

Democracy rights
were extended but
little reforms



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Democracy in modern world is a process that has evolved over long period of time under different circumstances.

For instance, political and democratic changes in Great Britain started way back in 18th century and the road to political democracy was marked in 1918. This was as a result of Representation of the People Act which increased voting eligibility percentage from approximately 8.4 to 21.4 million voters. These changes happened during the term of sir Robert Walpole who was the England's Prime Minister during that time.

In the early years, the Act of Union resulted into merging of Scotland and England. Consequently, the Prime Minister came up with idea of creating a council of ministers or cabinet. Similarly, France was in the same political and democratic state like Britain. The rulings were made by both monarchs in France and Britain.

However, French rulers practiced and believed in divine right of kings while British highly upheld parliamentary democracy. In 18th century, the French revolution started and by 1789, National Assembly came up with a document referred to as the Declaration of Rights of Human and Citizens. On the other hand, the United States of America believed and practiced different political beliefs and structures (Almond & Verba, 1963).

Another distinctive feature that marked Britain's rise to political democracy was the Great Britain's revolution. Moreover, in Britain, there were no displaced civil groups like was the case in German. Furthermore, the reforms that took place in France happened in a more liberal context and in presence of religious beliefs. However in Britain, the voting rights were extended but

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little reforms were initiated after 1918. In all European nations, the old forms of governments were abandoned. In Great Britain, the occurrence of revolutionary war made the latter to be defeated but a new republic was also created as a result of the revolution.

In 1777 though, the Continental Congress drafted the Articles of the Confederation which were to be responsible for provision of a legal framework to the new born republic. Moreover, it is during 19th century when greatest political and democratic events took place in Great Britain. These events were as a result of 1832 and 1867 Reform Acts. These Reform Acts gave the urban and the middle class citizens in Britain the right to vote thus resulting into increased electorate size. Consequently, Napoleonic code introduction and the rise and creation of Napoleon in most parts of Europe marked political and democratic events in the 19th century. For instance, the political and democratic conditions of both France and Britain were turbulent.

On the other hand, the United States of America was strongly faced with the challenge of slavery. This was caused by existing slavery competition between South and North on extending the same. Therefore, to put an end to slavery conflict, some pieces of legislation were put in place. These legislations included the Kansas Nebraska Act which was established in 1854 and Compromise Act of 1850. Additionally, in the United States of America, election of Abraham Lincoln as the president in 1860 marked a vital political occurrence in the United States of America history. This was due to the fact that the American war started one month later after the Northern and Southern union was disbanded.

According to Jefferys (2007), in early 1863, the president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, gave out emancipation proclamation. This was followed by a number of reconstructions which were made with the aim of improving southerner's living conditions. During the same period, various legislations were established. For example, the 15th and the 14th amendments and the Civic Rights Act of 1856 greatly favored Americans who were of African origin both politically and democratically since they were given the right to vote (Norris, 1999). On the other hand, the British government had been comprised of constitutional monarchy as from 1600s. The country was either ruled by a king or queen and members of parliament were elected. Nonetheless, even though parliament was the most powerful institution, only a class of wealthy men had the right to vote.

However, the democratic and political scenario changed from 1832 as a result of Reform Act which was introduced after middle class citizens saw the need to fight for their democratic rights. The Reform Act made industrial cities to be issued with parliamentary seats in addition to secret voting in parliament (Jefferys, 2007). However, according to Almond and Verba (1963), by 1890, adult males in United States of America and Britain had voting rights while women were not allowed to take part in any voting exercise. Therefore, in early 1880, women in Britain and United States of America organized campaigns with the aim of fighting for their voting rights. As early as 1903, an organization known as Women Social and Political Union was formed to fight for women's voting rights in Great Britain. They held parades, rallies and interfered with government speeches so that they could secure their voting rights. But it was only after the occurrence of World War 1 that

women in United States and Great Britain attained the right to vote in parliamentary elections. On the other hand, in 1700s, France was the greatest nation in European world.

Nevertheless, it was during the French revolution that philosophers championed for freedom of speech in addition to condemning oppressive nature of the church and aristocracy form of governance which was hereditary in nature. Unlike Britain and United States, the rise of France's democracy was unsteady and chaotic. For instance, when France was defeated by Prussians in 1870, the Napoleon III was forced to go to exile. On the other hand, the National Assembly held up a meeting in order to form new government. During the same period, a radical group was formed and took over Paris.

Thus, civil war broke out between the radicals and French troops and finally the latter defeated the radicals and a new government was formed. The formed government was known as the third republic but it only lasted for 60 years marked by bloody wars among warring political parties (Garrard, 2002). To recap it all, it is imperative to note that European revolutions marked the rise of democracy and political events in entire Europe. For the greater part of 18th and 19th centuries, revolutions that took place in Britain, France, United States and German were a watershed in the history of democracy. Needless to say, the various pieces of legislations that were enacted in each of these states played crucial role in injecting democratic and political reforms in these states in addition to proactive movements by citizens that were quite often on the forefront to fight for equity in governance.

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