea to revolt against the Turks and later revolts spread to other Greek provinces hence the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833.

The support given to the Greeks by the foreigners. The support from other European powers especially Russia and Britain induced the Greeks to wage a war against their leaders the Turks. It must be noted that there was a blood relationship between the Russians and the Greeks. Therefore, Russia promised the Greeks full military support in case of war and besides, Russia gave the Greeks many exitments through assistance offered to the Society of Friends under Alexander Hypsilanti and the Greek exiles. Britain on the other hand had hidden motives of taking over the Turkish territories so as to dominate trade in the far and near east, thus she promised moral support to the Greeks in their war against the Turks. It is

little wonder that when the Greek war of independence broke out in 1821, Russia and Britain joined the war on the side of the Greeks against Turkey.

The mal-administration of the Turkish rulers. The Turkish rulers were highly oppressive and governed their subjects including the Greeks harshly. They were arrogant, ruthless, and never wanted to associate with the Greeks whom they treated as a conquered race. The Turks never absorbed the Greeks in their civilization. All this created a permanent gap between the Greeks and the Turks. This made the Greeks to become more united and determined to overthrow their masters who oppressed them in the social, political, and economic aspects of life through corruption of the leaders, over taxation and brutal methods of tax collection and social discriminations.

It was a period of revolutions in Europe that led to political instabilities in the Turkish Empire including the Greek war of independence. There was a wave of revolutions occurring in most European states such as in the Italian states and Germany states against Austria, which was oppressive. This increased instabilities that spread into the Turkish Empire leading to various revolts such as the Serbian revolt of 1804 and the Morean revolt of 1821. Such revolts or instabilities influenced Greek nationalism leading to the occurrence of the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833.

The weakness of the congress system. By 1821, the congress system, which had been initiated as a guardian of European peace, had almost lost meaning due to the diverging interests among European powers in approaching and handling European problems. In fact the powers were divided over the Greek war of independence e. g Russia and Britain were in support of the Greeks which encouraged them to continue with the struggle despite the fact that Austria was against it. It was therefore this gap created by the weakness of the congress system that opened room for the outbreak of the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833.

THE COURSE OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

The Greek war of independence lasted for twelve years from 1821 to 1833. It begun in March 1821 and partially ended in 1827 when the Greeks were granted semi independence though it finally drew to a close in 1833 when the Greeks were granted full independence from the Ottoman rule. It was organized and led by Alexander Hypsilanti and the Hetaïra (the Society of Friends). The rebellion started in the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia that were neighboring

Russia. In March 1821, Prince Alexander Hipsilanti moved across river pruith into Moldavia with a band of Greek officers who had been in the service of the Czar. He called up on the Moldavians to revolt. However, his move was poorly organized and it led to the massacre of Muslims there totaling to over 25000! Turkey quickly cooled off it and the leaders fled to Austria where they were imprisoned and ruined. The failure of Hipsilanti's move did not mean the end of the Nationalistic struggles because the agents of Hit aria phi like had been at work. In Moldavia, the Greeks killed every Muslim they could lay their hands on and within six weeks, 25000 Muslims had been murdered! The Turks equally carried out Horrifying reprisals of revenge in Thessaly and Macedonia where about 27000 Greeks were killed.

Nevertheless, Alexander Hyspilanti planned to invade Turkey. The rebellion then spilled over into the centre of Greece. In Morea, the Greeks killed over 50000 Muslims and in retaliation, the government of the Sultan noted it was a religious war and hanged 20 Bishops including the Patriarch (the head of the Greek Orthodox Church) in Constantinople on the Easter day of 1821. The body of the Patriarch was hanged outside the Cathedral in Constantinople and later thrown into the Bosphorous. The massacres alarmed the Great powers especially Russia and because of the brutality of the Muslims, Russia and Britain joined the war on the side of the Greeks against Turkey on humanitarian grounds as they argued that they wanted to save the young Greeks from foreign domination and harsh administration of the Turks.

At once, the Czar Alexander concentrated thousands of troops on the borders of Moldavia ready to invade Moldavia and defeat the Turks. Metternich and the British government persuaded Alexander to hold back but the policy of non-intervention seemed theoretical at this time.

In 1826, the war was at its apex and the Sultan of Turkey unable to contain the situation, called for assistance from Mehemet Ali of Egypt his vassal state. In this very year, the Egyptian army got involved in the Greek war under the command of Ibrahim Pasha the son of Mehemet Ali who declared Genocide in the province of Morea. Mehemeti Ali sent his son Ibrahim Pasha who captured Crete and successfully landed his forces in Morea where he begun to wipe out the Greek population. At that time, Czar Alexander I was already dead and had been succeeded by Czar Nicholas I(1825-1855) who was determined as a result of Russia's position as a protector of the Christian population in the Turkish Empire. The Greeks were crashed but Russia promised them support up to the bitter end. In Britain, public opinion was in favour of the Greeks and the British foreign

secretary George Canning responding to this demand and fearing that Russia would act alone decided to reach an agreement with Russia in 1826. They concluded that Greece should be independent from Turkey but continue to pay annual tribute to Turkey but the Sultan remained continuously stubborn.

The intervention of Russia into the war attracted the attention of other European powers especially Britain and France, which joined Russia and sent a joint naval force that destroyed the Turkish fleet at the battle of Navarino bay in 1827. This was done due to Turkey's refusal to accept the independence of the Greeks and after the battle of Navarino bay, the treaty of London was signed in 1827 granting semi independence to the Greeks. At the battle of Navarino Bay, the Egyptian fleet was sunk and unable to contain the situation, Egypt withdrew her forces from Morea.

However, Russia single handedly invaded Moldavia and Wallachia drove out the Turks and Turkey was forced to sign the treaty of Adrianople in 1829, which finally concluded the war situation. However, the treaty of Adrianople was not welcomed by other powers for in case of any trouble arising over the payment of tribute to Turkey by Greece, Russia would have an excuse of intervening alone without other powers. The great powers now excluding Russia then demanded for complete independence of Greece from Turkey. The sultan of Turkey finally accepted these demands.

In 1832, the major powers met in London and signed a treaty that formally declared Greece as an independent state and the Greeks attained full independence. This ended the long struggle by the Greeks for their independence and concluded the first phase of the Eastern question of Europe.

All in all, what can be noted is that, the Greeks attained their independence with the assistance of European great powers that were influenced by different motives e. g Russia in the pretext of protecting the fellow Orthodox Christians came in to disintegrate the Ottoman Empire so as to gain influence in the region and little wonder that after 1827 she remained in the provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia and Britain which also had interests in the region remained suspicious over Russia and came in to assist the Greeks on "humanitarian grounds," France at first supportet Mehemet Ali of Egypt but later on she joined Britain to support the Greeks on humanitarian grounds while Austria never wanted Russian influence in the region and she feared the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire because of the struggles like the Greek war of independence which would send an example to her subject states to revolt.

FACTORS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

The Greeks used various methods to achieve their independence by 1833 as explained below:

1. The continued decline of the military power of the Ottoman Empire that enabled the Greeks to employ military confrontation or force against the Turks.
2. The support given to the Greeks by the big powers such as Britain, France, and Russia.
3. Emphasis, increased desire, and determination by the Greeks to revive their ancient glory helped to awaken and keep alive the desire for independence, which united them against a common enemy.
4. The increased nationalism because of the ideas of Western Europe that instigated the Greeks to mobilize and fight with a lot of determination to acquire independence.
5. The role-played by the Greek exiles and middle class who provided determined leadership through forming revolutionary movements' e. g the Society of Friends.
6. The mobilization and determination based on religious grounds by religious leaders like in the first uprising of Morea, which was initiated by the Orthodox Christians.
7. The signing of the treaties; e. g the treaty of London in 1827, the Adrianople treaty of 1829 and the London treaty of 1832.
8. The weakness or collapse of the congress system.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

It led to massive loss of life and property. The war lasted for a long period of time, involved many countries and employed destructive weapons by the great powers of Europe. In fact, it was one of the destructive wars after the Napoleonic wars in Europe e. g at the battle of Navarino bay, several Turkish ships and Egyptian fleet were destroyed resulting into mass destruction of lives which depopulated Europe and heavy loss of property which increased sufferings.

It led to the independence of the Greeks. In 1832, the great powers of Europe met in London and signed the treaty of London that granted full independence of the

Greeks from the Ottoman Empire. This was after they had crushed the Turks at the Battle of Navarino bay in 1827 and for the first time in so many years the Greeks who had been subject peoples became free people.

It led to religious persecutions and conflicts within the Ottoman Empire. When the war broke out in 1821, about 27000 Christians were killed in Greece, in the following year besides, 20 Bishops were hanged on the Easter day of 1821. Therefore, religious conflicts and persecutions especially of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire intensified even at a later date e. g in 1826; the entire Christian population in one village of Bulgaria was wiped out. This was because the Turks wanted to subdue all the Christians and stop their chances of becoming independent like the Greeks.

It exposed the hidden interests of the major European powers towards the Balkans or Ottoman Empire e. g Russian claims as guardians of the Orthodox Christians were seen, Britain's protection of her economic interests in the pretext of humanitarian grounds and her double standards was also portrayed while France's humanitarian grounds were not hidden.

It finally led to the collapse of the congress system in Europe. This was because it divided the major European powers in the congress system I. e Britain, Austria, Russia and France took a divergent approach towards the struggle for Greek independence. At first, it was Russia in the support of the Greeks to the disappointment of France, Britain, and Austria who remained suspicious over Russia. Later on Britain and France joined Russia in support of the Greeks to the disappointment of Austria. All this led to increased suspicion and mistrust that finally tore apart the congress system creating a vacuum in European diplomacy.

It led to the signing of the London treaty of 1827, which granted semi independence to the Greeks and furthered divisions between and amongst the members of the congress system thereby leading to its collapse.

France lost the trust and support of great powers in Europe simply because she had supported Mehemet Ali of Egypt in the first place who was supporting the Sultan of Turkey against the Greeks supported by Britain on humanitarian grounds. It is little wonder that France was isolated in the future London conference of 1840, which increased the unpopularity of Louis Philippe before the French men.

It also increased the growth of nationalism in Europe. The success of the Greek war of independence was a motivating factor to other subject states or races in the

Ottoman Empire to rise up against their masters leading to the outbreak of several revolts such as in Montenegro and Bulgaria. It also inspired the occurrence of 1830 and 1848 revolutions in other European states such as the Italian and German states that were being oppressed by Austrian rule.

It accelerated the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. It must have be recalled that Turkey had been identified as a sick man of Europe by the Czar of Russia which sent a signal to her nationals that she would really be defeated and with the success of the Greek war of independence, it marked the practical beginning and accelerated the disintegration of the Ottoman empire.

It led to the occurrence of the Syrian question of 1831 to 1841. During the Greek war of independence, Turkey appealed for assistance from Egypt and promised Egypt the provinces of Morea, Syria and Damascus but after the war, Turkey never honored the pledge which made Egypt under Mehemet Ali to occupy Syria forcefully thus attracting the attention of other European powers leading to the famous Syrian question of 1831-1841.

TOPIC STUDY QUESTIONS.

1. Account for the outbreak of the Greek war of independence of 1821-1833?
2. "It was the desire for independence that led to the outbreak of the Greek revolt between 1821 and 1833" discuss.
3. To what extent was the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833 a religious war?
4. Explain why and how the Greeks were able to attain their independence between 1821 and 1833.
5. Examine the causes and consequences of the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833.
6. Account for the success of the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833.
7. Account for the outbreak of the revolution in Greece in 1821.
8. 'The weaknesses of Turkey were primarily responsible for the success of the Greek war of independence in 1821'. Discuss
9. Assess the impact of the 1821 Greek war of independence on Europe up to 1878.
10. Examine the causes and consequences of the 1821 Greek war of independence.
11. To what extent was the Greek war of independence a nationalistic revolt?

12. 'It was the religious factor which prompted the outbreak of the Greek war of independence.' Discuss.

THE SYRIAN QUESTION OF 1831-1841.

Hardly had the Greek war of independence ended, than another problem cropped up in the Turkish Empire. This was one of the events in the Balkans that severely affected international relations in Europe. It originated from the Greek war of independence of 1821 to 1833 when the Sultan of Turkey requested for support from Mehemet Ali of Egypt against the Greeks. Before Mehemet Ali could accept to help the Sultan of Turkey, an agreement was reached in which Egypt was promised the whole of Morea, Damascus, and Syria in return for her assistance from the Sultan.

After the war, Turkey refused to honour her promise to Egypt and in 1831, Mehemet Ali through his war like son Ibrahim Pasha forcefully conquered Syria. This left the Sultan desperate for help and approached European powers for assistance against Egypt.

The reaction of the great powers to the Syrian question was different. Britain and France were busy settling the Belgian Revolution and could not offer any assistance that left Russia as the only country to assist. The Czar Nicholas I of Russia had realized that Russian influence could be better served by maintaining weak Turkey than setting up a strong independent Balkan state and the Czar wanted to maintain friendly relations with Turkey thus he sent troops to assist Turkey but Britain supported by France and Turkey herself distrusted the Czar's assistance. "a drowning man will clutch at a serpent".

In 1833, the Sultan handed over Syria, Damascus and Palestine to Mehemet Ali as the Czar was forced by Britain and France and had no alternative thus peace was made with Mehemet Ali. Therefore, Russia was forced to withdraw from Turkey since her presence was no longer justified which severely affected international relations between Russia and the major powers. It is important to note that in return for Russian assistance to Turkey against Mehemet Ali, Czar Nicholas I of Russia got some concessions with the Sultan of Turkey i. e. the famous treaty of Unkierskellessi.

The treaty of unkierskellessi of 1833.

In return for the Czar's (Russian) assistance to Turkey against Mehemet Ali, Czar Nicholas I signed the treaty of Unkierskellessi of 1833 with the Sultan of Turkey to foster new friendship. The treaty was officially a treaty of friendship between Russia and Turkey in which the two countries promised mutual assistance

whenever peace and security was threatened as agreed in the secret clause and the Sultan agreed to close the entrance to the black sea to the warships of all nations except Russia whenever Russia needed. This provision might have enabled Russia to carry out an aggressive Mediterranean policy and if need be the entire security in the Black sea. The implication was that Britain's policy of keeping out Russia's influence in the Mediterranean Sea was defeated. Britain got to know of the secret clause and she protested it bitterly. It looked as if Russia had out matched Britain, which did not want to see Russia gaining influence in the region thus Britain was determined to have the treaty of Unkierskellessi cancelled which boiled the relations between Russia, and Britain.

However, the treaty of Unkierskellessi remained in force until 1839 when new developments occurred that enabled Britain to change the whole arrangement of the treaty of Unkierskellessi to her advantage during the Turkish invasion of Syria, which led to the London Convention of 1840.

The London Treaty of 1840.

This was another event in the Balkans that bitterly affected international relations. After the Turkish invasion of Syria, the British Prime Minister Palmerstone intervened to check on the intervention of Russia and prevent France from assisting Mehemet Ali of Egypt because it was a threat to Britain's naval and trading power in the Eastern Mediterranean. Palmerstone called the London convention that was reached and signed between Britain, Russia, and Austria. They allowed Mehemet Ali to retain the southern half of Syria and surrender all other conquests and France was left out because she was in support of Mehemet Ali. Mehemet Ali opposed the terms of the first London convention and France supported him. A naval force was set which defeated Mehemet Ali and the London convention was signed in 1840. Overall, the London convention of 1840 soured the relationship between France and other European powers i. e Britain, Russia and Austria whose relations were strengthened.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SYRIAN QUESTION.

1. It involved an element of war leading to loss of lives and property.
2. It accelerated the unpopularity of Louis Philippe in France.
3. It accelerated the decline of the Ottoman Empire.
4. It strengthened the relationship between Russia and Turkey as seen in the signing of the treaty of unkierskellessi of 1833 where Turkey gave Russia the control of the waters of the black sea and Mediterranean Sea.
5. It soured the relationship between Russia and Britain on the other hand because of the treaty of unkierskellessi of 1833, which gave Russia greater

influence in the Balkan region, which threatened the economic interests of Britain that worked hard to nullify the treaty of *unkierskellessi*.

6. It led to the signing of the London convention of 1840 that nullified the treaty of *unkierskellessi* and affected international relations severely between France on one hand and Britain, Russia and Austria on the other hand.
7. The naval force that was sent against him when he opposed the terms of the first London conference of 1840 defeated Mehemet Ali of Egypt. Therefore, he was forced out of Syria by Britain, Austria, and Russia that were signatories to the first London Convention.
8. It contributed to the signing of the straits convention of 1841 that saved Turkey from humiliation by defeating France and Mehemet Ali of Egypt.

THE STRAITS CONVENTION OF 1841.

After Syria had been completely restored to Turkey and Mehemet Ali confirmed in his position of Pasha in Egypt by the London Convention of 1840, a new treaty was signed by the great powers including France. All these were the efforts of Lord Palmerstone the British prime minister who wanted to bring an end to the treaty of *unkierskellessi* completely so as to stop Russian influence in the Balkans. The treaty was known as the Straits convention of 1841, which had a lot of causes or aims and left various consequences on the Balkan region as well as international relations in Europe. (More details are compiled in the next article)