

The positive effects of the french revolution

[History](#), [French Revolution](#)



Freedom of speech and press, equality before the law, right to property and security, and the separation of Church and State. All of these things we take for granted as our fundamental rights but until the French Revolution, these concepts were rare in most nations. The Revolution helped spread ideas of democracy through inspiring fear in the hearts of monarchs running absolutist governments as well as through the birthing of documents like the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the Napoleonic Code. These texts influenced the constitutions of many other countries as well as giving more rights and power to the middle class, which in turn took power away from the aristocracy. The events and aftermath of the French Revolution caused other countries to become more liberal and eventually become democratic countries. One way the Revolution influenced democracy is by helping the middle class to emerge and gain more power. By giving all free men rights to property and to an equal chance at an occupation, Napoleon destroyed the aristocratic system.

A man could no longer make a living just from being descended from royal blood. He had to work just as hard as the next man to secure his position in life. By creating this almost capitalist economy, the French had set the bar for the other countries for economy as well as for standard of living. Eventually the rest of Europe would have to catch up with France but they could not keep the same social structure and aristocratic system while having a mercantilist economy. This also encouraged countries to abandon their social structure and give their people more rights.

By conquering many of the surrounding European nations, Napoleon helped spread his democratic ideas to other countries. One of his best tools for doing this was the Napoleonic Code, a French civil code written by a commission of jurists in 1804. France had never had a set of laws, just community rules, so writing these laws was a big step towards democracy. The Code was not just instituted in France, but every European nation Napoleon conquered. Countries like Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal and Belgium all cite the Napoleonic Code as the basis for their laws.

It stated that government jobs were to be given to the most qualified person and forbade any privileges to be given based on birth. These points took away the basis of feudalism in many of the largest European nations and created equality, without which a democracy can't survive. The code also gives freedom of religion, which was rare in Europe. Up until the Revolution, the church had always had a large part in ruling countries but this rule put more power in the hands of the people and took away power from the clergy.

France was successful in spreading democracy largely because they led by example. They gave other countries the idea that they could get what they wanted. When they were unsatisfied with their king they revolted and got who they wanted on the throne to rule instead, demonstrating one of the major principles of democracy, the right to choose their leader. When they were starving, they marched on Versailles and threatened the king and got bread delivered to them. Many countries were inspired by the success of the French Revolution and led their own revolts.

When the oppressed slaves in Haiti and Santo Domingue learned of the conditions in France they led their own revolt and slaughtered their masters and families. This revolution led to the abolition of slavery in Haiti, as well as it becoming an independant republic in 1804. Similarly, after Napoleon invaded Spain in 1807, some Spanish colonies took advantage of the opportunity and revolted while Spain was distracted. Many people believed that the revolution did not lead to democracy, but only produced violence and murder.

While it is true that many people were killed during the Revolution, especially the Reign of Terror, it was necessary for the revolution to succeed. Although possibly over-doing it, Robespierre had the interests of the people at heart and was dedicated to removing any and all opposition to his cause. With many anti-revolutionaries around to criticize and hinder the revolution, it might not have been successful and never have planted the seed of democracy in the hearts of Frenchmen.

Edmund Burke, a member of British parliament, wrote just months after the fall of Bastille that he thinks it is better for change to happen over time than for there to be a dramatic social upheaval. The problem with that is that the countries in Europe couldn't just wait around for a king to come down the line that wasn't greedy and corrupt and wanted to give their people rights and freedoms. Louis XVI had piloted France to a 12, 000, 000 livre debt, much of it spent on personal expenses and it was only getting worse when the revolutionaries interfered.

The bloodshed and violence was a wakeup call to the rest of Europe that the oppressed people would do whatever it took to gain their rights and freedoms. If they hadn't fought back, feudalism might have been the type of government for another few centuries. In *Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine, he argues that each government is not hereditary and each generation should have the right to choose their government. Therefore, the French had the right to depose Louis XVI and establish a republic. Although having some flaws, the French Revolution was highly successful in influencing the growth of democracy.

It was the cause of the creation of multiple documents stating that all men are equal, one of the basic principals of democracy. Those documents also gave men freedom of religion, made obtaining a position by birthright illegal and prevented secret laws from being published. These laws were not only in effect in France but in every part of Napoleon's empire. The revolution inspired other countries to revolt with Haiti becoming the first black republic because of it. People were killed during the revolution but sacrifices had to be made in exchange for success, and you can't argue with success.