

THE RISE OF MODERN DEMOCRACY

تطور الديمقراطية الحديثة

LA PROGRESSION DE LA DEMOCRATIE MODERNE

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ملخص: يتناول هذا المقال الأفكار التي شكلت الديمقراطية الحديثة كما نعيشها في أيامنا هذه. فهو يصور تطور المفاهيم الرئيسية للديمقراطية المشتقة من القرنين الثامن عشر والتاسع عشر حيث تبلورت معظم الأفكار حول الحرية والمساواة وسيادة القانون. كما يضع بين أيدينا خريطة لنمو الديمقراطية الحديثة من عقول المفكرين الأكثر تأثيرا في عصر التنوير إلى الأحداث التاريخية المحورية التي أحدثت ثورة في عالم السياسة سواء في أوروبا وأمريكا و التي ولدت الديمقراطية الحديثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : ديمقراطية؛ حرية؛ المساواة؛ سيادة؛ الاقتراع.

Abstract: This article deals with the ideas that shaped modern democracy as we are witnessing in our days. It depicts the development of the key concepts of democracy from the 18th and 19th centuries where notions about freedom, equality and rule of law were mostly crystallized. It puts in our hands a map of the growth of modern democracy from the thoughts of the most influential thinkers of the Enlightenment era to the pivotal historic events that revolutionized the world of politics both in Europe and America giving birth to modern democracy

Keywords: democracy; freedom; equality; sovereignty; suffrage

Résumé : Cet article traite des idées qui ont façonné la démocratie moderne comme nous le voyons de nos jours. Il décrit le développement des concepts clés de la démocratie des XVIIIe et XIXe siècles, où les notions de liberté, d'égalité et du règne de la loi étaient essentiellement cristallisées. Il met entre nos mains une carte de la croissance de la démocratie moderne depuis les idées des penseurs les plus influents de l'ère des Lumières aux événements historiques cruciaux qui ont révolutionné le monde politique en Europe et en Amérique donnant naissance à la démocratie moderne.

Mots clés : démocratie liberté; égalité; la souveraineté; suffrage

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Introduction:

Democracy might be a word familiar to most people but either properly understood or used or not depends on its concrete practice in different societies. In fact, democracy has been defined in various ways by different people. The Webster's 1828 Dictionary gives us the first definition of democracy: "Government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is lodged in the hands of the people collectively." In other words, democracy is explained as a system of government in which the people rule or as in the memorable phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, "government of the people, by the people, and for the people".

Etymologically, the word democracy is derived from the Greek word *Demokratia*, the root meanings of which are *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule) (Pennock, 1979). Even the contemporary studies on the theory of democracy are based on this simple etymology of the word. Accordingly, we can literally translate democracy to be a form of government in which – contrary to monarchies and aristocracies – the people rule (Hansen, 2006).

However, in spite of the simplicity of the notion of democracy as "government by people" may sound, there is a wide variety of types and concepts of democracy in contemporary political science. In fact, the whole history of the idea of democracy is "complex and marked by conflicting conceptions" (Held, 2006, p1). This is the case because democracy is understood both as a "set of political institutions" and a "set of political ideals" (Hansen 1999, p. 90). Another reason why definitions of democracy vary to a great extent is that each element of the phrase democracy, *demos* and *kratos*, is open for interpretation. First, one can argue how *demos* can be defined (citizenship), what its characteristics are (in terms of resources, skills, motivations, and attitudes) and finally what the scope of their competences in ruling should be (kind and amount of participation). Second, the element *kratos* (rule) is being disputed in terms of what the term rule covers (fields of government activity) and how broad the scope of rule should be (Held, 2006). Though, all definitions agree on some major features of modern democracy which include individual freedoms; equality before the law; representation and universal suffrage. And such features have been proclaimed in great historic documents, for example, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, which asserted the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which affirmed the principles of civil liberty and of equality before the law.

England in 1642, began the first popular rebellion against monarchy which climaxed to the execution of King Charles I and resulted in the establishment of a democratic government instead of an autocratic one. Such action was inspired and led mainly by political philosophers, particularly the French philosophers Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the American statesmen Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Before the end of the 19th century, in many western European countries, a representative legislature modeled on the British Parliament was instituted. At that time, British politics was the epitome of the world democracies, yet the French Revolution also exerted a powerful influence. Add to this the success of democratic institutions in the United States served as a model for many peoples later. Consequently, it is assumed that the notion of democracy crystallized the most during the 18th and 19th centuries. Initiating with ideas of freedom and equality, passing through ideas of popular sovereignty, representation and rule of law and ending with the expansion of suffrage, democracy became what we know today. In the following article we are going to trace all these concepts back in history through the depiction of the pivotal events that shifted the western civilization at those periods.

1. The 16th Century Western Political Atmosphere; Reformation and the First Democratic Ideas:

It is a fact generally acknowledged that democracy was a Greek, or rather more precisely, an Athenian, invention and the story of the occurrence of Greek democracy has its roots in the

principal form of political organisation that was established in the Greek world between 800 and 500 B.C. which is known as the “polis” or city-state (Mitchell, 2015, p7). Yet, the Greek institutions of democracy waned under the attacks first of the Macedonian and later of Roman empires. Even if that the Republican Rome had popular assemblies “comitia”, in which the citizens met to elect officials and make laws, the comitia lost their powers first to the aristocratic Roman Senate and ultimately to the Roman emperors later (Hammer, 2015, p.47). The collapse of Rome in the 6th century A.D. created a European society that was mainly concerned with security rather than with democratic institutions. This gave rise to the rigidly hierarchical systems of feudalism. Political attitudes were, furthermore, shaped by the powerful Christian church, which taught, in effect, that existing institutions had divine sanction (Morkot, 1996). The medieval kings claimed divine authority to rule relying on their principal baronial vassals for practical advice establishing what it became to be called Absolutism (Rowley and Bin Wu, 2014, p2). It is up till the 16th century that “...the modern political thought which may be broadly called democratic takes its rise in the sixteenth century” (Gooch, 1898, p.1). In the same source Gooch asserts that

Democracy is the child of Reformation... Reformation largely owed its origin to the enunciation of two intellectual principles, the rightful duty of free inquiry, and the priesthood of all believers. ...Free inquiry, ..., led straight from theological to political criticism, and the theory of universal priesthood indicated the general direction of the investigation. The first led to liberty, the second to equality. (pp. 8-9)

The Reformation or the Protestant Reformation was a schism from the Roman Catholic Church which is usually considered to have started with the publication of the Ninety-five Theses in 1517 by Martin Luther in 1517 and lasting until 1648. Luther launched his protests by a call to purify the church by condemning the sale of indulgences, claiming that the Pope had no authority over Purgatory and that the Catholic doctrine of the merits of the saints had no foundation in the Bible. He went on declaring the Bible as the only source of faith and practice (“sola scriptura” (p.104)) and that faith in Jesus, and not good works, is the only way to obtain salvation “sola fide” (p.8) (Quentin, 1978). By promoting these ideas, reformation first challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and ended into a new form of Christianity, called Protestantism and second raised up the individual and individualism by terminating the possibility of the transfer of religious merit from the more to the less Godly by stressing the idea that men are equal in god’s eye.

2. Absolutism, Religion and the English Civil Wars:

In England, reformation was due to a parliamentary act that King Henry VIII forced in 1534 in order to “annul” his first marriage, remarry and get his male heir. The act marked the split and confirmed the divine rights of the king by making him Head of state and church. (Rowley & Bin Wu, p.31). However, This was not a clean and final cut from the Catholic Church; Edward VI led further reformations to secure Protestantism in England, under Mary the country reverted back to Catholicism resulting in executions of many protestants, and it was Elizabeth I who restored Protestantism in England once and for all (ibid, pp.32-36). What concerns me here precisely is not how the English schism was attained, but the claims that the religious reformation was a cause of the English civil war which brought about the end of monarchical absolutism and set for the constitutional monarchy. The existence of an English parliament could be traced back to the late the 13th century, and it had been divided into two houses since the middles of this century, with knights and burgesses sitting in what developed as the House of Commons while clergy and nobility sat in the House of Lords (Rowley C.K and Bin Wu, 2014, p15). During the rule of

Charles I, pervasive fears of Catholicism in England spread due to his inclinations along with his marriage to a Catholic.

fear by the covenanting Scots that the king aimed to extirpate Presbyterian worship and church government; fear by the Anglican party in England that the puritans in Parliament would abolish the prayerbook, and rip up the Church of England root and branch; fear of Catholics in the three king-doms that the English Parliament would not be content until every Catholic was dead; and fear of parliamentarians of a fiendish jesuitical plot to impose the popish religion on England. (Gentles, 1993, 409)

In 1641, the Irish Catholics revolted, killing English and Scottish Protestants who had lived there. Charles wanted to overturn the Irish uprising but didn't have the money to raise troops on his own. He called Parliament, but the Parliament rejected giving him money or raising troops for him unless their own grievances were addressed like the requirement that the king had to call Parliament at least once a year. The quarrel between King Charles and Parliament reached its zenith in 1642 when the king came to Parliament demanding the surrender of five members for treason to the crown. They fled, and the subjects of the kingdom took sides as the first of three English civil wars initiated. Most of northern and western England with much of Ireland sided with the king. These were the Royalists, or Cavaliers. The Parliamentarians, also known as Roundheads, having the support of the Royal Navy, controlled southeast England. Oliver Cromwell, a member of Parliament, raised troops for the Parliamentarians in the provinces. In 1643, Charles' victory over the Parliamentarians seemed grounded however an alliance between the Parliamentarians and Scotland placed that victory in uncertainty. With the intervention of Scottish forces, the Parliamentarians progressively gained the upper hand over Charles' Royalists. In 1644, Charles lost control of northern England. By 1645 the Parliamentary forces, under the command of Oliver Cromwell, had overcome the king's principle army and captivated the king. Charles was not willing to give up to the English Parliamentarians instead he surrendered to the Scots and planned his escape.

After his capture, the king stimulated more violence that became known as England's Second Civil War. The Parliamentarians thought there would be no peace in the kingdom unless the king was killed, so they arrested him on charges of high treason. The king was tried, found guilty and beheaded in January 1649. After the execution of Charles, a republic was formed in England. Oliver Cromwell was charged with the re-conquest of Ireland, which had been run by a Catholic Confederation since 1642. With Cromwell in Ireland, Charles II, the executed king's son, appeared in Scotland. In 1651 he was crowned king of Scotland and sent Scottish forces to invade England, launching the Third English civil war. While fighting in Ireland was persisting until 1642, Cromwell invaded Scotland to overthrow the forces of Charles II. In 1653, Cromwell was entitled "lord protector" of the commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland; the only non-royal ever to rule the three kingdoms. Charles II, who had run away to France, returned to the throne after Cromwell's death in 1660 (Morill, 2000, pp.25- 60). Because of the Civil War, monarchy had been removed and then returned in a weakened form, paving the way for the constitutional monarchy that exists today.

Another incident that deserves mentioning here is the way how the notion of parties developed. In 1678, a rumour spread through England that Roman Catholics were conspiring to kill King Charles II and give the throne to his Roman Catholic brother, James, Duke of York. There was no real popish plot, but a frightened Parliament stripped all Roman Catholics from public offices and attempted to take away the Duke of York's right to inherit the throne through the Exclusion Bills. However to King

Charles II, Parliament sounded to be challenging royal authority so he decided to dissolve it. All over England people were either for or against the king's deed. Those who pressed the king to summon a new Parliament were called "Petitioners". Those who supported the king's action were called "Abhorrers" since they abhorred any effort to control the king's actions. Later, the two factions acquired other names. Petitioners were called Whigs which was an old word for Scottish Presbyterians who opposed the government. The king's supporters were called Tories. "Tory" was formerly a name given to Irish Roman Catholics who had suffered under Protestant rule (Rowley C.K and Bin Wu, 2014). The principle distinction between Whigs and Tories in the 1600s was their opinion of what government should do and how strong it should be (Tories sought rule by a strong king. Whigs required ordinary people to own more rights and gain more control of their government). In time, as Parliament won greater control, both Whigs and Tories settled into organized parties. These old names took on new meanings.

Nonetheless, it was the arrival of William of Orange from Holland to take the throne from the catholic James II, again because of religious fears and on the verge of another civil war, which headed the creation of the Bill of Rights (the period became to be known as the Glorious Revolution 1688), making the king "the chief servant of the law, but not its master; the executor of the law, not its source; that laws should only be alterable by Parliament-Kings, Lords and Commons together" (Trevelyan 1938, p. 87 cited in Rowley & Wu, p.102). So constitutionally preventing absolute rule by the Kings and Queens of Great Britain to this day, and leaving Parliament as the true seat of power in the country along with granting the freedom of speech in Parliament, regular elections to Parliament, the right to petition in the monarch without fear of retribution.

3. Touchstone Theorists, the Enlightenment and the Right of Man:

Most of the democratic ideas that we are familiar with today coincided with very significant developments in the human thinking and reasoning; the Enlightenment. It was the age of Enlightenment that sparkled most of them as it was marked by the rejection of traditional social, religious, and political ideas and its emphasis on rationalism. Beginning in the second half of the seventeenth century and lasting for over a century and a half, the enlightenment era "was the most important and profound intellectual, social, and cultural transformation of the Western world since the Middle Ages and the most formative in shaping modernity" (Israel, 2011, p3). Yet, before tackling the democratic ideas that flourished during this period, a depiction of the political atmosphere of the western world before the Enlightenment is a necessity.

Philosophers of this era such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau advanced the earliest concepts on relationships between individuals, and between the individual and the government around the idea of a "social contract". In fact the idea of a social contract dates back to the Athenian antiquity and Socrates defined it as an agreement between people of a society to abide by laws and accept punishment. Hobbes in his *Leviathan* and Locke in his *Two treatises of Government* agreed upon the notion that citizens need to willingly give up some of their rights in favour of others' rights in order to found the state as a sovereign which would defend the rights of individuals and control their relationships with each other. However they disagreed in some points.

Actually, in his 1651 *Leviathan (or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill)* which name is derived from the biblical Leviathan; a big monster and published during the English Civil War, Hobbes depicted a "state of nature" where people were by nature ambitious (Hobbes, 1651, p.61) and thus life would be a "continual fear, ...; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (p.79) as everyone would have indefinite natural freedoms for "every man had a right to everything, and to do whatsoever he thought necessary to his own preservation; subduing, hurting, or killing any man in order thereunto." (pp.190-191). Thus, these liberties would lead to a "war of every man against every man" (p. 77) and to avoid this, men contract with each other to establish a political society through a social contract in which they all gain security as long as

subjecting themselves to an absolute sovereign. Hobbes believed that men are equal and ambitions and the kind of government required to control selfish ambitious men was absolute monarchy. He saw absolute government as the only alternative to the terrifying anarchy of a state of nature.

Contrary to Hobbes, Locke provided a strong argument against the divine right of kings "...to make way for this doctrine (absolute monarchy), they have denied mankind a right to natural freedom; whereby they have not only, as much as in them lies, exposed all subjects to the utmost misery of tyranny and oppression..." (Locke, 1690, p.8). Locke said that all human beings had naturally the right to life, liberty, and property. So as to protect these natural rights, they formed governments and the people had an absolute right, he assumed, to rebel against a government that violated or failed to protect their rights (ibid, p.205). In fact, according to Robert Faulkner's article, "The First Liberal Democrat: Locke's Popular Government" (Winter, 2001, pp. 5-39), John Locke was the first to lay the seeds for the liberal democracy. In 1690 Locke published his pivotal *Two Treatises of Government*. His declaration that all legitimate government rests upon "the consent of the governed" greatly changed discussions of political theory and encouraged the development of democratic institutions. With his assertion of Natural Law, Locke contested the claim that government, specifically monarchy, was a characteristic of a divinely ordained chain of being. Locke argued that Natural law is identical with the law of God and guarantees to all men basic rights, including the right to life, to certain liberties, and to own property and keep the fruits of one's labor (Locke, 1963). To secure these rights, Locke sustained, men in civil society enter into a contract with their government. The citizen is committed to obey the law, while the government has the right to make laws and to defend the commonwealth from foreign harm; all for the public good. Locke declared that when any government becomes lawless and arbitrary, the citizen has the right to overthrow the regime and institute a new government. (Waldron, 2002)

A generation of Enlightenment philosophers in Europe and America, from Jean Jacques Rousseau in France to David Hume in Scotland, Immanuel Kant in Germany, and Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in what became the United States, was inspired by Locke's theory of natural law. However his notable successor was probably Montesquieu who also believed in republican government based on the consent of the governed, but not in democracy established on majority rule.

A hundred years later, Rousseau, unlike Hobbes, identified the social contract as an agreement among free individuals to create a government that would respond to the people's will, he said

.... Find a form of association which will defend and protect, with the whole of its joint strength, the person and property of each associate, and under which each of them, uniting himself to all, will obey himself alone, and remain as free as before. This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract gives the answer. (cited in Betts C., 1994, p.55)

He also emphasized the idea of popular sovereignty, which can only be achieved when each individual puts his power under the rule of law. This necessitated people to delegate power to a government that would apply the law and therefore protect the popular sovereignty or "the general will" against individual interests (ibid, p.58). This early thought was consequently the precursor of modern democratic relations such as people's sovereignty and the legitimation of political authority by the rule of law.

Another influential philosopher is Montesquieu who also recognized liberty as a natural right. In *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu decided that liberty could be best secured by a separation of powers, that is, by dividing government into three separate branches (p.187). These branches were (1) a legislature to make laws, (2) an executive to enforce them, and (3) courts to interpret them. The United States and many other democratic countries use this basic plan.

DEMOCRATIC and aristocratic states are not in their own nature free. Political liberty is to be found only in moderate governments; and even in these it is not always found. It is there only when there is no abuse of power: but constant experience shews us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go. ... To prevent this abuse, it is necessary, from the very nature of things, power should be a check to power. A government may be so constituted, as no man shall be compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him, nor forced to abstain from things which the law permits. (Montesquieu, 1777, book11, chapter4, p.186)

In other words, Montesquieu advocated separating and balancing powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government as a means of guaranteeing the freedom of the individual. This doctrine also helped to form the philosophical basis for the U.S. Constitution, with its division of power among the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary.

4. The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights:

Moving to a different setting but remaining in the same era, we find one of the most critical documents for the study of the growth of democracy in the world; the Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their CREATOR, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government...(Dyer, 2012, p.3)

It presented the colonists' philosophical explanation for the American Revolution and reflected the ideas of Locke and Rousseau. It contained "the most potent and consequential words in American history" (Ellis J.J., 2007, p.56) and due to it the new United States of America came to be the first modern democratic state. After independence in 1783, the new nation existed as a loose federation, or union, of states under a plan of government called the Articles of Confederation. Fearing that a strong government would lead to the kind of tyranny they had rebelled against, inspiring lessons from the English experience "Americans learned that a free people are those who live under a government so constitutionally checked and controlled that its powers must be reasonably exercised without abridging individual rights" (Levy, 1999, p4). In 1787, a chosen group of American leaders met in Philadelphia to frame, a better plan of government. The result of their efforts was the Constitution of the United States which was only ratified by 9 states. For the sake of total ratification, the constitution was amended in 1791 resulting in one of the most far-reaching documents in the history of the growth of democracy which was the Bill of Right. Being an aspiration and a model for new democracies around the world for more than two centuries, the American constitution endured because "it was written to control government, not people" (Levy, p43).

5. More Liberty and Equality with the French Revolution:

Justice has its anger, Monsieur Bishop, and the wrath of justice is an element of progress. Whatever may be said matters not, the French revolution is the greatest step in advance taken by mankind since the advent of Christ; incomplete it may be, but it is sublime. It loosened all the secret bonds of society, it softened all hearts, it calmed, appeased, enlightened; it made the waves of civilisation to flow over the earth; it was good. The French revolution is the consecration of humanity. (Hugo, 1992, p36)

The French revolution is an indispensable matter in tackling the subject of the underpinning elements in modern democracy. Prior the French revolution, like most Europeans, the French people were divided in three social estates, clergy, nobility and the lowest Third Estate; the commoners, and the absolutist king. In May 1789, an economically broke and spoiled monarchy tried to increase taxes on commoners. So, Louis XVI called the Estates- General, which had not been called to meet since 1614, into session. The Third Estate, however, felt their class was not fairly represented. They left in protest and formed the National Assembly. In June 20th, the Third Estate took Tennis Court Oath, declaring its intention not to dissolve until a constitution is adopted for France. On July 14th, 1789, Burdened by taxes, suffering from hunger, dissatisfied with the “ancien régime’s” reforms, fueled by the Enlightenment ideas of social contract and freedom and inspired by the American Revolution that threw off an oppressive rule, the French peasants revolted, storming the Bastille, a prison in Paris that signified royal tyranny, then spread throughout the country. On August 26th, 1789, the National Assembly introduced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It insisted that “men are born and remain free and equal in rights” and guaranteed security and resistance to oppression to all citizens. In 1791, a new elected Legislative Assembly replaced the National Assembly. However, it was not accepted by the king, the aristocracy, or many Catholics. Adding to the civil riots, the country was torn apart by an exterior war. In August 1792, the king, queen and their son were imprisoned for believing that the king betrayed them and the first Republic took place. In September, the Legislative Assembly created a new legislature, the National Convention, which was elected by universal manhood suffrage. But because of fraction within the Convention, a more radical legislature took charge and the Revolution entered a year period called the Reign of Terror in 1793. People who were supposed to be against the revolution were guillotined for their beliefs. Included among them were the king and queen. Finally, in 1799, a military leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, took control of France and created a dictatorship (Fremont-Barnes, 2007). Although the Revolution started and ended with a monarch, it had a crucial impact on Europe and world history and laid to the foundation of a modern state governed by the people, “We may say of it that it created man a second time, in giving him a second soul, his rights. The nineteenth century inherits and profits by its work...” (Hugo, p.864). The French Revolution demonstrates the hardships of achieving democracy. Promising equality and freedom or having a representative government is not enough. For democracy to work, a society must have rule of law, protections for both civil rights and civil liberties, tolerance of opposition, and acceptance of majority decisions by the minority.

6. The 19th century and the Extension of Suffrage:

So what we have learnt from the 17th and 18th century’s thoughts is that democracy must encompass representation, though with restriction, popular sovereignty, rule of law, liberty and equality along with an accountable government.

6.1. The Ideological Mood of the 19th century:

In the light of the Enlightenment democratic advancements, some key concepts of modern democracy weren’t yet fully shaped. In fact, for much of the nineteenth century democracy would be “almost unanimously” linked to Jacobinism blamed (somewhat unfairly) for the revolutionary wars, and portrayed as a great menace to stability and peace (Hobson, 2015, p108). Voices disfavoured democracy turned louder due mainly to the Terror period witnessed by the French. Those negative analyses of democracy were not exclusive in Europe that survived the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars; they reached even the fledgling American republic. Consequently a dominant view surfaced the debate explaining that democracy was possible only in a small land among a small number of citizens “applying the ancient form of democracy to the modern world had been the chaos, violence and tumult of the revolution” (Hobson, p.109). The answer to this concern was advanced by John Stuart Mill (Hoch-Dayican, 2010). According to Mill, the rise of the nation-state needed the setup of a system of representation in which those defined as citizens with economic, legal, and social rights would elect representatives: “since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate in any but

minor portions of the public business”, in other words, the model of a perfect government must be representative (as cited in Hoch-Dayican, p25). In fact, the grouping of the principle of representation with the classical democratic principle of liberty gave birth to a new type of democracy referred to as “liberal democracy”, which can also be defined as representative democracy in view of its institutional structures. Without a doubt, the combination of the democratic principle with the representative principle ascertained the view that a democracy was only possible in small states was “completely abandoned” (Dahl, 1989 as cited in Hoch-Dayican, p, 25).

6.2. The Extension of Suffrage:

Moving away from the ideological aspects of the development of democracy in the 19th century, we find tangible actions that paved the path for today’s democracy, which is suffrage. It is in this period that movements for universal suffrage were initiated. In the early nineteenth century, the United States extended suffrage to all white males through removing property requirements reaching unprecedented amount of voting population. Therefore, even though this level of suffrage barely looks democratic today, the United States is often regarded the world's first true democracy.

In Europe, it was another story. Throughout the 19th century, most European states started to undertake the side effects of the Industrial Revolution, concentration of populations in the cities, unemployment, low wages, urban poverty, the bankruptcy of the artisans and handicraftsmen and all of this led to numerous political movements.

Liberal agitation began to revive in Britain, France, and the Low Countries by the mid-1820s. Liberals wanted stronger parliaments and wider protection of individual rights. They also sought a vote for the propertied classes. They wanted commercial legislation that would favour business growth, which in Britain meant attacking Corn Law tariffs that protected landlord interests and kept food prices (and so wages) artificially high. Belgian liberals also had a nationalist grievance, for the Treaty of Vienna had placed their country under Dutch rule. (Campbell, 2011, pp.25-26)

Following the American model, democracy gradually gained ground across Europe. In Britain, parliament continued to gain power at the expense of the monarch, and suffrage was finally extended in a smooth way. In contrast, throughout Continental Europe, democratization was a much more violent process, including many rebellions; notably, the year 1848 that witnessed a wave of revolutionary struggles that absorbed most European nations except for a few, including Russia, Spain, and Britain and came to be known as the “springtime of the peoples” (Campbell, p.127). Most of the people who became revolutionaries in that year demanded a more inclusive and representative government, with some hoping to achieve this through banishing foreign rulers.

In Britain, political reforms came very gradually. Nevertheless, they were escalated after 1848, on account of the peril of revolution, although the 1848 revolution did not sweep across Britain. By 1815, only the upper classes were represented in the parliament, and only 5 per cent of the adult male population were eligible to vote (Tilly, 2004). Then reforms ushered in as follow:

1-Reform Bill of 1832: liberal elements within the British government passed the bill that lowered property qualifications, enabling most upper-middle class males to vote; also abolished "rotten boroughs:" the practice of having one person running for election to parliament from several electoral districts.

2-The Chartist Movement: Unpleased with the Reform Bill of 1832, in 1838 working class leaders drew up the People's Charter calling for universal male suffrage, election by secret ballot, and removal of property qualifications for office. These people were called Chartists and their greatest demonstration came in 1848, which coincided with the continental revolutions of 1848, but the Chartist movement never grew politically powerful.

3-Reform Bill of 1867: Doubled the electorate, gave vote to the lower middle class for the first time, restricted working hours, established sanitary codes, created housing standards and aided labour unions.

4-1884 Reform Bill: gave two thirds of adult males the vote; implemented civil service examination and also opened army service to talent (ibid, pp.3-5)

Compared with Britain, France endured more dramatic changes, mainly because it was the cradle of the French Revolution and people just had a deeper memory of it, and the promises of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" that they were taught to be within their reach. In 1824, Louis XVIII was succeeded by Charles X, who wanted to re-establish conservatism by dissolving the lower house of the parliament, Chamber of Deputies, which headed to a revolution in 1830 led by liberals and workers. The new king, Louis-Philippe wanted to seem close to the people and doubled the electorate "producing a new and slightly more liberal monarchy, an expanded middle-class voting system, and some transient protections for freedom of the press" (Campbell, p.26). In the 1848, aggrieved that the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Philippe represented largely the wealthy, and not the working class, the workers rioted against the government troops and a new revolution erupted. It ended by electing Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, president of the Second French Republic who after four years established the Second French Empire. In spite of the restoration of the empire, Napoleon III started universal male suffrage, though it was written into the Constitution of 1793, this only became effective on 2nd March 1848, in the heat of the February revolution, promoted industrialization and economic growth. The Franco-Prussian war terminated Napoleon III's Second Empire. From then on, France has stayed a republic till today (Ibid).

Conclusion:

By the end of the 19th century, the major features of modern democracy including individual freedom; equality before the law; representation, popular sovereignty and suffrage had been asserted. Such features have been reflected by great philosophers like Hobbes and Locke and have been proclaimed in great historic documents, such the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. Throughout the twentieth century, the remaining obstacles to suffrage including discrimination based on gender and ethnicity were finally removed in Western nations and aspiring for democracy has become a mutual issue for nations and leaders all over the world.

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