Chapter 10: Liberalism and Reform in the Transformative Century

A. The Great Transformation

Prior to 1800, life for the typical person in Europe had not materially changed for many centuries. Farming was the main occupation, as it had been for millennia. Social mobility was not impossible, but it was difficult because of legal, cultural, and economic barriers. Opportunities were largely determined by laws and customs that explicitly linked political and economic positions to families. Rule of law existed in most of northern Europe and in Japan, but somewhat different laws and rights existed for royals, nobles, peasants, serfs, and slaves, and also for men and women. A state-supported monopoly church provided religious services and a more or less uniform world view. Water, wind, and muscle were the dominant motive forces of economic production as they had been for centuries.

Significant changes in ideas about the world occurred in the centuries before 1800, as noted in chapter 9, and these had effects on the lives of an important subset of the relatively wealthy who engaged in international affairs, travel, and education. Such changes are part of the case for arguing that the transition in the West actually began well before the nineteenth century (North and Thomas 1973). New knowledge and ideas about the world, together with improvements in European ships produced new opportunities for exploration and trade, which produced new trading networks, as well as advances in philosophy, science, and art. Technological shifts on land were also evident during the late eighteenth century, as better techniques for using water and wind power increased the scale of efficient cloth and lumber mills. Better seeds and plows together with new techniques of crop rotation and plowing were also making existing agricultural land more productive. New highways and canals were being constructed to form somewhat more integrated regional markets.

These "new" technologies of trade, production, and organization, however, were not fundamentally different from those of past centuries. Most of the new technologies were somewhat bigger and better versions of the ones that they replaced, and many of the "new" laws simply codified or restored long-standing informal practices. Animal propulsion along canals and roads remained the principal "engines" of domestic trade and integration. Sails remained the principal "engines" of international trade. Buildings and bridges were constructed of bricks, stone, and wood, as they had been since Roman times. Nor were the organizations that carried out these tasks very different from those in past centuries. They remained largely based on family finance, management,

and relationships—albeit augmented with non–family members, who occasionally held positions of significance. Improved land and transport continued to be the limiting factors of economic production during times of population expansion.

The king and council template had long been in use in Europe, and its late medieval formulation with a dominant king and a relatively weak parliament with veto power over taxes had been the norm for several hundred years. The process through which kings and members of parliament were "selected" was largely based on, and supported by, inheritance and family networks. Although there had been earlier periods in which the office of king had been an elective office, most European kings in 1800 had inherited their positions. Exceptions occurred, but for the most part these were cases in which the previous king had died without (legitimate) children. Inheritance was also the basis for "selecting" the men that held seats in the noble chambers of parliaments (also usually first-born sons). Members of the other chambers of parliament were also often members of distinguished families, who were often related to noble families in fairly direct ways.[81]

The changes in economic and political life that occurred in the nineteenth century were far larger and more fundamental than those that had occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate the magnitude of the changes that took place in northern Europe, the United States, and Japan during the nineteenth century. It was a truly transformative century. This chapter and the next provide overviews of public policy and constitutional reforms adopted over the course of what many refer to as modernization. More detailed historical accounts of constitutional reforms are provided in the country case studies of chapters 12–18.

Technological and Ideological Trends and Innovations in the Nineteenth Century

In some cases, the nineteenth-century simply accelerated and amplified changes that had been taking place in past centuries. For example, the money-based economy expanded as "hiring oneself out for wages" became an increasingly common method of securing personal necessities. Formerly

[81] It is clear that this method of solving the succession problem advanced the interests of elite families. It also allowed wealth and power to shift within a single dynasty, lawfully and peacefully. It also minimized unproductive conflict as discussed in chapter 3. During times at which no heir to the throne existed, competition for succession often led to open warfare among elite families and their armies. The principle of "first-born male" succession reduced this unproductive conflict over high offices at the same time that it cemented family wealth and authority.

novel methods of farming and organizing village life became the norm, rather than the exception. Store-bought cloth and clothing gradually replaced homespun and homemade. Urban centers that had been growing slowly for centuries began expanding at an accelerating pace. Ancient cities such as Paris, London, Berlin, and Amsterdam grew larger than they had ever been in the past, as their medieval cores were surrounded by a rapidly expanding ring of nineteenth-century roads, canals, and buildings. Seaports expanded and long-standing highway systems were upgraded. In other cases, completely new methods of production, new occupations, new lifestyles, and new cities emerged from a long series of major and minor innovations.

A series of new technologies, each with significant economies of scale, was introduced during the nineteenth century. New relatively large organizations were founded to take advantage of the new technologies. Specialization among and within firms increased. Completely new occupations emerged, and literacy became an important factor in upward mobility for the middle class. New steam production and rail enterprises emerged. New occupations such as metallurgist, machinist, engineer, steam fitter, and steel driver also emerged.

Formerly expensive and exotic materials such as steel and aluminum became increasingly common building materials for machines, factories, urban buildings, bridges, and warships, as the cost of producing those materials fell. Steel became a major product, rather than an exotic specialty metal after the Bessemer process was worked out in 1858. Similarly, aluminum became a significant material for manufacturing in the late nineteenth century, after Hall worked out a process for smelting aluminum in 1886. The use of petroleum for lighting and heating took off in the late 1850s after Gesner developed a method for producing kerosene in 1846. Mining expanded as new uses for old minerals were discovered and refined. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, other new power sources became available as practical motors using kerosene, gasoline, and electricity were developed. Elevators, bicycles, automobiles, trucks and airplanes emerged as common modes for local transport in the early twentieth century.

Mechanical forms of propulsion supplemented and then largely replaced animal-based transport and manufacturing. Transport became faster, more reliable, and more comfortable within and between countries. The great mechanized systems of cloth and lumber mills were attached to steam engines, rather than water wheels or wind mills, which freed them to move away from favorable places along streams and rivers. Instantaneous communication over long distances became commonplace within and between cities, as telegraphs and telephones were invented and their

networks expanded. Very few steam engines had been in use in the late eighteenth century and no electric ones (Pomeranz 2000: ch. 2; Taylor 1951: ch. 5; Fulbrook 1990: ch. 5).

As rail and communication networks were developed, the points at which lines crossed became convenient places for transshipping and manufacturing. New towns and cities emerged as inland "port" cities. New commercial and industrial centers were also established at places where the new factories and mines were located. New cities emerged in the British midlands, the German Ruhr, and the American Midwest as transport networks improved and as industrialization and economic migration took place. The new forms of transport and new materials made new forms of buildings, bridges, and roads possible, although it took some time for architects and engineers to fully exploit the potential of the new materials and new engines. New scientific fields also emerged as chemistry, biology, geology, economics, political science, and sociology became subjects undertaken by specialists, rather than subfields of natural philosophy and physics. New organizations and new industries emerged to produce equipment for those enterprises and to undertake the large construction projects required for the new more capital-intensive production methods.

Employment in a wide range of supporting industries grew. Most of the new opportunities for employment were in cities. Wages tended to be greater in towns and cities than in the countryside, which induced more and more people to move to towns and cities. The quality of urban life also improved gradually as water systems, central heating, street lights, and electricity became commonplace. Commerce expanded to unprecedented levels. Communication costs fell as printing presses improved and as telegraphs and telephones were invented and widely adopted. Ancient town walls were often demolished and their materials recycled to build new dwellings, shops, and factories as the populations of old towns and cities increased. By the end of the nineteenth century, many of the "ordinary" technologies and materials of transport, manufacturing, and communication were very different from those that had been the norm for many centuries or millennia.

Farming remained an important occupation, but in many cases farming itself had become a "new" industry. Western farmers served larger and more distant markets than in the past, using more capital-intense methods of planting, harvesting, and storage. Refrigerated railcars were introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century, which greatly extended the range of many agricultural markets. The rural populations of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Great Britain fell from between 75 and 90 percent of the population in 1850 to between 50 and 60 percent in 1900, at the same time that population approximately doubled in size (Cook and Paxton 1978: ch. 10).

B. Liberal Reforms as Prerequisites for Industrialization

This short overview suggests that technological innovations were central to the transformation of life in the nineteenth century. However, the uneven adoption of the new technologies within Europe and around the world suggests that more than new ideas were important. The advantages of new technologies were partly determined by legal and political setting in which they were to be applied. Exploiting new economies of scale required access to relatively large markets. Urbanization required new city boundaries and a somewhat broader array of public services to be provided. Many of the laws governing the use of real estate, internal monopolies, tariffs, and labor laws were controlled by national, rather than regional governments. A broad range of reforms to medieval regulations and laws had to be adopted in order for the new modes of production to be profitable.

Even in England, often regarded to be the most open of the eighteenth century economies, Adam Smith noted that the rules of incorporated towns and trade associations created for the "better government of trade" had restricted competition to the point where:

> in many large incorporated towns no tolerable workmen are to be found, even in some of the most necessary trades. **If you would have your work tolerably executed, it must be done in the suburbs,** where the workmen have no exclusive privilege, have nothing but their character to depend upon, and you must then smuggle it into town as well as you can." (*Wealth of Nations*, p. 151).

.The profits associated with new economies of scale created new political support for reducing local restrictions, improved transportation networks, the elimination of tariffs, and local government reform. Many persons inside and outside government in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also supported reform of political institutions in order to advance normative interests in somewhat more open societies. Other less idealistic persons believed that desired economic policy reforms would be easier to adopt if the allocation and method of choosing members of parliament were changed.

Open support for reform of the national government was often illegal during this period, but as political censorship was reduced, advocates for such reforms organized politically active groups to make the case for economic and political reform inside and outside government. Many of the reforms adopted were liberal in the sense used in this volume. There were a wide range of reforms that promoted civic equality, as for example, political and economic opportunities became less family and wealth dependent.

In what became the West, coalitions of pragmatists and liberal idealists were often sufficient to induce reforms of long-standing political procedures and economic regulations. The first reforms often increased support for further reforms by changing the rewards of economic and political opportunities. This boot-strapping effect occurred partially because many liberal reforms did advance general interests, as often argued. The success of modest reforms weakened the case for institutional conservatism, which encouraged the copying of the new "political best practices" by other communities and countries. Economic reforms allowed new technologies to be applied, which also encouraged further efforts at innovation. Together with the extension of public education, the organizations founded to take advantage of these new technologies produced a new middle class that was largely composed of persons who had benefited from past economic and political liberalization. The new middle class tended to be more widely read, more widely traveled, and more often interested politics and liberal reforms than their parents had been.

Increasing support for reform was also evident within government, because the interests of members of parliament and kings were not entirely institutionally induced. For the idealists in government, useful policy reforms provided convincing evidence that progress and improvements were possible in many areas of life. For many pragmatists, it became increasingly obvious that technological advance and economic growth increased taxable resources and national military power. Many wealthy land owners invested in the new enterprises or were themselves formeteurs of new commercial enterprises. Many of the persons who became eligible to serve as government officials or to vote as reforms were adopted also tended to support somewhat more open political and economic systems, because openness had allowed many of them to rise to high office.

The long series of liberal reforms did not occur "spontaneously" or through great revolutionary wars, but through gradual, thoughtful, carefully crafted, intensively debated, formal changes in law that reflected changes in the interests of those with the authority to adopt reforms through legislation.

Laws governing what could be owned and inherited were changed in substantial ways. Land became an asset that could be more freely sold and more widely owned, at the same time that government positions became less tradable and inheritable. Entrance into businesses was made easier by reducing the scope of local monopoly and guild privileges. Economics, politics, and law, became less family based, less hierarchical, and more uniform. Slavery was eliminated. Formal aristocratic privileges gradually disappeared, while middle class and peasant "privileges" expanded. Religious and wealth requirements for high offices gradually disappeared, followed by racial and

sexual restrictions. Large enterprises were made easier to found and finance, as standing procedures for incorporation (often with limited liability) replaced procedures that effectively required separate acts of national legislation.

Major reforms of national governance also occurred. Parliaments gradually became the most powerful branch of government as policymaking authority shifted from kings to their parliaments. Parliaments also became less based on family and more based on electoral competition. The ancient noble chambers of most parliaments were gradually eliminated (or weakened) and replaced with more representative chambers, albeit often ones that included many members from noble families. The breadth of the electorate used to select members of parliament gradually increased to unprecedented levels.

By century's end, a new form of government had emerged that was largely supported by a new consensus about the core features of a good society. That consensus is largely taken for granted in Western politics today, but it took more than a century to emerge and its proponents were not assured of success. In parts of the world where politics and public policies were not liberalized, the new technologies were much less widely employed, and where employed they tended to be used less extensively, as in China and the Ottoman Empire.

In most cases, this does not seem to have been a consequence of natural resources, wealth, or location, but rather of long-standing legal barriers and customs that reduced opportunities to profitably use the new technologies. In regions of the world that did not "modernize," those favoring continuation of internal trade barriers won the policy debates within government, rather than the liberals.

Liberal Theories and the Direction of Reform in the Nineteenth Century

Political liberalism was grounded in new normative theories that stressed the implicit contract basis of the state, a government's duty to ordinary citizens, and the value of written constitutional documents and representative institutions as methods for encouraging governments to advance broadly shared interests. Economic liberalism was grounded in new economic models of economic development that supported open competitive markets over tightly regulated and monopolistic markets, for largely similar reasons. The origins of these two important strands of liberalism often overlapped and reinforced each other, as noted in chapter 9.

The arguments used by proponents of liberal reform in the nineteenth century also overlapped to a considerable extent. Consider, for example, a few passages from Adam Smith's widely read and

widely translated book, *Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith's book was often cited by economic liberals in the nineteenth century. Many of his observations and arguments also supported liberal political constitutional reforms. He argued, for example, that:

> [Regarding liberties in the English colonies:] In every thing, except their foreign trade, **the liberty of the English colonists** to manage their own affairs **... is secured in the same manner, by an assembly of the representatives of the people, who claim the sole right of imposing taxes for the support of the colony government.** The authority of this assembly over-awes the executive power [of their governors], and neither the meanest nor the most obnoxious colonist, as long as he obeys the law, has anything to fear from the resentment, either of the governor or of any other civil or military officer in the province. ... the executive power either has not the means to corrupt them, ... [and, consequently, their representative assembles] are perhaps in general more influenced by the inclinations of their constituents. (Adam Smith 1776, *the Wealth of Nations*, Bk. IV ch. 7.73)
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> Regulated companies resemble, in every respect, **the corporations of trades so common in the cities and towns of all the different countries of Europe, and are ... enlarged monopolies** of the same kind. As **no inhabitant of a town can exercise an incorporated trade without first obtaining his freedom in the corporation, so in most cases no subject of the state can lawfully carry on any branch of foreign trade,** for which a regulated company is established, without first becoming a member of that company. **The monopoly is more or less strict according as the terms of admission are more or less difficult**; and according as the directors of the company have more or less authority, or have it more or less in their power to manage in such a manner as to confine the greater part of the trade to themselves and their particular friends. (Adam Smith 1776, *the Wealth of Nations*, Bk. V ch. 1.96)
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> The legislature, **were it possible that its deliberations could be always directed**, not by the clamorous importunity of partial interests, but **by an extensive view of the general good**, ought upon this very account, perhaps, to be particularly **careful neither to establish any new monopolies of this kind, nor to extend further those which are already established**. Every such regulation introduces some degree of real disorder into the constitution of the state, which it will be difficult afterwards to cure without occasioning another disorder. (Adam Smith 1776, *the Wealth of Nations*, Bk. IV ch. 2.44)

It is clear that Smith's analysis is grounded in the normative theories that had emerged in the previous century or two. These paragraphs, among many others, support the advancement of general interests through public policies and constitutional design, rather than the traditional interests of king, national glory, or state religion. These paragraphs also demonstrate that Smith's liberalism tended to favor more open and representative political systems as well as more open competitive economic markets. Similar arguments and policy positions were very evident throughout the nineteenth century, partly because of Smith and other liberal scholars of that period, but also

because experience with modest liberal reforms showed that they could, in fact, advance broad common interests.

A useful window into the argument and policy agenda of politically active liberals in the early nineteenth century is provided by John Stuart Mill in his description of his father's hopes for political reform:

> In politics, [he had] an almost **unbounded confidence in the efficacy of two things: representative government, and complete freedom of discussion**. So complete was my father's reliance on the influence of reason over the minds of mankind, whenever it is allowed to reach them, that he felt as if **all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read**, **if all sorts of opinions were allowed** to be addressed to them by word and in writing, and **if by means of the suffrage** they could nominate a legislature to give effect to the opinions they adopted. He thought that **when the legislature no longer represented a class interest, it would aim at the general interest**, honestly and with adequate wisdom; since **the people would be sufficiently under the guidance of educated intelligence, to make in general a good choice of persons to represent them**, and having done so, to leave to those whom they had chosen a liberal discretion (J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 1873, Ch. 4).

The arguments of such liberal theorists could often be used to build support for reforms favored by pragmatists, at least at the margin, because they made the case that liberal reforms advanced broad interests, not simply those of would-be industrialists or privileged families.

Support is easier to build for reforms that will make "most of you" better off than for ones that simply make "me" better off.

Trends in Liberalism and Reforms in the Nineteenth Century

Trends in economic and political reforms throughout the West were remarkably consistent with liberal political and economic theories during the nineteenth century. This was not because nineteenth century Europe was populated by liberals or because liberals favored a specific program of reforms, but because there were a sufficient number of liberals in government who agreed about the *proper direction* of reform to influence policy reform. Liberals generally favored reforms that increased civic equality by reducing hereditary privileges and deprivations in economic life, in the law, and in politics. Nonetheless, they disagreed about how far reforms should go in that direction. Policy debates among liberals, consequently, were nearly as common and intense as arguments between liberals and conservatives, although liberals nearly always voted for modest expansions of civil liberties and modest reduction ins special privileges when they were proposed.

It also bears noting that there was a trend in the mainstream liberal movement during the nineteenth century. Only a few radical liberals, for example, explicitly called for the end of the

medieval order in 1800. Instead, moderate liberals favored modest reforms that opened political and economic life to somewhat more families and to somewhat more individual men and women. They also favored a gradual end to slavery, the expansion of public education, and reduction in censorship. The mainstream liberal political agenda of 1830-80 favored somewhat more detailed written constitutions with a somewhat broader electorate that reached "down" to what today would be called the upper middle class. They also favored reduced tariffs, increased parliamentary control over cabinets ministers, and infrastructure expansion.[82] Only "radical" liberals such as John Stuart Mill, favored (nearly) universal man and woman's suffrage or parliamentary dominance during the mid century. At the end of the century, the "moderates" largely accepted these formally radical positions.

Liberal ideas about proper voter qualifications gradually became less grounded in property and tax payments during the century. Mainstream liberals began to favor extending suffrage to middle class professionals, and subsequently to the working class, and finally to nearly all adult men in the early twentieth century, partly because public education had expanded and illiteracy reduced. Shortly before (or after) the World War I, support for women's suffrage also became mainstream for liberal parties, as the logic of qualified voters was extended to women. In this respect, it could be said that Mill's radical positions had gradually become mainstream ones (see Chapter 11).[83]

Nonetheless, it is likely that the breadth of liberal opinion about specific reforms allowed liberalism to have a larger affect on day-to-day policy decisions during the nineteenth century, than liberalism would have had were the entire movement composed of "doctrinaire" or "radical" liberals. Mainstream liberals were willing and able to engage in bargaining with conservatives over public policies and constitutional reforms throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, "conservative" legislation could often be adopted in parliaments by attracting the support of a few moderate liberals in exchange for a few minor liberal reforms. Such forms of compromise and cooperation would not

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[82] Cabinet officials were often essentially above the law during the early nineteenth century, because they were servants of the king or Queen rather than "ordinary" persons. They were, thus, subject to royal mandates and administrative procedures. Liberals and others in parliament during the mid-nineteenth century often wanted cabinet ministers to be subject to criminal law and to parliamentary sanctions, rather than protected by royal privilege.

[83] This liberal-conservative classification scheme is not arbitrary, but reflects the labels that many reformers used for themselves, as well as party labels and platforms that were common in the second half of the nineteenth century. Conservatives opposed reform of the medieval order in the early nineteenth century. They too shifted ground during the late nineteenth century as developed below.

have been possible if liberalism had been a truly revolutionary movement with inflexible radical goals.

A Long Series of "Minor" Liberal Reforms

The remainder of this chapter provides a more detailed overview of significant reforms supported by liberals during the nineteenth century, many of which proved to be so durable that they are taken for granted more than a century after they were adopted. The main purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that liberalism affected many areas of public policy and that liberal reforms tended to be gradual, and broadly sustained during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Examples of reforms include reductions in censorship penalties, increases in support for public education, reductions in minor tariffs, subtle shifts in corporate and tort laws, and slight changes in electoral laws. Other reforms were more radical, as with the elimination of slavery and major tariffs, significant changes in property and suffrage law, and formal constitutional amendments. However, even major reforms normally revised, rather than replaced, long-standing policies, laws, and procedures for adopting public policies. Many other examples could have been discussed, but the ones included are sufficient to show that broad liberal trends in policy reforms were evident during the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries throughout most of what came to be called "the West."

It is liberal constitutional reforms that are of greatest interest for the purposes of this book, but it is important to understand that liberalism was not exclusively a constitutional movement, although it had significant effects on the procedures of governance. The other reforms show that liberals were politically active and became increasingly influential during the course of the nineteenth century. Liberal political and economic systems emerged from a long series of reforms, rather than from one or two great quantum leaps.

C. The End of Medieval Property Rights: Enclosure and Free Trade

Medieval Ownership and Strip Farms

Prior to 1750, most land in Europe was owned, but "ownership" involved quite different bundles of rights than it did in 1850. Noble families owned their estates in the sense that they managed them without external interventions, but they could not sell them without the king's permission. Within most estates, peasant farmers similarly "owned" their land in the sense that they farmed and controlled access to particular fields. Their fields, like those of their lords, were

normally passed on to their children. These owners could use the field largely as they saw fit, block others from using them, but could not easily sell or transfer their claim to the fields that they controlled.

The relationship between church-controlled lands, farmers, and peasants was similar to that of lords, farmers, and peasants. Families farming church fields had durable if informal property claims, and inheritance was an important source of their wealth and opportunity. Freeholders also existed, although they normally controlled less land than the royal family, nobles, and churches. Nonetheless, such freeholders were a large fraction of the non-noble elite and the middle class. Freeholder ownership was less encumbered and, so, more closely resembled today's property arrangements. These land holdings, nonetheless, were also not often sold to non-family members, because land was the most reliable store of wealth and income in the medieval period.

Many posts within local and national governments were owned in a similar manner. Such posts were inheritable and essentially family property. Many persons held many titles as a consequence of marriage and inheritance. In some cases, family titles and positions could be sold, but only the least important ones. Top posts in state churches could not be routinely passed onto children, but they were often passed on to other family members. In the medieval and late medieval periods, major land, titles, and positions were largely birthrights, rather than liquid assets. Servants and farmhands were often employed to help with household chores and field work, but they were largely paid in kind (room and board) rather than cash for their services.

The rural landscape also physically differed from that which we are familiar with today. Medieval farmland was normally divided into hundreds of narrow strips of land, rather than into large more or less rectangular farm fields that typify the contemporary countryside. Peasant land holdings consisted of particular strips of land that were interspersed among the similar strips of fellow farmers. Strip farmers often lived together in farm villages and would walk out to their individual strips together. These narrow strip fields could not be fenced off at a reasonable cost because of their long perimeters, and a good deal of private farmland consequently consisted of "unenclosed" open fields. Much of the farmland that was held by independent farmers was also in the form of strip farms.[84]

[84] Macfarlane (1978: 83-91) provides evidence that land titles were in principle transferable in England and much of Europe in the period before enclosure, but he acknowledges that land titles were for the most part inherited under rules of primogeniture. Land was rarely, for example, included in wills and there were restrictions on transfers of land within manors. The so-called customary estates are those of interest for enclosure movements.

In addition to strip farms, other "wasteland" was often held in common and could be used by all persons living on the manor, farm, or village, including farmhands and servants without fields of their own. Access to communal pastures and access to communal woodland and gardens was normally tied to ownership of particular pieces of land and to employment on farms within the community. Such access rationing systems helped avoid the "tragedy of the commons" by limiting use of communal property.

Strip farmers on manors had obligations to the "owner" of the manor (often a minor noble, who occupied the manor's grand house). Manorial obligations could be regarded either as a form of property tax or rent, although manorial obligations were normally in kind, rather than cash. Farming decisions were often made collectively at village meetings of various kinds, both on manor estates and among independent (but interwoven) strip farmers in the countryside.

The strip-field, three-class (peasant, farmer, and aristocrat), farming system had existed for centuries in much of Europe. The strip-field system of property rights was neither communal property nor private property according to contemporary definitions (Demsetz 1967), but addressed both commons and long-term resource management problems by creating residual claimant-owners.[85] This long-standing system of land management and usufruct underwent major reforms in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe in what can be considered the first of the major liberal economic reforms.

Enclosure as Liberal Civil Law Reform

Proponents of "enclosure" called for the consolidation of strip farms into contiguous fields to be independently owned by their "freeholders." The advocates of enclosure in most cases were economic and political entrepreneurs who combined narrow economic interests with ideological ones. Enclosure entrepreneurs were paid to devise acceptable enclosure plans and to obtain permission to change the property systems, normally one village or manor at a time (Allen 1982; Blum 1981). They argued that land output could be increased by rationalizing the fields and that enclosure would increase the liberty of landholders by eliminating manorial duties.

[85] Similar systems remain evident today in several non-industrialized countries, where property claims are still often based on informal traditions and historic use, and many farm fields are strips of land, rather than large contiguous rectangular fields. See, for example, Benneh (1973) or Ostrom (1991, 2005). See North Wallis and Weingast (2009: 77-87, 107-9) for a discussion of medieval land practices, title reform, and concentration of ownership in England.

The first enclosures required specific legislation be adopted by national parliaments, this cumbersome process of reform was later revised to facilitate enclosure.

Enclosure plans had four direct effects. First, the plans "rationalized" the medieval farming system by collecting the strip fields and communal lands into a few more or less rectangular fields that could be somewhat more efficiently farmed with the new plows and field rotation. This geometry also made fencing and hedge rows more practical, which indirectly provided the English name for this property reform movement. (The perimeters of the new squarer fields were much shorter than the original strip fields.) Second, the new fields were to be managed independently by individual farmers, rather than through collective village decisions of one kind or another. This often caused medieval villages to disintegrate as farmers moved out of villages to their fields and barns.[86] Third, the land was generally freed from familial restrictions on transfers of property, which allowed property to be shifted more easily among family members and from family to family, increasing the liquidity of this form of wealth. Fourth, most jointly-used communal property (often wastelands, but also common wood lots, gardens, and pasture lands) was divided up and assigned to individual farmers, although small communal plots often remained after most land was "enclosed."

All these changes tended to increase economic efficiency and independence by reducing transaction costs and allowing economies of scale to be realized. The new property rights made land holdings a more liquid asset, which allowed persons who were more effective at farming to expand their land holdings more easily and allowed less skilled farmers to more easily sell off their holdings and relocate to towns and cities. After enclosure (privatization), agricultural experiments could also be undertaken one at a time by individual farmers, without the consent of their village, which somewhat increased the rate at which better equipment and field rotations could be discovered. The new field system also reduced the cost of policing boundaries between neighbors by reducing the length and number of property boundaries. Increased agricultural efficiency, however, was evidently less than often claimed by proponents of enclosure (Clark 1998; Pomeranz 2000: ch. 2). Villages composed of farmers have strong incentives to maximize total farm output.

The new field system of farming tended to increase economic risks somewhat, because the new freeholders controlled a narrower distribution of soil types, sun exposure, and drainage. Enclosure also reduced the extent of informal village and family–based social insurance (Richardson 2005). Privatizing village holdings, especially the common "waste areas," also tended to reduced the implicit

[86] A few villages chose to aggregate their strips into more or less triangular blocks with a common point at the village boundary in order to preserve their farm villages. Such enclosures created a star-like pattern of land holdings. See, for example, Allested or Nørre Højrup in Denmark.

wealth of non-owners (renters and servants) and small landowners, who previously had had more or less equal access to common grazing, gardening, and forest areas. These losses to servants and small land owners were, perhaps surprisingly, offset in the short run by an increased demand for labor to build enclosures and new roads, and also to help improve and farm the newly enclosed areas (Allen 1982, Blum 1981).

The main economic advantage of "privatization" was evidently reduced transaction costs, rather than increased farm output.[87] The greater liquidity of land allowed entrepreneurial farmers to use their lands as capital for financing farm expansion and other commercial ventures. Land also gradually shifted from less efficient to more efficient farmers. About 20 percent of English land was enclosed by parliamentary acts between 1760 and 1820 (Blum 1981). Similar enclosures and enclosure movements took place during the same period in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and France (Pomeranz 2000: ch. 2; Blum 1981). Much of the remainder was held as royal land, grants to families (nobles), and by churches, which could not easily be transferred permanently to others.[88]

The Political Procedures and Consequences of Enclosure

The enclosure acts themselves required political decisions and had political consequences. The enclosures required legislation to revise existing civil and customary law at the village level, as both use and transfer rights were redefined at the same time that land holdings were aggregated and communal properties divided up among property holders. New property rights were established essentially one village at a time by passing private bills in parliament (for a relatively high fee).[89] At the local level, sufficient support of landowners had to be assembled, which required bargaining over the reassignment of rights to strips of land (and other claims). These negotiations determined

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87 The extent of the agricultural advantages of enclosure is much debated within the economic history literature. Most studies, however, show that only relatively small agricultural productivity gains can be attributed to enclosure (Clark 1998).

The enclosures of this period evidently hold a special fascination for economic historians, in part because they shed light on the privatization campaigns of the late twentieth century.

88 Noble titles and lands reverted to the king (or queen) when an aristocratic family died out. The king would subsequently grant the land and title to prominent supporters, often in exchange for loans and other services, or sell it to freeholders to meet royal expenses.

89 Among the costs of enclosure were solicitor and parliamentary fees, commissioner and surveyor fees, and the cost of fencing, roads, and drainage. The General Enclosure Act of 1801 somewhat reduced solicitor, parliamentary, and commissioner fees; this act established standing guidelines for enclosure procedures (Blum 1981).

the size and location of the new parcels and also affected the nature of local governance (Blum 1981).

Although cases existed in which smaller landholders pressed for reform, it was normally the large landholders that paid the legal fees associated with enclosure bills. Small farmers often opposed enclosure, because of uncertainties associated with the process of consolidation (Blum 1981).

The first procedures for enclosure required unanimous agreement among the landowners and the passage of national legislation. Under these procedures, essentially all property owners had to anticipate gains from the enclosure plans, or parliament would not adopt the required legislation. Parliaments gradually reduced local support for enclosure plans, by reducing the veto power of small stakeholders. In England and other countries, land-weighted supermajority voting gradually replaced unanimous agreement among property holders. In the late eighteenth century, if persons owning three-quarters of the land at issue wanted enclosure, parliament normally passed the desired bill; if not, the desired bill was rejected or tabled. In 1801 the required assent in England was reduced to majority rule. A commission would be appointed to undertake the consolidation, which reduced the transaction costs of enclosure, but vested a good deal of authority in the commissioners. Parliament adopted about 4,000 separate enclosure bills between 1760 and 1840.

Changing the formal procedures for enclosures to be accepted by parliament required assembling national coalitions in favor of the new procedures. Those opposed to enclosure legislation argued that there were no (net) economic advantages from enclosure and/or that the political risks associated with non-unanimity were too high. The opponents clearly lost the political debate, except in France, albeit slowly.

General enclosure acts were adopted in England in 1801 and 1845 to streamline and regulate the process of enclosure. Similar reforms to streamline enclosure procedures were adopted in other countries at about the same time. For example, enclosure reforms were adopted in Denmark (1769, 1781), Sweden (1749, 1757, 1783, 1803, and 1807), Prussia (1751, 1811, and 1821), Saxony (1834 and 1843), Hanover (1842 and 1856), Baden (1856), and France (1791, 1865, and 1919). Many of the new rules used land-weighted voting among local landowners to determine whether an enclosure petition was acceptable or not.[90] This created opportunities for significant redistribution among

[90] See Helmfrid (1961) for a thorough overview of Swedish land reform and some remarks on Danish consolidation. In some cases, enclosures were augmented by royal shifts of land from nobles to commoners. See Grantham (1980) for a table of reform legislation and decision rules and for an extended discussion of French rules for enclosure, which required unanimous consent well into the nineteenth century.

landholders and other stakeholders at the same time that it created a precedent for wealth-weighted voting on important local matters.

The timing and nature of enclosure legislation reflected a variety of factors, but the relative bargaining power of the groups represented in parliaments and in royal councils was clearly an important determinant (Grantham 1980, Blum 1981, Pomeranz 2000: ch. 2).[91] By the mid-nineteenth century, persuasion and economic circumstances had produced a gradual shift of local property law that greatly extended national and regional markets for land throughout most of northern Europe. The number of "free holders" initially increased, which together with new farming techniques, produced the familiar, more or less rectangular geography of small- and medium-size farm fields that remains typical in contemporary northern Europe.

Enclosure affected the distribution of political authority, as well as the geography and economics of rural Europe. The political relationships among a number of groups were affected: (i) the interests of relatively wealthy commoners (whose land rights were revised), (ii) nobles (privileged families whose lands were not normally subject to royal taxation and who often exercised significant quasi-governmental control of "communal" lands), and (iii) the central government (which stood to profit from increased taxes and fees associated with enclosure). Village governments and local aristocrats lost policymaking authority, and the central government and individual farmers gained.[92]

Free Trade Movements of the Nineteenth Century

During the early-nineteenth century, another broad more or less liberal movement emerged that supported the elimination of other internal and external trade barriers. As true of the aims of the enclosure movement, these reforms required political decisions to overturn long-standing regulations. In contrast the enclosure movement, for which reforms could be adopted one village or city at a time, reducing international barriers to trade could only be adopted at the national level. The

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[91] In England, the 40 shilling franchise also created a political incentive for broader ownership of land (Chase 1991).

[92] Surveys of French farmers indicated that they recognized the value of consolidating their land holdings, but also showed they opposed the creation of mechanisms for accomplishing this change against the will of individual landowners. It was not until 1919 that majority rule replaced unanimous agreement in French enclosure proceedings (Grantham 1980). A single landowner could enclose his own land, essentially without consulting his or her tenants. However, enclosures by large French landowners were evidently not very common. Voluntary enclosures continued to be the norm in France, even after the 1865 procedures were adopted. Private property (and customary law) was, in this sense, better protected in France than elsewhere in northern Europe.

liberalization of international trade, however, could be adopted one product or industry at a time, which helps explain the variation in tariffs and timing of trade liberalization among products. Support was sufficiently broad that large national organizations in support of more open trade emerged throughout northern Europe during the early nineteenth century. Examples include the anti-corn law group in England, the Handelsvertragsvereign and Kongress Deutscher Volkswirte in Germany, which undertook broad lobbying campaigns (Welby, Rea, and Murray-MacDonald, 1908, Kindleberger 1975).

The proponents of free trade included merchant and industrial groups that expected to benefit from reduced tariff and non-tariff barriers such as exclusive import or export privileges and liberals opposed to special privileges (rents) generated for those protected. Contributions to the Anti-Corn Law League (which lobbied against agricultural tariffs in England) reflected employment in exporting industries that were likely to prosper from free trade in general and from reduced agricultural protection (Schonhardt-Bailey 1991). The required support for reform, however, was generally broader than the groups in which economic advantages were concentrated.

To assemble a broader coalition, the free trade groups used both ideological and economic interest arguments in persuasive campaigns. Economic arguments in favor of free trade were augmented by mentioning advantages that liberals favored on (ideological) principle, such as broadening economic opportunities (Kindleberger 1975, Schonhardt-Bailey 1991, 2006).

> In 1838 a corn law league was founded, Richard Cobden and John Bright being its leading spirits. The league made an educational campaign lasting through several years, which ended in convincing the bulk of the Englishmen of the impolicy of protection. The Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, and by 1852 the protective duties were all gone. (Judson 1894: 231).

Mass politics had clearly arrived in the United Kingdom, in spite of the fact that suffrage for the House of Commons was still very narrow by twentieth-century standards.

> On a broader scale, the league based its national network on an organizational strategy that joined the voter registration campaign with the league propaganda scheme. As league agents distributed propaganda tracts to every elector in 24 county divisions and 187 boroughs, these agents submitted to the league headquarters consistent and complete reports on the electorate in their districts. (Schonhardt-Bailey 1991: 47)

Schonhardt-Bailey argues that the eventual success of the Anti-Corn Law League reflected ideological arguments in Parliament and changes in the voting behavior of members of parliament, who increasingly saw themselves as representatives of their specific regional interests, rather than

independent agents for themselves or England. Pivotal members of Parliament had evidently internalized some of the popular sovereignty arguments of liberal political theory:

> Repeal appears to have gained passage as these MPs switched from voting more as trustees to voting more as delegates. (Schonhardt-Bailey 2003: 581)

Average British tariffs rates declined from 1820 through 1900 (Nye 1991).

The persuasive campaigns in England were unusually broad, indeed national in scope, and their "propaganda" pamphlets combined a variety of arguments to persuade educated persons to favor the end of agricultural subsidies, including ideological campaigns.[93] Not every country witnessed open large-scale campaigns similar to those of the Anti-Corn Law League, but similar economic and ideological arguments were made in the parliaments and councils of essentially all Western countries.

The success of the economic liberals throughout Western Europe is evident in the tariff reforms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For example, Denmark adopted a comprehensive free trade act in 1797 (Danstrup 1947: 5). The Netherlands lowered tariffs to an average of 10 percent in 1822 (Kossman 1978: 35). Internal restrictions on trade were eliminated within Prussia through an internal customs union in 1818, which eliminated a variety of internal tariffs and taxes (Fulbrook 1990: 114–15). A similar customs union for the German Confederation (the Deutsher Zollverein) was established in 1834, partially as a consequence of internal lobbying by economic liberals, although the new revenue-sharing mechanisms associated with external tariffs also generated substantial support among regional sovereigns. (Confederal tariff revenues were not subject to the oversight of the regional parliaments [Dumke 1978].) Swiss liberals negotiated a new federal constitution in 1848, which eliminated internal barriers to trade among cantons.

Indeed, tariffs on the continent were often reduced to levels below those of the United Kingdom. For example, trade-weighted French tariffs fell from about 20 percent in 1820 to about 5 percent in 1870 and remained well below average British tariff rates during most of the nineteenth century (Nye 1991). Between 1820 and 1860, U. S. tariffs fell from an average of 45 percent to an average of about 20 percent (James 1981).

The influence of the various nineteenth-century free-trade movements can easily be exaggerated. Although many liberals stressed the advantages of broad open markets, pragmatists

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[93] It is possible this shift in perspective was a consequence of the petitions of the Chartist constitutional-reform movement, which was active during the same period and is discussed below. Pickering (2001) notes that "Gladstone recorded that '[Chartist] discussions very greatly increased the influence of popular feeling on the deliberations of the House," although Gladstone did not entirely approve of that influence (p. 388).

preferred broad open markets only in cases in which they were likely to be personally advantageous and preferred protectionist tariffs and other restrictions in other trade areas (Kindleberger 1975, Schonhardt-Bailey 1998, Nye 1991). The point here is not that liberal ideology—specifically that of laisse-faire economists—won the day, but rather that loose coalitions of liberals and economic interest groups emerged and pressed for broad internal and external trade reforms—and that these coalitions were sufficiently well represented in government to influence economic policy at the national level. Indeed, an *international customs union* for northern Europe was proposed in 1813 by the Prussian Chancellor K. A. von Hardenberg (Scott 1950).

The free trade movements of the nineteenth century were notable for their size, intensity, and success during the early and mid-nineteenth century. Tariff rates drifted downward on average during much of the nineteenth century in most of the countries of interest for the purposes of this book, but with many reversals, particularly near the end of the nineteenth century.

Intranational barriers were also dismantled during this period and have nearly been forgotten by contemporary economic historians. Town monopolies were gradually opened to competition. The economic privileges of aristocrats and guild members were gradually diminished and then formally eliminated.[94] The ebb and flow of tariff debate and tariffs for the past two centuries demonstrates that liberals did not win the trade liberalization debate as decisively for external trade as it did for restraints on internal trade.

D. Civic Equality

Similarly, some political issues were permanently settled during the nineteenth century, whereas others remain on the agenda today. In many areas of civil law, long-standing, family-based handicaps and privileges were reduced. Such reforms often required significant lobbying campaigns in which liberal ideas played leading roles in public and governmental discussions. For the most part, these civic equality was increased gradually during the tranformative century, although some reforms were clearly more important than others.

[94] This asymmetry probably reflects the fact that foreigners do not vote in national elections. Resurrecting internal barriers to trade tends to affect other domestic parties in fairly obvious ways. The adversely affected groups armed with liberal arguments can, thus, normally organize to counter local pressures for protection in national and regional parliaments. This tends to increase the political stability of domestic liberalization. The effects of one nation's restrictions on another nation's prosperity are not directly represented in parliamentary debates, because foreign losers do not vote in member elections (although they may sponsor lobbying groups).

Among the most striking of the early reforms of civic entitlements were the laws that ended slavery in the West, an institution that had endured for thousands of years. Other examples include the expansion of public education, and formal religious tolerance, as rights to worship were extended to more religious groups and religious requirements for high office were gradually eliminated. In many of these areas of public policy, it seems clear that shifts in norms, rather than changes in economic interests, were the principal motivations for reform.

Slavery and its Abolition in the Nineteenth Century

Although all stable societies tend to be governed by laws that are routinely and consistently applied, the laws often distinguish among families in a manner that produces and protects significant differences in wealth and status. In medieval societies, some families had far greater authority and protection than average. Others have far less than average. The clearest example of law-based anti-privileges were the laws with respect to slavery and serfdom, although there were many others in most countries.

These laws assured that the lives of some families were entirely subject to the direction of others, and that members of such families had few if any exit options. That such laws had long existed is equally clear. Slaves are mentioned in the Code of Hammurabi, written in Mesopotamia 4,000 years ago. Slavery was discussed by Greek philosophers during their golden era. Many of the great monuments of Greek and Roman times were products of slave labor. Slavery was used in European colonial enterprises during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Slavery was a highly profitable method of producing sugar, cotton, tobacco, and coffee in the tropical and semitropical colonies of the Western hemisphere (Engerman 1986). The slave trade was a significant source of profits for British, Portuguese, French, and Dutch traders.[95] Serfdom was more common than slavery in late medieval Europe, and serfs had more legal protections than slaves, but serfs were also bound to particular manors by law and normally could not own real estate (Kahan 1973).[96]

Normative debates on slavery and serfdom are nearly as old as slavery and serfdom themselves. For example, in about 330 B. C. E. Aristotle argued that some persons should not be slaves, because it was against their nature. He also argued that slaves should have some prospect of liberation. (Both

[95] Lovejoy's (1982: 483) estimates of the Atlantic slave trade suggest that the British shipped 2.5 million slaves, the Portuguese 1.8 million, the French 1.1 million, and the Dutch approximately 350 thousand between 1701 and 1800.

[96] Such laws, however, were routinely violated when labor was scarce, at which time serfs might move among manors (North and Thomas 1971). A serf that successfully escaped his or her manor could become free if he or she reached a free town.

positions would have been relatively liberal ones for most of the next 2,000 years.) On the pro-slavery side of the debate, appeals to history, necessity, and precedent were used . Such inequality was part of the "natural" or "God-given" order of things, after all.

The idea that some families or persons were destined to be slaves tended to be taken for granted.

> He is sometimes slave who **should be** master; and sometimes master who **should be** slave. [Latin: Fit in dominatu servitus, in servitute dominatus.] (M. T. Cicero, *Oratio Pro Rege Deiotaro (XI)* 46 BC.)

European debate over slavery intensified during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in part, because of philosophical and theological innovations associated with the rise of liberalism and the enlightenment. It also intensified because several European countries had became more involved in slavery and the slave trade through their merchant fleets and colonial enterprises. As a consequence, a variety of normative arguments for and against slavery were developed during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries (Turner 1929).

The debate about the abolishment of slavery was not the one-sided affair in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that it would be today. Slave owners had clear economic interests at stake and were predisposed to defend slavery (and serfdom), partly as an economic necessity, but also an essential part of the "natural" order of human society. Those opposed to slavery developed economic and ideological critiques of the economics efficiency and morality of slavery. For example, Adam Smith (1776) argued that free labor always tended to be more efficient than slave labor.

> From the experience of all ages and nations, I believe, that the work done by free men comes cheaper in the end than the work performed by slaves. Whatever work he does, beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance, can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own.

The economic strand of the arguments against slavery was responsible for economics being labeled the "dismal science" by conservatives defending the institutions of slavery and slave ownership (Levy 2001).[97] Other economic pragmatists were predisposed to argue against slavery on economic and nationalistic grounds, because their products competed with those of slave enterprises.

The civic equality and social contract strands of liberal political theories were also used to oppose slavery. Locke's contention that there are some contracts that no "person" would ever voluntarily agree to also applies to slavery. For example, the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition

[97] It can be argued that the label stuck, however, because of Mathus' gloomy prediction about prospects for long term increases in average income.

of Slavery, with the support of Benjamin Franklin, argued that administration of the new national constitution should be color blind:

> These blessing [of liberty] ought rightfully to be administered, without distinction of color to all descriptions of people ... that **equal liberty was originally the position, and is still the birthright of all men** influenced by the strong ties of humanity .. (Excerpt from the February 2, 1790 PSAS petition, Unites States Senate, Center for Legislative Archives.)

This line of argument also produced debates about the proper definition of "persons." Were African or West Indian slaves really persons? Did they have souls? Could they make sensible, rational choices?

Ideological and economic abolitionists solicited horror stories from travelers and others who had seen the dark side of slavery: the abuse, the mortality rates, and the effects of the trade on the traders themselves. Those defending the status quo produced reports of the benefits conferred by slavery on the slaves themselves and on the quality and extent of their nation's merchant fleet (Heffernan 1973).

> The song and the dance, says Mr. Norris, are promoted [on slave ships]. It had been more fair, perhaps, if he had explained that word promoted. The truth is, that for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, oppressed with disease and wretchedness, are forced to dance by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it. "I," says one of the other evidences, "was employed to dance the men, while another person danced the women." (W. Wilberforce speech in Parliament, 1789, *Hansard* 29: cols 45-48.)

An antislavery tract by Clarkson (1786) helped energize the abolitionist movement in England (Drescher 1990), which was subsequently formally organized and effectively led by William Wilberforce. The Abolitionist Society's abstract of evidence presented to the English parliament in 1791 focused nearly entirely on moral issues associated with slavery, although parliamentary debates considered both moral and economic issues (Drescher 1990). Few members of the groups involved in the public debates on slavery in Europe or the northern part of the United States owned slaves or directly competed with imports produced by slaves. Consequently, the main issues tended to be metaphysical and ideological ones for most proponents of abolishing slavery. Within parliaments and royal councils, however, ideological, military, and economic national interests were also debated and gradually resolved in favor of legal "personhood" for slaves.

The abolitionists and their moderate allies gradually won the policy debate on slavery and on participation in the slave trade throughout Europe and in the northern United States during the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. For example, in 1772 slavery was declared illegal

in England via a court decision. Slavery was abolished by the Vermont state legislature in 1777, by Scotland in 1778, and by the state of Massachusetts in 1783. In 1815 the participants of the Vienna Congress expressed their opposition to slavery. An international meeting of abolitionist groups was organized in London in 1840.

An act of Parliament in 1807 ended British participation in the slave trade, and slaves were emancipated throughout the empire by another act in 1833. Denmark's government abolished remaining mobility restraints on peasants in 1788 and began phasing out slavery in 1792. Denmark ended its participation in the slave trade in 1803 and banned slavery in its colonial territories in 1847. The Dutch ended its participation in the slave trade in 1814 and emancipated slaves in its colonies in 1863. The Swedish government abolished slavery in 1843. The French banned participation in the slave trade in 1818, and emancipated slaves throughout its empire in 1848. The United States banned the slave trade in 1808 and slavery in the southern states (after the Civil War) in 1865 via the thirteenth amendment to its constitution.

In many cases, slave owners were compensated for the cost of slaves freed or the burden of emancipation was reduced by freeing only the children of existing slaves. For example, Pennsylvania adopted laws in 1779 that gradually phased out slavery by ending the hereditary basis for slavery (freeing the children of slaves). Abolition in the southern United States, however, was essentially imposed by the northern states after the Civil War (see chapter 18). In Europe, however, ordinary politics produced new laws that gradually overturned centuries of established precedence without revolutionary threats to Europe itself and only modest ones within their colonies.[98]

Public Education Reform and Expansion

Public education has a long history in Europe that was often linked to religious organizations and controversies in the period after the Roman empire collapsed. Priests at important cathedrals and monasteries founded many of the earliest public schools in Christian Europe. Assemblies of church officials also occasionally recommended greater support for public education. For example, in 529 the Catholic Council of Vaison recommended the establishment of village schools. In 800, a synod at Mayence required its priests to provide free schooling for local village and town children:

> Let them receive and teach these with the utmost charity that they might themselves shine as the stars forever. Let them receive no remuneration from their students unless what the parents through charity may voluntary offer. (as cited in Barnard 1854: 18)

[98] Similar reforms gradually ended most legal aspects of serfdom throughout much of Northern Europe during the same period. The final reforms often occurred in the nineteenth century.

The Catholic Church itself promised public education at its cathedrals in proclamations in 1179 and 1215. Martin Luther, who wrote on pedagogical theory as well as theology, recommended the establishment of schools in many of his communications with government officials.

Partly as a consequence of such highly regarded advice and partly as a consequence of shifts in political authority, many late medieval duchies and towns provided free education for local children. For example, public education systems were established in Saxony in 1560 and Hesse in 1565. Royal ordinances that established grammar schools in Denmark, Sweden, and England were adopted during the same period, in part to substitute for Catholic schools that were closed after success of the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe.[99] Charitable schools in many large towns and cities were endowed by persons of wealth. Compulsory education was introduced as early as the seventeenth century by some local governments (Bernard 1854).

The result of several centuries of public education in Europe was an education system that emphasized religious training and exhibited substantial variation from town to town in the quality and extent of the education provided. Elementary schools remained for the most part religious enterprises. Most universities were also heavily influenced by religious practices and theories, although their curriculums had gradually increased their coverage of nonreligious subjects and methodology. For example, at Oxford University, monastic religious vows applied to the faculty, who could not marry and had to attend daily religious services through the first half of the nineteenth century (Morris 1978: 206).

In the late nineteenth and early nineteenth century, this almost completely decentralized, religiously oriented education system began to change. New public education associations were established in England and in much of the rest of northern Europe. For example, a "society for the public good" was organized in Groningen in 1784 to press for public education and other reforms. Similar societies of teachers and "friends of education" were organized throughout the Netherlands and Belgium during the next three decades. Other educational lobbying groups were founded in France, Sweden, and Denmark (Bernard 1854). These organizations pressed for broader access, increased support, and more coverage of secular subjects in public education.

Such educational reform groups were not initially national in scope or membership, although in the long run they affected national as well as regional educational systems. In Bernard's words,

[99] The Protestant (Lutheran) duchies and countries closed most formal Catholic organizations, including their schools, after the treaty of Augsburg in 1555.

> [At the beginning of the nineteenth century] "a new era in popular education ... commenced by the formation of voluntary associations **to extend the blessings of knowledge, human and divine, to the great mass of the people**" (Bernard 1854: 725).

In countries that had such groups, parliaments adopted (and their kings accepted) a long series of public education reforms that gradually broadened access to education, increased public funding, and reduced the religious focus of public school curricula. Early nineteenth-century education reforms are noted by many historians and include: the Dutch reform of 1806, French reforms of 1808 and 1833, the Prussian reform of 1809, the Danish reform of 1814, the Swedish reform of 1825, and the English reform of 1847. These were, of course, part of a long series of educational reforms that continued throughout the century and into the next.

For the most part, the new educational laws were liberal reforms that broadened access to education by (i) increasing public funding at local levels (often through unfunded mandates from the central government), (ii) increasing funding and quality control for schools that trained elementary school teachers (often called "normal schools"), and (iii) increasing inspections of individual schools (which were often very small) to assure more uniform curricula and teaching quality.

As in the case of tariff reform, it is easy to exaggerate the importance of liberal ideology, as opposed to liberal arguments, within the various educational reform movements. Firm owners, whether liberal or not, expected public education to reduce their training and labor costs and often supported public education for economic, rather than ideological or altruistic, reasons. Liberal ideas and arguments were also used by nationalists that favored education reform as a method of "nation building" that would reduce regional and ethnic differences and increase identification with the central government. (The Prussian reforms are sometimes interpreted in this way.)

The reforms also played a role in future reforms, insofar as many teachers were liberals, and much of the secular curricula stressed reasoning and observation. The students became more independent readers and thinkers than they would have been, and many earned higher incomes because of the increased demand for literate and numerate employees. The policy debates themselves often used arguments and quotes from liberal scholars who advocated education reform and greater government support of education. For example, in Germany the educational theories of Locke, Rousseau, and Pestalozzi were often mentioned in reform pamphlets and editorials in support of education reform. In England, the educational positions of Smith, Bentham, and Malthus (who favored universal education) were often mentioned (Bernard 1854, Rorty 1998).

The secularization of education advocated by many liberal and radical reform groups was a major area of contention between liberals and conservatives in most countries during most of the nineteenth century. Indeed, educational reform issues sometimes played a significant role in constitutional bargaining, as in the Belgian secession from the Netherlands in 1830, and the constitutional reforms adopted by the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Increased tax support for education in general, however, was somewhat less controversial and public education budgets expanded throughout most of the nineteenth century.

Reorganizing various aspects of public education at national and regional levels did not instantly produce uniform universal education or equal opportunity, but it did gradually level the playing field for successive generations of children and adults by reducing the extent to which family determined education and thereby economic and political opportunities.

Laws Extending Religious Tolerance and Opportunity

Other efforts to promote civic equality during the nineteenth century addressed various formal privileges associated with religious affiliation. Religious tolerance had increased prior to 1800, in the sense that heretics were no longer routinely burned at the stake or banished from towns and kingdoms. Nonetheless, most states in Europe had official state religions, and the leaders of their established churches often were entitled to seats in parliament and in the cabinet. For example, the Anglican church was entitled to appoint their own members of parliament in England (the lords spiritual). The Lutheran church of Sweden had its own chamber of the parliament with veto powers similar to those of the three other chambers. Indeed, all the estate-based parliaments included a separate chamber for church officials.

Most European countries had also religious qualification for their highest offices in government. Kings, queens, members of parliament and high government officials all had to belong to and affirm the doctrines of their national church. The king of England could only be Anglican. The king of Sweden could only be a Lutheran. (Religious qualifications for accession to the throne remain in many contemporary constitutional monarchies.) Most European central government provided direct tax support for particular religious organizations (state churches). The Lutheran church was privileged in Denmark, Sweden, and Prussia; the Anglican in England, and the Catholic

in France, Ireland, and Belgium.[100] Most of the American colonies had established churches or restricted worship to a subset of Protestant practices during the first half of the eighteenth century.

In many cases, unapproved religious organizations were prevented from holding service. Catholics, for example, could not hold public services in most Protestant countries, and organized Protestant churches were illegal in most Catholic countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Such restrictions were broadly supported by most worshippers in their respective countries for good doctrinaire reasons. They knew the unique truth.

The excluded religious groups, naturally, opposed their existing legal disadvantages for religious and economic reasons. As restrictions on interest-group activity diminished and religious tolerance increased, national groups favoring reductions in existing theological privileges began to lobby for reform of their respective "intolerant" religious laws.

Religious groups were often already organized to provide religious services, and so did not require the formation of new organizations to overcome team production and free-riding problems. Their minority status, however, implied that persuasive campaigns based entirely on narrow self-interest (i.e. my church is the only true religion and therefore should be allowed to hold service) were unlikely to produce new legislation by members of parliament holding essentially opposite views.

To be successful, a persuasive campaign had to appeal to the religious majority in the country of interest. More or less universal liberal arguments favoring religious toleration had been developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Laursen and Nederman 1997), and these arguments were used by the pro-tolerance movements of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among the most influential arguments against state churches and intolerance, were those developed by John Locke in 1689 shortly before his return to England:

> [In the first place] whatever profession we make, to whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our own mind that the one is true and the other well pleasing unto God, such profession and such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation. For in this manner, instead of expiating other sins by the exercise of religion, I say, in offering thus unto God Almighty such a worship as we esteem to be displeasing unto Him, we add unto the number of our other sins those also of hypocrisy and contempt of His Divine Majesty.

[100] Subsequent debates on established churches gave rise to a favorite spelling word in English and American grammar schools: antidisestablishmentarianism, the position, for example, of persons who favored the continuation of established state churches (that is, they were opposed to those favoring disestablishment).

> In the second place, **the care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force; but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind**, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force. Confiscation of estate, imprisonment, torments, nothing of that nature can have any such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things. (J. Locke, 1689, *A Letter Concerning Tolerance*, originally published in Latin while he was in political exile in the Netherlands.)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, liberal arguments for religious tolerance were helped by the increased acceptance of other liberal arguments favoring more open political and economic systems and equality before the law. The hypothesis that ethical behavior could only be sustained under a single uniform religious doctrine was also increasingly challenged by experiences in a few places that had successfully experimented with religious tolerance. The Dutch Republic and several English colonies in North America were noteworthy in this respect. Protestant concerns about "Catholic conspiracies" also gradually diminished.

The stability and durability of "intolerant" laws over several centuries suggest that liberalization in the religious sphere of public policy is not easily accomplished, even by well-organized groups with intense interests in reform. Indeed, the result of many decades of religious warfare between Catholics and Lutherans in late medieval Europe was not increased tolerance, but a patchwork of intolerant Lutheran and Catholic duchies. Without the rise of liberalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, it is very unlikely that nonconforming religious groups would have been able to induce reforms of intolerant laws. It was only those already represented in parliament who could actually press for the desired reforms.

As a consequence of persuasive campaigns in favor of religious tolerance and for specific changes in religious qualifications, legal rights to organize churches were gradually extended to nonconforming Christians, Jews, and a few other religious groups. And, religion-based legal barriers to participation in economic and political life were also gradually eliminated.

In 1828 the Test Act was repealed, which allowed Catholics in England to run for parliament and be appointed to high offices. Jews received similar rights 30 years later.[101] In 1835 Jews were

[101] In addition to the test act, access to seats in parliament were controlled by the oath of office after 1534, which was very gradually expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to allow Protestants, Christians, theists, and finally atheists to take the oath in good conscience. For example, after 1858, a Jew could sit in Commons or Lords, but only if a special bill was adopted

Continued on next page...

given full rights of citizenship in Denmark and the right to work in the bureaucracy in 1848. The new Dutch constitution of 1848 guaranteed religious liberty for Catholics, which allowed the church to organize in their usual manner for the first time in two and a half centuries.[102] In 1849 religious freedom in Denmark was established (Danstrup 1947: 103). Freedom of religion was also proclaimed (again) in the second French republic in 1848, and it was adopted by the Swedish government in 1860.

These reforms were significant shifts away from long-standing medieval doctrines and practices. Most such reforms proved to be quasi-constitutional in nature—durable changes in public policy—that would be taken as "given" for many decades at a time. It bears noting that religion remained central to the beliefs of most persons in those societies and for most persons in parliament in the mid-nineteenth century. Support for greater civic equality in this important area of life did not require a radical weakening of religious beliefs on the part of those favoring and adopting it.

E. An Overview of Constitutional Reforms and Suffrage in the Nineteenth Century

At the same time that liberal economic and civil law reforms were being debated and gradually adopted, a variety of liberal constitutional reforms were also being proposed, debated, and gradually adopted. The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of trends in constitutional reform that gradually produced Western democracy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More fine-grained historical narratives and analyses are provided by the next 8 chapters.

Many countries in Europe began the nineteenth century with their medieval form of government largely intact. For example, England began the nineteenth century with its five-century old bicameral parliament, in which one chamber was based on noble birthrights and the other was elected on the basis of narrow suffrage (often with geographically disproportionate representation). Government officials were normally selected from the House of Lords, rather than the House of

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to exempt them from the Christian portion of the oath of office. This allowed Baron de Rothschild to sit in Commons in 1858. In 1860 the oath of office was modified so that such special bills were no longer necessary. In 1888 the oath was modified so that atheists, such as Bradlaugh, could affirm their commitment to the English constitution without also confirming their acceptance of a supreme divine being (Walker and Wood 2000).

[102] The new Dutch constitution extended religious liberties to Catholics, which was followed by the creation of five new bishopries by the Catholic Church in 1853. In this case, the leading liberals were more tolerant than their voters. The Dutch extension of religious freedom *to organizations* produced a Protestant backlash and a governmental crisis. Although liberals were pivotal members of the government that adopted the new constitution, those supporting freedom to organize religious affairs were not (yet) a majority of the electorate in the Netherlands.

Commons. Sweden began the century with its two-century old, four-chamber parliament with separate chambers representing nobles, clergy, townspeople, and farmers; the latter two chambers were elected on the basis of narrow suffrage. Its most powerful officials also tended to be chose from the noble chamber. Other countries continued with their unwritten (informal) constitutions in place, as could be said of Prussia and Denmark.[103] In much of continental Europe, the constitutional clock in Europe had been reset by the Congress of Vienna, which promoted constitutional monarchy as the proper form of European governance.

Many of Europe's written constitutions in 1820, nonetheless, were relatively new and included modest departures from previous practices. The most recent Swedish instrument of governance, for example, had been adopted in 1809 and its rules for succession in 1810. A relatively liberal Norwegian constitution was adopted in 1814. The Congress of Vienna caused new written constitutions to be developed for the new kingdom of the Netherlands and for the restored monarchy of France after the defeat of Napoleon. The new parliaments of the Netherlands and France adopted the British architecture. They were bicameral with an elite appointed first chamber and a narrowly elected second chamber. The Congress of Vienna also encouraged the duchies and kingdoms of the new German Confederation to adopt formal written constitutions (Nicolson 1946).

Many European sovereigns, perhaps surprisingly, had more, rather than less, authority in 1820 than they had had a few decades earlier, as in France, the Netherlands, and Sweden. (Indeed, the Netherlands had never before had a king). This could also be said of the monarchs of Italy, Germany, and Japan when their new national constitutions were adopted in the second half of the nineteenth century. George III of Great Britain spent much of his long term of office reclaiming authorities delegated to past cabinets and parliaments by his predecessors.

Although many constitutions were relatively new and many others were quite old, in each case there were long series of proposals for constitutional reforms during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the constitutional proposals attempted to advance liberal political and economic ends. Liberal proposals often called for more complete written constitutions that would "force" royal cabinets to rule according to the law by, for example, allowing cabinet officials to be subject to criminal law or to be discharged by parliament for failure to execute existing legislation. Others called for increased parliamentary authority over budgets and public policy. Others called for

[103] These countries had constitutional and quasi-constitional laws that, in principle, bound their sovereigns, but no single written document that could be referred to as their "constitution."

modest or great expansions of suffrage and for salaries for members of parliament. Still others called for equal protection of the law, judicial independence, the end to censorship, and the secret ballot.

Most such proposals were rejected when they were first proposed, as is true of most proposed amendments in contemporary democracies (Rasch and Congleton 2006). However, enough liberal amendments were adopted during the course of the century between 1825 and 1925 that the Western constitutions of 1925 were clearly very different from those of 1825. They had created Western democracy, more or less as we know it today.

Negotiations rather than Revolutions

For the most part, serious proposals for constitutional reforms were developed by senior cabinet ministers and by members of parliament and their staffs, although are also instances in which external interest groups made detailed constitutional proposals. Notable among the latter were the English Chartist petitions of the 1840s and the Frankfurt proposal for a new German constitution in 1849.[104]

The occasional large-scale public demonstrations in support of constitutional reforms were not usually associated with specific proposals and, so, only indirectly affected the constitutional reforms adopted during the century. The particular reforms adopted depended on the interests—economic, political, and ideological—of the king, members of parliament, and other officials in the top levels of government. It was only such persons who were directly involved in negotiations and only such persons who could formally adopt constitutional reforms. Large-scale demonstrations, however, could affect the interests and relative bargaining power of high officeholders, even in cases in which no genuine revolutionary threats existed.

Support for the Chartist and Frankfurt proposals, for example, strengthened the hand of liberals in parliament by demonstrating that liberal constitutional reforms were supported by a broad cross-section of persons in those two countries. This somewhat increased the persuasiveness of the case for reform, particularly among neutrals and opponents who accepted, at least in the abstract, the Hobbesian or Kantian justifications for central government authority. Insofar as normal commerce was disrupted by such demonstrations, affected pragmatists might also favor modest reforms as a method of reducing future losses. To increase support among such pragmatists, the risk of future demonstrations, or even revolution, might be stressed in parliamentary debates.

[104] The Frankfurt parliament at which the proposals had been worked out was authorized by the government of the German Confederation, although it followed on the heels of widespread popular demonstration for constitutional reform in 1848 (Koch 1984).

It bears noting, however, that perceived internal and external military threats were normally responded to with increased censorship and *reduced* civil liberties, rather than liberal constitutional reform. For example, the French government increased censorship and curtailed rights of assembly for three decades after the monarchy was restored. Similarly, in response to more or less peaceful (but not entirely lawful) mass demonstrations, the British suspended habeas corpus in 1817 and adopted the so-called Six Acts in 1819 in order to restrict political meetings by proponents of constitutional reform. The Acts also increased censorship and allowed trials to take place without juries.[105] Danish censorship in the early part of the nineteenth century was so strong that a college professor was imprisoned for life in 1821 for simply "demanding" democracy. Proposals for constitutional reform (in print) were severely punished within the German Confederation for most of the nineteenth century, although not proposals for economic reform.[106]

Such steps were not taken in response to obvious well-organized threats of civil war, e. g. the existence of revolutionary armies, but rather to suppress annoying dissent and reduce opportunities for organizing large public demonstrations in support of particular reforms.[107] The rhetoric of speeches given at the demonstrations often challenged the status quo, the authority of government officials, the justness of existing laws, and occasionally used the term "revolution." Most of the various popular "uprisings" were peaceful mass demonstrations that posed no serious military threat to the rulers. Such demonstrations, however, did undermine claims by those in power that they governed for the good of their country and with the broad support of their citizens.[108]

The reforms proposed by such demonstrators were often significant, but could not be truly revolutionary if they hoped for success. For example, the proposal for the Frankfurt constitution

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[105] The acts (i) forbade training persons to use arms, (ii) authorized the seizing of arms, (iii) expedited trials, (iv) forbade assembles greater than 50 persons for deliberations of public grievances, limited attendance at town meetings to freeholders, and essentially ruled out smaller meetings to raise funds for politically active interest groups, (v) forbade the distribution of many kinds of "seditious" pamphlets and allowed courts to confiscate them, and (iv) extended censorship to small pamplets containing political news or commentary. A good summary of the acts is available from Halévy (1987: 66-70). Condensed versions of the acts are available in Aspinall, Smith, and Douglas (1996:335-41).

[106] See Fletcher 1980; Bély 2001: 89–91; Lee 1994: 22–3; and Jacobsen 2000: 93.

[107] For example, the Six Acts were partly a response to excited mass meetings of liberals favoring repeal of the corn laws and constitutional reform, such as those that had occurred in Lancaster in 1818 (Halévy 1987: 59-60).

[108] Many such meetings were also illegal and could be said to be "revolutionary" in the sense that those at the mass meetings ignored laws governing such meetings and political speeches. Of greater practical concern to most European kings was the possibility that their armies would disobey orders or shift their loyalty from king to parliament or to the reformers.

called for a new, *stronger* central government with a hereditary king (kaiser) and a federal parliamentary government. It was rejected by leaders of the two largest and most powerful states in the federation, Prussia and Austria. And when told to disperse, most members and supporters of the Frankfurt assembly peacefully returned to their homes. The remaining militant minority was severely punished for disobeying repeated orders to disperse (often by death). In Great Britain, the proposed constitutional reforms of the second Chartist petition (with more than three million signatures) were similar to those proposed by the Levelers two centuries earlier: universal male suffrage, annual elections, and payment of members of parliament. The Chartists also objected to corruption, high taxes, and payments to the established church.

Both the Frankfurt and Chartist proposals were formally proposed to government authorities, considered by them, and rejected. After failing to secure reforms, the Chartist movement peacefully disintegrated, as most members departed for other politically active groups.

> Understanding the centrality of petitioning in the Chartist experience highlights the fact that, with few exceptions, the **ideological horizons of the Chartists were constitutional**, and in this sense its decline owed less to extension of the suffrage than to the gradual fracture of the 'master narrative' of England's libertarian Constitution after 1867 (Pickering 2001: 387).

Such groups proposed lawful changes: reforms rather than revolution. Moreover, reforms proposed by the Chartist and Frankfurt groups were moderate relative to the cumulative effect of reforms that were adopted in the decades that followed.

Liberalism and Trends Constitutional Reform

A series of reform-oriented coalitions of liberals and pragmatic economic and religious interest groups allowed a series of modest constitutional reforms to be adopted throughout most of what became the West. These coalitions reflected similar alignments of economic and ideological interests and applied similar liberal ideas to justify the reforms adopted. These pragmatist-liberal coalitions were successful in large part because of parliament's power of the purse, which had been reinforced by gradual reductions in the king's (or queen's) ability to influence parliament and the increasing cost of government services. It was no longer possible to finance government entirely from traditional royal sources of revenue.

The increased importance of ongoing tax bills to finance government meant that stable coalitions of elected politicians with similar policy agendas could affect public policies by linking other issues to new (often temporary) tax increases. This by itself tended to shift policymaking

authority from kings to parliament and created numerous opportunities for political bargaining along a number of policy and constitutional dimensions. During the first half of the nineteenth century, majority coalitions often had to include a few liberals to pass legislation. During the second half of the nineteenth century liberal parties became increasingly successful in elections and so were often majority parties in their own right. Constitutional gains to trade between kings and parliaments, consequently, exhibited a liberal trend throughout the nineteenth century.

The increased importance of parliamentary majorities also helped to encourage party discipline. Party-line voting within parliament greatly increased the bargaining power of parliaments relative to kings on budgetary matters by making it more difficult for kings to ignore parliamentary leaders. Voters would naturally tend to be more supportive of representatives who could "bring home the bacon" or adopt broad reforms that advanced their interests. And, in many cases, "all or nothing" offers from a durable majority coalition could often obtain more from the sovereign on a variety of issues, including constitutional ones, than less aggressive bargaining tactics. These more disciplined political parties also helped coordinate election campaigns, and thereby also framed a good deal of the policy debates of that period.

As party discipline increased, party leaders became increasingly important for kings and queens, who in previous centuries had dealt with parliaments that they could substantially control through patronage and appeals to historic loyalties. In previous centuries, supportive coalition leaders might, for example, be invited to sit in the cabinet, granted a senior post in the bureaucracy, or be elevated to or further in the nobility. The emergence of party government (cabinets occupied by leaders of political parties) reflected was a significant change in the relative policymaking authority of kings and parliaments, although it was not codified in constitutional documents.

It bears noting that many of the interests advanced through intra-governmental bargaining were *institutionally determined*, but in a manner that allowed shifts in economic and ideological interests to affect policy. For example, nobles had reasons to oppose the king on issues that affected their own autonomy and ability to organize. Centralization tends to reduce noble autonomy, status, and income. Kings, in turn, had interests in curtailing the authority of nobles insofar as it tended to enhance their own authority.

Elected officeholders have institutionally induced reasons to take account of the economic and ideological interests of their pivotal supporters. Electoral competition had obvious effects on "conservative" parties, which became increasingly liberal in the second half of the nineteenth century, taking positions that would have been regarded as liberal or radical in the first half. By

century's end, both conservatives and liberals were far less deferential to the king and to past traditions than they had been in 1800. By 1920, elections to parliament and the members selected were more important than Kings and the nobility, rather than far less so as they had been in 1800.

Suffrage expansion was both a cause and effect of bargaining within parliaments and between parliaments and the sovereign.

Suffrage Reform Movement(s)

A significant part of the expansion of suffrage during the nineteenth century occurred as a result of economic growth, which caused more and more persons to satisfy the tax payment qualifications for suffrage rights. Suffrage also increased because of relatively minor changes in the qualifications for suffrage, and in some cases as seats were reapportioned.

Wealth and property were broadly considered to be evidence that a voter could cast an independent and informed vote during the first half of the nineteenth century, but how much wealth was required for independence and the extent to which other qualifications might substitute for wealth were much debated among reformers. Many liberals argued, for example, that more and more persons had sufficient education and incomes to exercise competent and independent votes, as with lawyers, managers, merchants, and college professors. If qualifications could not be changed, they argued that representation should reflect current, rather than historic geographic distributions, of persons and wealth. Suffrage reforms thus often adjusted the geographic basis of representation as much or more so than the qualification for suffrage.

Pragmatic interests often supported such electoral reforms, because the new districts would shift representation in a manner that favored the new communities that emerged with industrialization and because political parties hoped to build support from newly empowered voters. Liberals, for example, tended to benefit from middle-class electorates and increase political competition. Many in the middle class realized that that they had benefited from opening up political and economic life, and often favored a bit more openness. Electoral reform movements were thus partly idealistic enterprises that sought to expand suffrage to qualified persons and partly pragmatic enterprises that favored shifts of policymaking authority to persons more likely to support particular policy reforms.

With both projects in mind, a variety of organizations were founded to conduct persuasive campaigns in favor of suffrage reform. Together, persuasive campaigns and partisan interests accelerated suffrage expansion. Similar campaigns and arguments were later used to support the

qualification of women for suffrage. Women's suffrage was widely adopted in the period just before and after World War I., often about a decade after working-class men were deemed suitably qualified for suffrage.

It bears noting that suffrage organizations were common throughout Europe in the nineteenth century, although the size of the movements and the timing of reforms varied among countries. For example, national organizations favoring the expansion of male (and subsequently women's) suffrage were founded in Great Britain, in the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, and in many of the kingdoms and duchies of the German Federation. Similar movements arose in Italy and Japan during the late nineteenth century. In addition to organizations devoted to suffrage issues, other organizations of liberals often supported suffrage expansion although their main focus was on trade liberalization, public education, religious tolerance, labor law, and so forth. The labor movement and labor and social democratic parties formed at the end of the century also favored suffrage reform, in part because expanding suffrage was anticipated to advance their main policy agendas (the reform of labor law and increased social insurance).

The persuasive campaigns in favor of suffrage reform and partisan interests allowed suffrage to be gradually expanded through a series of small changes in wealth (or tax) and residency qualifications. These reforms often spanned a good deal of the nineteenth century. For example, the British suffrage rules were significantly altered in 1832, 1867, 1884, 1918, and 1928 and less dramatically expanded several other times. Dutch suffrage laws were altered in 1848, 1887, 1896, 1917, and 1919. Swedish laws were reformed in 1866, 1907, 1920, 1945, and 1971. French suffrage was extended in 1830, doubled in 1831, and expanded gradually by about 50 percent during the next decade and a half.[109]

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[109] In France, universal male suffrage had been adopted during their first republic, in 1792; however wealth-qualified suffrage had been restored along with the French monarchy after Napoleon was defeated. Under the restored French monarchy, suffrage was reformed a number of times, although in an illiberal direction at first. After 1830, suffrage was expanded several times through ordinary revisions of suffrage law and by changing the manner in which the existing qualifications could be satisfied. Wealth and tax revisions were dropped in 1848 after the Monarch abdicated, although a variety of residency and similar qualifications made suffrage less than truly universal (Seymour and Frary 1918: Ch. 17–18).

Major extensions of male suffrage also occurred in Prussia in 1848, and subsequently in the new German empire later in the century, where universal male suffrage was adopted well before parliamentary authority challenged that of the monarch (see chapter 16). (France is the only country in northern Europe where civil wars or threatened civil wars clearly played a significant role in the course of constitutional reform, as with its great expansion in suffrage in 1848.)

In most cases, the ability to vote in national elections was gradually extended to successively poorer and younger male cohorts up through about 1910. After 1920 similar qualifications were extended to women, usually in a single major suffrage reform. Excluded persons on poor relief or who had once been bankrupt were gradually added to the electorate in the period between World War I and II in England, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Japan.

Complex Constitutional Bargains

Negotiation was rarely straight forward and the constitutional bargains that produced universal male suffrage often required significant reforms of other election procedures, as elaborated in chapter 11. For example, the use of new methods for using votes to select representatives was often part of suffrage negotiations. In the late nineteenth century, these often include proposals for wealth or education weighted voting. In the last stages of negotiation before World War I, conservatives often insisted on the adoption of proportional representation, in exchange for their support of changes in the qualifications for participation.

Conservative partly leaders feared that the post-reform elections would eliminate their parties, as liberals and social democrats shared credit for the last reforms. PR electoral systems protected parties that expected only minority support in single-member districts under extended suffrage (at first, chiefly the conservative parties) and also reduced opportunities for gerrymandering designed to minimize the number of seats won by the parties supported by blue-collar voters (chiefly the social democrats and labor parties). Proportional representation, consequently, was often adopted in the early twentieth century as part of constitutional bargains reached on adult male suffrage, as in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany (the Weimar Republic).

F. Liberal Politics and Ideology in 1900

During the first half of the nineteenth century, politics could be divided into conservative and liberal factions with roughly opposite positions on the importance of religious homogeneity, trade protection, privileged families, and family-based political institutions. Liberals disagreed about how far reform should go, but they all favored greater civic equality: somewhat more open political and economic systems, somewhat greater equality before the law, and somewhat broader access to public education. By the end of the century, the entire political spectrum could be said to be liberal, apart from small groups at the extremes. Representative government, equality before the law, more or less open markets, and government support for education had become widely accepted.

That is not to say that voters and their representatives had all become liberal ideologues. Voters did not have to become liberal ideologues to support liberal reforms of economic regulations, civil law, and policymaking procedures. It was sufficient that they and their elected officeholders became a bit more receptive to liberal arguments, a bit less opposed to reducing some restrictions on economic and political life, a bit more supportive of parliamentary authority, and a bit less opposed to extending the franchise to qualified, but previously excluded, voters. Such pragmatic "liberal" members of parliament, often supported by industrialists and wealthy landowners, were often pivotal members of majority coalitions in the middle of the nineteenth century.

In 1800, liberal members of parliaments were a small minority that occasionally played pivotal roles in majority coalitions. Earlier reforms that had broadened opportunities in the bureaucracy, military, and politics helped produce a somewhat more liberal world view in government and within the majority coalitions of national parliaments. The persons in high office were somewhat less often in those positions because of ancient family privileges, and were somewhat more often there because they were professionally qualified for high office and had "risen" to their positions by demonstrating that competence. Senior advisors within the bureaucracy, as educated men and women, were also increasingly exposed to and influenced by liberal economic and political theories. The formally liberal political parties that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century were formed after many significant liberal reforms had already been adopted.

Early liberal alliances and political parties were regarded to be the "left wing" of politics during most of the nineteenth century. Towards the end of the century, liberal political parties were often majority parties in the elected chamber of government and exercised considerable control over public policy. Their freedom of action, however, was constrained by electoral competition with conservatives, who incorporated more and more of the liberal policy agenda into their party platforms. In the early twentieth century, their main rivals were on the left, particularly after most supporters of social democratic parties became eligible to vote. By 1925, the liberal parties had become the moderate parties of the new political spectrum with conservatives on their right and social democrats on their left.

Nineteenth century liberals were never a single doctrinaire group, They were constantly splitting into new parties and merging into new unions during the most of the nineteenth century. Such splits occurred among left, middle, and right liberals, as a consequence of disagreements over the proper extent of economic regulation, the proper extent of economic safety nets, over the proper role of the state in education, and over the relative merits of single-member districts and proportional

representation. Those on the right formed new (more liberal) conservative parties and sometimes aligned with older conservative parties. Left liberals favored greater economic regulation, greater social insurance, and the use of proportional representation in national elections. They often formed new "radical" organizations, often in alliance with members of the labor movement. These left-liberals, in many cases, subsequently became the moderate leaders of the new social democratic parties.[110]

Although romanticized views of the past and future often played roles in campaign rhetoric, none of the mainstream parties of 1900 proposed ending elections, shrinking suffrage, returning to manorial life, or doing away with industry and commercialization. Such positions were left to relatively small groups of arch-conservatives and idealistic communal socialists.

The issues and reform agenda of the liberal political parties in 1900 were, however, quite different from the modest ones of 1800. Liberalism grew increasingly "radical" during the nineteenth century in the sense that liberals lobbied for increasingly greater departures from the privilege- and family-based society of previous centuries. Mill's positions on civic equality, suffrage, and the proper scope of government were radical positions mid century, but were mainstream liberal positions at century's end. This drift to the "left" was also evident by their main political opponents, the conservatives, who grew increasingly liberal during the nineteenth century. The conservative defenders of the privileged aristocracy, king, and state church gradually died out to be replaced by conservative that mingled nationalism and nostalgia with support for previously adopted liberal economic and political reforms.

By century's end, liberals were no longer a small minority interested in reducing aristocratic and religious privilege. Indeed, it could be said that the spectrum of liberal thought now defined the politics in Northern Europe and North America. The mainstream parties of Europe in 1900 were all constitutionally liberal in the sense that they favored equality before the law and representative government based on broad suffrage. They also accepted or supported private enterprise, public education, and modest social insurance and economic regulation. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of the mainstream political parties often made their remaining policy disagreements sound like issues that threatened civilization itself.

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[110] See Luebbert (1991: chs. 3, 4) for a careful historical analysis of the process through which the liberal movement splintered throughout Europe during the late nineteenth century and for a good discussion of liberal–Social Democrat coordination on elections and constitutional issues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gould (1999) analyzes the constitutional and policy effects of liberal parties and liberal ideas in France, Switzerland, and Belgium.

This was partly because of electoral competition with fringe groups and partly because relatively extreme rhetoric tends to capture disproportionate attention from newspapers and newspaper readers. For example, Social Democrats often gave speeches and included platform planks favoring radical changes in the distribution of property and in the nature of ownership. Similarly, the mainstream conservative parties on the right often argued for a return to (limited) hierarchy based on new aristocratic interpretations of social Darwinism and romantic views of "national" experience in the past. However, when the conservatives won elections, few liberal laws were repealed. When the "socialists" won national elections in 1920s and 1930s, they similarly adopted only modest reforms. They expanded social insurance programs (previously adopted by liberal and conservative governments) and revised labor law, rather than nationalizing the means of production or engaging in wholesale wealth redistribution, as some of their speeches might have implied. They were left liberals, rather than revolutionary reformers. When conservatives won national elections, they tended to reduce taxation and weaken labor union protections, rather than eliminating regulation, disenfranchising the working class, outlawing deviant churches, or attempting to recreate medieval life. They were , right liberals, rather than medieval idealists in practice.

Disagreements remained on a number of important policy issues, of course, or there would not have been three major parties or a need for coalitions. Only groups on the far left and far right, however, pressed for fundamental reforms of the liberal economic and political system. The groups on the far left normally left the mainstream social democratic and labor parties to form their own more radical organizations and parties in the early twentieth century, as with the communist parties of Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Italy. The groups on the far right similarly abandoned moderate conservatives parties to form new more radical parties in the early twentieth century, such as Mussolini's fascists in Italy, Hitler's National Socialist Party in Germany, and similar parties elsewhere.[111]

The emergence of the new consensus about the institutions of a good society is another indication of the great transformation that took place in the nineteenth century. The good society of 1900 favored individual merit rather than family heritage, open discussion of ideas rather than censorship, policymaking by elected representatives rather than historic elites, and supported technological advance over tradition. Mechanistic interpretations of nature, as in astronomy, chemistry, and physics, became increasingly central parts of the world views of even very religious

[111] In contrasts to the conservative and social democratic parties, when these more extreme right- and left-wing groups came to power, they did engage in fundamental reforms of the liberal democratic political and economic systems that had emerged during the nineteenth century.

persons, and ancient institutions and traditional patterns of life less so. The typical universe of the average person had become larger and more secular, in part because public education and literacy was more widespread, in part because long distance communication and transportation had become far less expensive and more reliable, and in part because of scientific advances during the nineteenth century. The mainstream parties and their supporters had considerable "faith" that technological innovation and progress would continue in all areas of life.

Both the new Western world view and the new Western political system proved to be quite robust. This was largely a consequence of the piecemeal, substantially empirical, manner through which both had emerged, rather than some great quantum leap in the theory or practice of governance. The institutions of liberal parliamentary democracies were refinements of ancient templates that had already stood the test of time, and they had emerged slowly enough that a supporting political norms had emerged along with them.

The improvements of the nineteenth century had been adopted gradually over the course of a century, with considerable experimentation and experience. Public policies in the West did not become more erratic or radically more redistributive than before, as predicted by many conservatives. Economic progress continued although it was occasionally interrupted by business cycles and policy errors. Political liberalization also continued, albeit at a slower pace, as remaining civic inequalities were challenged and gradually eliminated. Few twentieth-century critics of nineteenth-century developments argued for reestablishing the old manor and guild system or for restoring ancient aristocratic privileges, although many seemed to have fond "memories" of those ancient societies.