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The Issue of Democracy through Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian UK

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Dedication

To our families who love us with no conditions

To our beloved underground who we wish they were with us on this special day

To our teachers who give us comments for our own benefits

To our friends who were with us in good and bad

To you our dear reader who we wish you find this work beneficial

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Abstract

This study traces the history of the British Parliament in addition to the characteristics of the Victorian age. It aims to investigate the issue of democracy in the Victorian period. In doing so, it explores the three Parliamentary Reforms (1832, 1867, and 1884-1885) since they influenced the establishment of democracy in Britain. For that, the main question that was raised in this study was the origin of the British Parliament and the circumstances under which democracy was established in addition to whether it was intended or not. For the framework of analyzing data, the content analysis was the adopted tool under the historical method. In this respect, the work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter traces back the origin of establishing the British Parliament and discusses the circumstances under which it was established. The second chapter represents an overview of Queen Victoria and highlights the characteristics of Victorian Britain under which democracy emerged. The third chapter discusses the issue of Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian age and how they contributed to the foundation of democracy in the British political system. At the end, the study reveals that despite the fact that there were many attempts for reform before Victorian Period, they met with failure. However, the spread of patronage and corruption within the Parliament in addition to the nature of Victorian Age as an age for change and reform, created the most suitable environment for Parliamentary Reforms among other changes, thus, the emergence of democracy which was marked by its gradual and unintended process.

Keywords: Britain, Democracy, Parliament, Parliamentary Reforms, Victorian Age

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المُلخَص

General Introduction

The sovereignty of the British parliament over the political system enabled it to be the most important authority in Britain. Along with history, the British parliament passed through several phases before it reaches its current status. The establishment of the British parliament was for the purpose of security of the state affair under the hand of the elite who represented the House of Lords and were for a long time the only representatives.

The parliament witnessed remarkable changes when the House of Commons was established. However, the division of power was unbalanced in which the House of Lords was the dominant authority based on the belief that they belong to the educated and cultured minorities. For that, they controlled the Parliament decisions through the members of the House of Commons to ensure their authority and supremacy. As a result, there was a spread of corruption and patronage among the members of Parliament at the expense of the people's rights.

The entering of the Victorian Period along with the industrial revolution marked the beginning of an era for change, particularly in politics. Moreover, Europe began to experience a wave of revolutions against governing systems. Consequently and for the security of the country, the UK was obliged to start to think of a policy to avoid this wave which might be destructive especially for the sovereignty.

At the same time there was the adoption of a new belief among politicians; the call for reform. The elite were against any sort of change so they looked for solutions for the problem away from reform. However, the pressure from the society and the fact that this may accelerate the process of revolution paved the way for a future in which reform is accepted.

The great efforts that were spent to avoid reform led to a series of crisis that almost led Britain in a Civil War. The universal franchise and the change in the distribution of seats were out of the desire of the ruling powers what made the process of accepting the idea take a long time than it needs.

The increase of the conflict among the members of parliament in addition to the increasing of awareness among society encouraged the people, who believed that they deserve to hold such responsibility, to demand for their right to be involved in the policy of their country and this paved the way to the idea of democracy and brought it into light.

The struggle of the ruling powers between the pressures imposed from the people and their fear of democracy believing that it is anti-civilization drove them to find a compromise by which they calm the situation and at the same time they prevent democracy. However, the results led to a sequence of compromises and eventually to democracy.

1. Research Problem

Several works attempted to cover the changes that touched the British policy after passing the Parliamentary Reforms. The factors that paved the way for these changes were discussed from one point of view while these changes can be covered from other sides that may lead to different results.

2. Research Questions

- 1) To what extent the place-frame contributed to the emergence of the call for reform?
- 2) To what extent the time-frame was a vital part of the growth of the belief in reform?

- 3) To what extent democracy was manifested in the Victorian British political system?
- 4) Was democracy the real intention behind passing the reforms? Was it reached suddenly or gradually?

3. Hypotheses of the Study

- 1) Tracing the history of establishing the Parliament may reveal the crisis that led to the emergence of reform.
- 2) Exploring the Victorian Period in which the reform took place may help in identifying the circumstances under which the reforms were issued.
- 3) Investigating the process of developing democracy may provide with a clear idea of how far it was achieved.
- 4) Questioning the factors that led to issue the Parliamentary Reforms may enable to identify the real reasons behind democracy and the pace by which it was reached.

4. Aims of the Study

This study is a study that aims at exploring the history of the Parliament establishment as well as the Victorian age in order to be able to investigate how democracy was achieved through Parliamentary Reforms.

5. Research Methodology

This study aims at exploring the history of the British Parliament, in addition to Britain's environment under the role of Queen Victoria in order to identify the nature and origin of developing democracy in the Victorian age. For that, the historical method was the adopted method, which depends on studying the past events through analyzing previous historical materials. Among the historical method ways of analysis, this research uses the content analysis which works on analyzing the content of texts in order to find a

logical connection between the events. For that, we based on using historical studies in which the population is mainly the Reform Acts.

6. Significance of the Study

The concern of this study is to highlight the real intention behind issuing the Parliamentary Reforms in Britain under the reign of Queen Victoria as well as the manifestation of democracy through these reforms. Furthermore, as students in Literature and Civilization studies, we believe that the results of this study will provide students, teachers and others who are interested in this topic with an overview of the role of Victorian Age in shaping a political era in Britain.

7. Structure of the Study

This theoretical study is divided into three chapters. The first and the second chapters aim at investigating the factors by which the idea of reform emerged, while the third chapter provides many details on the Parliamentary Reforms by which democracy was developed. Chapter one is devoted to explore the history of establishing the British Parliament from its early beginning until 1689. The first chapter includes also a section of literature review about the previous studies that dealt with the same issue. Chapter two traces back the features of Britain under the reign of Queen Victoria in which the Parliamentary Reforms were issued. Chapter three is dedicated to describe the different details of the Parliamentary Reforms and its relation to the establishment of democracy in the British political system. We concluded with the nature and the origin of democracy through the implementation of the Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian Period.

8. Literature Review

In 1832, the British Parliament passed the First Reform Act which made changes in the political and social system that was not seen since 1689. Beginning a new phase, Britain experienced another form of political system without knowing the real intention behind it. As a result, there are many previous studies that touched the topic of *The Issue of Democracy through Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian UK* and which varied between Arabic and foreign. In the University of London, a Ph. D thesis was conducted in addition to two articles; one in Arabic and another in English. However, these works dealt with the topic from different angles.

The first work is a thesis that was conducted by Martin John Dirk Sanders in 1987 which was entitled *The Issue of Parliamentary Reform in England during the 1820s*. It aimed at determining the importance of the issue of Parliamentary Reforms in the 1820s. The second work is an article that was published in *Larc* journal that was written by Hassan Al-Waily Mehibes in 2009 which was entitled “Al-islamiat-al-barlamaniya-fi-britania-1832-1949” [Parliamentary Reforms in Britain 1832-1949]. It aimed at tracing and investigating how Parliamentary Reforms were issued. The third work is an article that was published in a book entitled *Constitutionalism, Legitimacy, and Power: Nineteenth-Century Experiences* under the name of “Unintended democracy: parliamentary reform in the UK” that was written by Jo Eric Khushal Murkens in 2014. It aimed at arguing the motives behind issuing the Reform Acts.

These studies agreed on a common goal which that Parliamentary Reforms served as an attempt to maintain oligarchy. However, the study of Martin John Dirk Sanders disagreed in terms of that it aimed at focusing on the importance of the idea of reform in the 1820s. In addition, it had addressed the problem of the study in theoretical aspect.

Nevertheless, the current study dealt with a multifaceted scientific gap by addressing the topic of *The Issue of Democracy through Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian UK*, the comprehensiveness of its sample to include the three Parliamentary Reforms (1832, 1867, 1884-1885), the use of the content analysis tool and its use of the historical methodology.

There is no doubt that the present study has benefited greatly from previous studies in order to reach a thorough diagnosis and treatment of the problem. For that, the present study has benefited from all previous studies in reaching a precise formulation of the research title which is entitled *The Issue of Democracy through Parliamentary Reforms in the Victorian UK* in addition to reaching the appropriate methodology for this study. Finally, it benefited from the study of Martin John Dirk Sanders and the study of Jo Eric Khushal Murkens in the selection of the study tools in addition to the study of Jo Eric Khushal Murkens and the study of Hassan Al-Waily Mehibes in enriching the theoretical framework.

Chapter One

Historical Development of the British

Parliament

Introduction

For centuries, Britain was under the governing system which was based on the monopolization of authority in the hands of the monarchy. However, the need for limiting the monarchy authority urged to establish an institution which later developed to hold the political affairs. This institution became known as the Parliament.

Through the changes that brought with the establishment of Parliament, Britain experienced the introduction of a new policy. With its important role, this institution became one of the most highly settled political institutions in Britain. Due to the oligarchy, there was the spread of corruption within the Parliament which led to losing its confidentiality.

This chapter is devoted to the historical development of the British Parliament; starting with the political system before establishing the Parliament and ending with the development of the Parliament structure. It aims at investigating the main factors and circumstances that paved the way for this institution to be founded. All this is to be able to understand the nature of the environment within the Parliament that paved the way for the call for reform.

2.1 History and Establishment of the British Parliament

There were equivalent systems before the establishment of the Parliament. In addition, the British Parliament passed through different stages to reach its current structure. These systems and stages are explained in the following sections:

2.1.1 Issuing Law Systems before the Establishment of the Parliament

Before the establishment of the British Parliament, there were other systems that preceded it. These systems functioned as the present parliament. The following sections will briefly explain how these systems emerged and how they were functioning:

2.1.1.1 The Anglo-Saxons System

The origins of the British Parliament return back to two early Anglo-Saxon bodies called the Witan and the Moots. The Witan were responsible for providing the King with the right advice and with support in difficult situations. They were composed of advisors and nobles. Whereas, the Moots were responsible for discussing local issues in each county, which later became the House of Commons. They were composed of local lords, bishops, the sheriff, and four representatives from each village. However, later on, the Witan were replaced by the King's Council. Still, on some occasions, the King needed a larger group to consult which was named the Great Council. This latter led to the emergence of the House of Lords (Parliamentary Education Office).

2.1.1.2 The Magna Carta

The Barons and Bishops shaped the early British Parliament, since the Kings needed their advice and support in difficult matters. Those nobles became a fundamental part in the British political system. As a result, the relationship turned to be a struggle for power between the Monarch and the councils. In 1215, the Barons and Bishops decided to impose some limitations on the authority of the King. In doing so, they created an agreement known as the Great Carta, or Magna Carta in Latin, which claimed that the King

has to consult the councils before imposing any taxes. The Magna Carta received its royal assent in 1215 although the King refused to accept the agreement. The Great Carta marked the first event in the British history which limited the King's authority (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

2.1.1.3 The Montfort Parliament

About 1265, a clear vision of the British Parliament started to shape when disobedience against the King Henry III was made under the leadership of a noble named Simon De Montfort; as a result of refusing the King to consult and to take the advice of the nobles. De Montfort acted by shaping an elected council of nobles which was named "Parliament", a word originated from the French word "Parlement" that means "discussing meeting" (McDowall, 1989).

In addition, De Montfort extended the members of parliament by adding from each county two knights and from England's boroughs two citizens. Although De Montfort was defeated and killed by the King Henry III, his efforts marked the initial step for the establishment of the British Parliament; mainly the House of Commons (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

2.1.2 The Establishment of the First British Parliament

The emergence of the model Parliament was during the reign of King Edward I. The Parliament finally became a formal political body and officially called "Parliament". Furthermore, its validities went beyond discussing taxes, now it started issuing laws. In order to provide enough money for the treasury, the King established a "representative institution" composed of knights and wealthy freemen from shires which became officially the House of Commons. (McDowall, 1989)

2.1.3 Factors Leading to Its Establishment

The birth of the British Parliament was a result of a sequence of unplanned events. These events paved the way for the establishment of this highly settled institution in the British political system.

After King John signed the Magna Carta in 1215, it was obvious that he will not be committed to its rules. As a result, a rebellion was made against him. However, he died suddenly in 1216 and his son Henry III took the throne. Still, Henry III was only 9 years old and unable to reign. For that he found himself under the control of the elites of nobles and tied by the Magna Carta (McDowall, 1989).

In the age of 25, the King finally became able to govern and his desire to be independent from the nobles led him to consult his foreign friends for the affairs of the kingdom. This directly outraged the nobles' council and forced them to establish a secret institution to protect the privacy of the kingdom and the treasury. This institution became later officially the British Parliament (McDowall, 1989).

2.1.4 Development of the Structure of Parliament before 1830

After the death of De Montfort, who attempted to establish the Parliament, the King Edward I was able to make it an official institution. In 1265, the parliament began to take a structure composed of nobles and churchman, in addition to two representatives from each county to discuss taxes (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

In the 14th century, the structure of the parliament took a shape of two houses; House of Commons and House of Lords. The former was shaped when the representatives took a step to meet separately. The latter was divided into two groups; the Lords Spiritual mainly churchman and the Lords Temporal mainly nobleman (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

In 1377, the British Parliament witnessed another development which is the election of the first speaker of the House of Commons. The role of the speaker was mainly “to act as spokesperson for the Commons to the Monarch and the House of Lords” (Houses of Parliament, 2018, “THE MODEL PARLIAMENT 1295,” para. 3).

In 1641, a tension arose between the parliament and the King Charles I who presumed that he can govern Britain without returning to the parliament. As a result, a Civil War was sparked against the King which led to his execution. In addition, the House of Lords and Monarchy were removed (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

Furthermore, in 1653, the House of Commons was dissolved by Oliver Cromwell, who had a strong belief that the House of Commons was opposing his decisions. The Lord Cromwell became the Head of state and brought Britain to a new era in which it became a republic nation for about a decade. Following his death, the parliament and the monarchy were revived again (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

Moreover, in 1689, a new agreement strengthened the position of the British Parliament known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill put the King under a set of rules which limited his authority. The monarch has to consult the Parliament before issuing law, impose taxes or using the British army in time of peace. In addition, the agreement guaranteed for the public to object the decisions of his majesty without being under threat. The Bill of Rights represented the basis by which the Parliament became a superpower; capable of organizing frequent sessions, free elections and expressing their thoughts freely (Houses of Parliament, 2018).

2.1.5 Discussion

This chapter is devoted to investigate the history and establishment of the British Parliament in order to investigate the internal factors that led to the call for Parliamentary reform. In this study, it was identified that there are many factors within the parliament itself that paved the way for reform.

The Parliament was established as a result of the struggle between monarch and politicians over the affairs of the State. However, this struggle was not over and it continued throughout history for certain reasons. The domination of the elite over the ordinary in making decision created unbalance in the division of power in the British political system. This led to the overspread of corruption and patronage in order to accommodate their own interests.

The Parliament function shifted from being devoted for securing the State affairs to become an instrument for serving their personal interests. The variety of interests among the Parliament Members led to the emergence of political groups called parties. One of the uprising parties was the Radicalism which called for reform.

2.1.6 Conclusion

The establishment of the British Parliament had gone through many stages before it reached its stage of stability about 1689-1830. Actually, it was developed gradually and it encountered many struggles to be finally considered as an official institution after it was dissolved. However, oligarchy can be clearly seen in the governing system through the divergence in the division of power among the Parliament.

The ruling power attitude toward change was clear and despite the fact that there were some politicians who believed in reform, the Parliament reaction to the theory of reform was easy to be predicted. But, nowadays, it seems clear that democracy is implemented in the British political system as the British Parliament constitutes the

Legislative branch in the British division of power in which the Parliament's main function is to make law, debate and decide parliamentary business. In fact, an overview on the Victorian age is going to be the subject under investigation in the following chapter as many facts concerning calling it "The Age of Reform" will be revealed.

Chapter Two

An Overview of the Victorian Period

Introduction

The establishment of the British Parliament represents one of the significant events in the history of the British political system. For many years, the British parliament witnessed almost no change in its political system and parliamentary reforms were not taken into account despite the fact that it was needed. However, this did not last with the onset of the nineteenth century.

The nineteenth century shaped a transitional phase in which Britain changed from being agricultural, rural, and oligarchy country to become industrial, urban, and democratic one. As a result, the policy in this period took an extra dimension due to several factors that were the vital reason which transferred Britain to a different status. This remarkable change is associated with the Victorian reign.

This chapter is concerned with Britain during the reign of Queen Victorian starting with an overview of her biography and ending with the main changes that occurred in different fields of life at that time. In addition, there will be a discussion on the environment in which reform emerged. It aims at investigating the factors within the Victorian society which led to the reform.

4.1 The Biography of Queen Victoria

The Victorian Age was named after Queen Victoria who ruled Britain from 1837 till 1901. The following sections represent an overview of her biography:

4.1.1 Dynasty and Birth

Queen Victoria belongs to the Hanoverian family (Lee, 1903). She was the niece of William IV and the daughter of Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and the young brother of William IV (Synge, 1919). The Queen was born on May 24th, 1819 in Kensington Palace (Lee, 1903).

The morning that followed the death of the King William IV, which was on June 20th, 1837 at Windsor Castle, two archbishops went to Kensington Palace in London to tell the future Queen to take her legitimate right as the Queen of the Kingdom. She was 18 years old when she took the throne after her uncle and she reigned for 63 years. She died on January 22nd, 1901 (Synge, 1919).

4.1.2 The Queen's Succession

In fact, the Queen occupied the fifth rank before taking her legitimate right as the Queen of the kingdom. "Between her [the Queen] and the crown there stood her three uncles... besides her father..." (Lee, 1903, p. 11).

However, her position to the throne advanced gradually after a series of events. On January 23rd, 1820, the Queen Victoria's father, Edward Augustus the Duke of Kent, died because of lungs inflammation (Lee, 1903). Nine days later, her grandfather, King George III, passed away after a long period of being "blind and imbecile" (Lee, 1903, p. 14).

As a result, her uncle, George IV Prince of Regent, became the King. However, his health declined and he died on June 26th, 1830 (Lee, 1903). In fact, three years before,

his brother, Prince Frederick Duke of York, died on January 5th, 1827 because of dropsy and cardio-vascular disease (Prince Frederick, Duke of York and Albany, 2011).

Following the death of King George IV, William IV, Duke of Clarence, took the throne. He ruled for seven years before his health broke down and passed away on June 20th, 1837 (Lee, 1903). Since King William IV had no successor, the right of reign moved directly to Queen Victoria.

4.1.3 The Queen's Marriage and Children

With a demand from her uncle, King Leopold, her marriage from her cousin Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha was planned since she was born (Lee, 1903). Lee (1903) stated that “early in 1838 King Leopold reminded his niece of his matrimonial plan” (p. 106). Lee (1903) added that the Queen replied that they still young for marriage and she asked her uncle to postpone the decision for three years.

When Albert was informed about the decision and about the Queen's suggestion for postponing, he accepted with hesitation thinking that the Queen had high expectations in such a situation. The following year, the Queen received a number of proposals for marriage that she considered them annoying, what led her to rethink about the three years suggestion. On October 15th, the Queen asked Albert for marriage. The next year, on February 10th, 1840, they got married at the chapel of St. James's Palace (Lee, 1903).

The Queen gave birth to nine children who ruled in different places in Europe. Her first child was the Princess Victoria, the mother of Emperor William II and the wife of Prince of Prussia. The next year, she, Queen Victoria, gave birth to Edward VII, the Prince of Wales who took the throne after her death. Two years later, Princess Alice, the grand Duchess of Hesse, was born. Afterwards, Prince Alfred, who became the Duke of Edinburgh and Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, was born. The next three years, the Queen gave birth to two daughters; Princess Helena who was entitled Princess Christian of

Schleswig-Holstein in 1846; and Princess Louise who was entitled Duchess of Argyll in 1848. The following five years witnessed the birth of the two youngest princes; Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught in 1850; and Prince Leopold Duke of Albany in 1853. Finally, in 1857, Princess Beatrice was born, later Princess Henry of Battenberg (Veldman & Williams, 2019).

4.1.4 People Effect on Her Life

As a queen, Queen Victoria was affected by many people that became reflected on her decisions. The following sections represent the people who were the most influential on her life:

4.1.4.1 Mary Louisa Victoria, the Queen's Mother

“Heir after heir to the British throne had died” (Synge, 1919, p. 7), it became obvious that the young princess may become the future Queen. For that, her mother ensured that the princess will be well educated for the future charge of the throne (Synge, 1919).

4.1.4.2 Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister

Lord Melbourne was the Prime Minister when the Queen took the throne. Since she was only 18 years old, she needed support and needed to be instructed. Lord Melbourne was a strong instructor who directed the Queen in her first Council meeting in her reign (Synge, 1919). In addition, “Lord Melbourne was ever at her right hand, instructing her in her great duties, explaining difficult situations, and guiding her through the intricate ways of the British Constitution” (Synge, 1919, p. 11).

4.1.4.3 Prince Albert, Her Husband

One of the most influential people that affected the Queen's life was her husband and her cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Prince Albert was a wise political

man. The Queen consulted him in many concerns of the kingdom. He was honored and entitled by the Queen Victoria as the Prince Consort to emphasize that he made such effective role in the country (Spiazzi, Tavella, & Layton, 2016).

4.2 Characteristics of the Victorian Period

The Victorian Period was an extraordinary era in British history. The Period featured by the spread of prosperity. It was a period where the Industrial Revolution reached its peak altering every aspect of life in Britain. The major characteristics are explained in the following sections:

4.2.1 Science

The Victorian Period characterized by a rapid change in the scientific field. In other words, Britain became known as “the workshop of the world” due to the expansion of the industrial production as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution (Think Central, n. d.). In addition to the discovery of electric power which helped in developing communication means such as the Telegraph.

4.2.2 Transport

Another consequence of the Industrial Revolution is the discovery of the steam power which had moved Britain from “horse-drawn carriage to motor cars” (Think Central, n. d., p. 914). Later, Britain witnessed the expansion of building railways as a means for transportation for both goods and people. Another mode of transportation is the development of steamships where Britain experienced the launch of the steamship SS in Bristol in 1843 (Easton, Carrodus, Wilson, Wilson, & Smith, 2016).

4.2.3 Urban Growth

Prior to the Industrial Revolution and with the development of the transportation means, there was growth in the number of cities and towns. The growth of towns came as a

direct consequence of the movement of population from rural areas to urban ones. “In 1801, only 17 per cent of the population of Europe lived in the cities. By 1891, this had grown to 54 per cent” (Easton, Carrodus, Wilson, Wilson, & Smith, 2016, p. 286).

4.2.4 Social Conditions

After the technological advancement, there was emergence of new social classes which created a huge gap between the rich people and the poor ones. On one hand, poor people were living under unprivileged conditions and with lack of care and sanitation (Spiazzi, Tavella, & Layton, 2016). For example, “often whole families shared one room with no running water, and toilets were communal pits” (Spiazzi, Tavella, & Layton, 2016, p. 8). On the other hand, rich people were land owners living in welfare conditions and enjoyed a variety of advantages. For instance, “they possessed enormous wealth, land and political influence” (Easton et al., 2016, p. 282).

4.2.5 Education

In the early Victorian Period, education was limited to a certain category of people who can afford the charges for educating their children and mostly belonged to the upper class (Woodward, 1939). However, after the spread of machines, there was an urgent need for technical skills. Therefore, “the new schools were as necessary as the new machine tools and the new railways” (Woodward, 1939, p. 455). Thus, issuing educational reforms began to increase which offered educational opportunities for children from all social classes (Woodward, 1939).

4.2.6 Literature

The increasing of knowledge was reflected in the growth of literature. The Victorian literature entered a transitional phase where it moved from Romanticism to Realism. The writers shifted from the focus on imagination to reality where they were

interested in picturing the living conditions of that era (Habib, 2011). Moreover, writers, in the Victorian era, showed more interest in writing novels more than other genres (Spiazzi, Tavella, & Layton, 2016). The most famous writers during this era are Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, among others (Habib, 2011).

4.2.7 Politics

Another fundamental change which involved the political system is the acceptance of the idea of a constitutional monarchy by the Queen Victoria. Dutt (n. d.) explained that “the crown becomes a checking and regulating, rather than a moving force” (p. 3). Another change that the political system had experienced was the passing of several legislations and reforms which touched each of the political, economic, and social life in Britain. Under the light of these legislations and reforms, Britain took a step toward democracy and “political equality [was replaced] in spite of social and economic differences” (Dutt, n.d, p. 2).

4.3 Age of Reform

The Victorian Period was an age of prosperity in the British history. Meanwhile, it has been considered by historians as an Age of Reform which involved political and social changes.

Briggs (2011) stated that the Victorian Age was a vital age. In more words, a time featured by legislation that mainly aimed at reform. These legislations “passed through [the British] Parliament...including bills relating to Parliament itself” (Briggs, 2011, “Introduction,” para. 1).

The beginning of the Victorian era was associated by the beginning of the Reform Age. Several acts were passed such as the Great Reform Act (1832), the Factory Act

(1833), the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), among others (Spiazzi, Tavella, & Layton, 2016).

Black (1999) commented that political and social reform featured the Victorian Period. He emphasized that reform was an extraordinary change since the 1640s. he stated that reform “was an issue which politicized British society, and increased middle class social awareness” (p.277).

4.4 Movement Toward the Reform

The first reason for reform was that political power was centered in the House of Commons. British Parliament was under the control of the elite for a long time. However, the reform came to put an end to the corruption that spread in the Political system (Woodward, 1939).

Britain, during the late of the eighteenth century, witnessed a new phase of instability and tension rose, due to several factors which led to changing in its political structure (Turner, 1999). Turner (1999) cited five main factors that led to the abolition of the old corruptive political system; the emergence of Radicalism which changed the power centre in the British system; the appearance of parliamentary protest that caused instability within the Parliament; the spread of revolutionary movements in Europe against political systems; the formation and the impact of the new parties; and the struggle between the Monarch and the Parliament over power, patronage, and influence.

Another point of view is that of Thomson (1963) who argued that the idea of reform emerged with the appearance of the working classes. He claimed that the working class shaped a fundamental factor which inverted the nature of the British political system. He added that labourers were the implication of the Industrial Revolution and its discipline that came to feel marginalized by the government. As a result, a sense of awareness began

to spread among workers. For that, the working class began their call for reform (as cited in Turner, 1999).

4.5 Discussion

This chapter is devoted to explore the Victorian Period in order to underline the major effect of the Victorian Period features that led to the call for Parliamentary reform. In this study, it was identified that there are many external factors that paved the way for reform.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the Victorian society was distinctive for being an industrial society. However, the Industrial Revolution had other consequences across time. It led to the appearance of industrial towns which were desirable by the majority of population. These people belonged to the Middle class, however, after the emergence of industrial labours, new opportunities for working were offered. As a result, the majority of population was workers in manufactories and mines, thus, resulted in forming a new social class addressed to as the Working class.

The massive movement of population which gathered in the industrial towns, in addition to the hard conditions under which this unprivileged group were working created an unhealthy life style. Despite the fact of representing the majority and the vital population in Britain, there was no political legislation guaranteed their rights. This fact led to revolutionary movements as a reaction against the political system in an attempt for reform.

4.6 Conclusion

The British society has always been distinguished by its preservation and fear of radical changes. However, the entering of the Victorian Period along with the industrial revolution marked the beginning of an era for change. At that time, Britain started to

witness major changes in all field such as science, transport, cities, life conditions, education, literature, and politics was among them.

As a result, the Parliament experienced noticeable events and attempts for change that drawn attention to it. One of these changes was the establishment democracy, which was gradually introduced to the British political system through the Parliamentary Reforms which previously encountered a strong objection. The fact of the matter is that democracy issue through parliamentary reforms in the Victorian age is going to be the subject under study in the following chapter as a lot of details will be revealed.

Chapter Three

**The Parliamentary Reforms and
Their Consequence**

Introduction

The unbalanced division of power among the Parliament houses in addition to the rapid change that Britain was experiencing in the early Victorian period paved the way for the idea of reform to flourish. The democracy issue was implemented in the political system through reforms despite the fact that it was seen as an unachievable objective.

The Victorian period was not the only time where reforms were passed as following reforms took place in Britain to shape the final structure of democracy. At that time, the actual reasons behind reforms were not evident. In fact, there were questions about whether democracy was intended or unintended.

Many specialists in politics started to investigate the issue since history shows that the Parliament did not encounter such change for a long time. There have been inquiries concerning the circumstances under which the Parliament passed the reforms. In addition, they questioned the implementation of democracy whether it was a sudden or gradual in terms of urgency.

Therefore, the results cannot be definitely achieved since new facts can be revealed by time and by the diversity of methods among studies.

6.1 The Reform Acts

The Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, 1884-1885 represent one of the major changes in the British political system in Victorian Age. The following sections present more details on these three Reforms:

6.1.1 The First Reform Act

The first Parliamentary Reform Act enacted in the Victorian Age was the First Reform Act 1832. The following sections provide more details concerning this Act:

6.1.1.1 Background

In order to avoid revolution and for better social conditions, the Whigs stood for the idea of reform which had been started by early radicals. Radicals claimed that Parliament should represent people while Tories claimed that it should represent the property. The Whigs, on the other hand, wanted neither representing people nor property; all that they called for was changes to avoid revolution (McDowall, 1989).

When the House of Lords refused to pass the Bill that Lord Earl Grey proposed in 1830, there was a wave of Reform Riots in several British towns; the most significant one was in Bristol in 1831. Furthermore, the King William VI was forced to ask Grey to return to the office because of the failure of Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, to form a cabinet since Lord Grey's government had resigned. Nevertheless, it was the request of Lord Grey to enlarge the number of Whig peers what forced the House of Lords to pass the Reform Act and it received Royal assent in 1832 (Simkin, 2017a).

Still, the Royal assent had not been given by the King in person; Molesworth (1865) explained that "he peremptorily refused to give his assent to the Bill in person. It was consequently given by commission; the commissioners being the Lord Chancellor,

Earl Grey, the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Marquis of Wellesley, Lord Durham, and Lord Holland” (p. 339).

6.1.1.2 Leading Factors

On the ground of what is mentioned above, it can be concluded that there are two major factors that contributed in passing this reform; avoiding revolution and the fear of losing power:

- **Avoiding revolution**

When a wave of revolutionary movements has stroke Europe, Britain was on the stake. It had only two options in hand; either face its destiny as any other European country or find a plan to avoid it, and what plan is better than a change that has to be done now or later. For that, Britain was the only survivor of this crisis due to this reform which was “undertaken in part by the elites to stave off revolution or more drastic reform, and in this it was successful, allowing them to survive as ruling elites in a largely intact system” (Steinbach, 2017, p. 38).

- **Fear of Losing Power**

The parliament was dominated by the Tories, before 1830, which were controlling the rotten boroughs by which they put control over the House of Commons. So the chance of passing the Bill seemed impossible. Yet, when the Whigs gained the elections, it seemed as a chance to propose the Bill. However, the Bill was defeated by the House of Lords after passing it by the House of Commons. This led the Whigs government to ask the King to create more Whig peers in the House of Lords but the King refused and the Whigs government resigned. After that, the Tories failed to shape a new cabinet since it will be against the people’s claims. This is when the King was obliged to ask them to return to office, what created a chance for the Whigs to ask the King concerning the Whig peers

again. Eventually, he accepted and when the House of Lords, mainly Tories, heard of the news, they passed the Bill out of fear of losing power (Simkin, 1832 Reform Act, 2017a).

6.1.1.3 Definition of the First Reform Act

The First Reform Act of 1832, mainly named the Representation of People Act 1832 yet known as the Great Reform Act, brought many changes. It amended the electoral system and the distribution of representatives in the Parliament. Thus, it extended the suffrage according to specific requirements. In addition, it redistributed parliamentary seats according to the number of population for each town (Steinbach, 2017).

6.1.1.4 The Terms of the First Reform Act

The Representation of People Act of 1832 stipulated a set of terms concerning the distribution of parliamentary seats and the qualifications for the electoral system. The terms can be divided as follows:

6.1.1.4.1 Distribution of Representatives

The Reform Act of 1832 resulted in two main impacts concerning the distribution of representatives as follows:

- **Abolition of seats**

The first impact of the Great Reform of 1832 was abolishing a number of seats, mainly the rotten borough. The Reform resulted in losing representation for 56 rotten boroughs who belongs to 111 MPs, losing one MP for each borough with less than 4,000 inhabitants, and giving up of 2 MPs for each of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis (Bloy, 1997).

- **Creation of new seats**

Another impact of the Reform Act of 1832 was creating new parliamentary seats to represent the counties and large towns which either were represented for the first time or added extra seats. The Representation of People Act of 1832 resulted in adding 65 seats for the counties, creating 44 seats for 22 larger towns, giving one MP to each of 21 smaller towns, and adding more seats to each of Scotland and Ireland; 8 seats for Scotland and 5 for Ireland (Bloy, 1997).

6.1.1.4.2 Electoral system

The Great Reform provided a set of suffrage requirements for each of the borough and the counties as follows:

- **In the boroughs**

In the boroughs, the suffrage was organized and norms were established. Voting rights were granted to who owned or leased either house or land worth £10 (Bloy, 1997).

- **In the counties**

In the counties, Bloy (1997) listed the terms under which the suffrage was extended as follows:

- _ Owners of house or land worth 40 shillings;
- _ Who has ownership of house or land worth £10;
- _ Renters of house or land worth £50;
- _ Renters with a long lease of house or land worth £10;
- _ Renters with a medium lease of house or land worth £50;
- _ Owners of house or land worth between 50 shilling and £10 in borough, or if it was rented and worth over £10.

6.1.1.5 Critics of the First Reform Act

The Great Reform Act of 1832 extended the electoral vote and redistributed the seats of the parliament. However, its main focus was on the respectable middle class leaving the majority of British population, which are the working class, unable to vote (Steinbach, 2017). “Eighty percent of MPs still came from landed backgrounds” (Steinbach, 2017, p. 45). Furthermore, the rotten boroughs were not totally abolished and the distribution of seats remained unbalanced. For instance, southern England still has the majority of representatives in parliament comparing with Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and north of England (Steinbach, 2017).

Another point that outraged the working class was the legislative programs that were passed by the government. Such programs, Anatomy Act, Poor Law Act, and paying of taxes, led to the emergence of Chartism movement. The movement adopted six main points which are; giving the right of vote to males over twenty-one years old, secret ballot, fairness in distribution of seats, no property qualification, providing payments for MPs, and annual elections. It aimed at supporting the working class and the extension of males’ suffrage. However, after 1848, the movement failed and lost support (Vossen, 2005).

Molesworth (1865) agrees that the Reform Act of 1832 marginalized the working class in the elections, whereas, the suffrage before the Reform was almost universal. Lord Spencer admitted that the measurement of suffrage requirements was not fair. Molesworth (1865) explained that “the opponents of the bill were much more to blame than its framers and supporters. Their efforts were exerted not to amend the bill but to delay and defeat it” (p. 338).

Although the bill guaranteed the suffrage to the middle classes, it marginalized the working classes and the agricultural population which represent the majority of it at that

time (Synge, 1919). Synge (1919) emphasized that “it was this huge class of toilers that now arose to call attention to an injustice to which it had awakened” (p. 41).

6.1.2 The Second Reform Act

The second Parliamentary Reform Act enacted in the Victorian Age was the Second Reform Act 1867. The following sections provide more details concerning this Act:

6.1.2.1 Background

The failure of the Chartism movement and the distinction between the middle classes and the working classes, led to raise awareness among the workers toward their conditions and rights. Moreover, the fear of revolution and mess across the country paved the way for reform proposals, initially from Lord John Russell. Certain suggestions of the reform proposals included reduction of enfranchisement rates, merging of smallest borough seats, redistribution of seats, and secret ballot. Still, they all were refused by the government (Vossen, 2005).

However, the death of Palmerston in 1865 paved the way for Lord Russell, as Prime Minister, and Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, to introduce representative bill in 1866. But the little support from the parliament resulted in the defeat of the bill. When the news spread, it outraged the workers. After that, the bill was reintroduced again by Benjamin Disraeli in 1867. Finally, it received its Royal assent in 1867 (Vossen, 2005).

6.1.2.2 Leading Factors

On the ground of what is mentioned above, it can be concluded that there are two major internal factors that contributed in passing this reform; ambition of franchise extension and the death of Lord Palmerston. In addition to an external factor which is the Union victory in the American Civil War:

- **Ambition of Franchise Extension**

Following the decline of the Chartist movement, the parliament started to receive initial attempts for reform. The most remarkable proposals were suggested by Lord John Russell. He proposed a bill, in 1849, in which he reduced the enfranchisement requirements; £ 5 for householders in the boroughs and £ 20 for tenants in the counties. However, the cabinet defeated the bill. Later, in 1852, he reintroduced another bill but including new suggestions (Vossen, 2005). Lord Russell proposed “a merger of the smallest borough seats” (Vossen, 2005, p. 5). Although he did not belong to the radicals, Lord Russell made great efforts to call for reform.

- **The Death of Lord Palmerston**

Lord Palmerston was strongly one of the opponents of any modification in the existing government. He defeated any reform proposal that was suggested. After his death in 1865, the chance for reform increased, what paved the way for further proposals. In addition, Lord Russell took the office of Prime Minister what facilitated the operation of passing the Reform (Murkens, 2014; Vossen, 2005).

- **The Union Victory in the American Civil War**

Another factor that contributed in the establishment of the Reform Act of 1867 is the results of the American Civil War. The victory of the Union in the American Civil War encouraged for the call for reform and democracy. This war “demonstrated the viability of democracy and strengthened the calls for reform” (Murkens, 2014, “Motivation behind the Reform Act,” para. 2).

6.1.2.3 Definition of the Second Reform Act

The Second Reform Act, mainly named the Representation of People Act 1867 also known as the Reform Act of 1867, renewed the electoral system. It doubled the number of voters by enfranchising the working class through redefining the meaning of owning property. Furthermore, the Reform Act of 1867, as the Great Reform Act, brought new changes in the distribution of parliamentary seats and abolished more rotten boroughs (Steinbach, 2017).

6.1.2.4 Terms of the Second Reform Act

The Representation of People Act of 1867 made amendments concerning the distribution of parliamentary seats and renewed the terms of qualifications for the electoral system. The terms can be divided as follows:

6.1.2.4.1 Distribution of Representative

The Reform Act of 1867 resulted in two main impacts concerning the distribution of representatives as follows:

- **Abolition of seats**

The Second Reform Act abolished a number of seats; however, it did not have the same impact as the Great Reform Act. Boroughs fewer than 10,000 inhabitants were deprived from their seats as a result 45 seats were taken. Further, due to corruption, there were 7 towns that were disfranchised (Walton, 1998).

- **Creation of new seats**

The Act made remarkable changes in which it added and created new seats. Walton (1998) stated that “25 seats were given to counties; 20 seats were created for new boroughs; 6 boroughs received 1 extra seat each; and London University was given a seat” (p. 12).

6.1.2.4.2 Electoral System

The Second Reform redefined the suffrage requirements for both; the boroughs and the counties. However, this time it focused mainly on the boroughs. The suffrage requirements are defined as follows:

- **In the boroughs**

The Second Reform Act redefined the property qualifications by including the working class (Steinbach, 2017; Walton, 1998). It extended the suffrage to include all male householders for at least one year despite the fact of the situation of the property. However, it effectively considered the skilled workers who are entitled “the Labor Aristocracy” (Steinbach, 2017, p. 51). Moreover, “male lodgers who paid £10 per year for unfurnished rooms also had the vote, on the logic that they too were on some level ‘independent’” (Steinbach, 2017, p. 51). In other words, the Act focused on the notion of independency, i.e. any male who lived neither with his parents nor with a landlady, had the right to vote.

- **In the counties**

In the counties, the requirements were almost the same as the previous Reform. While the rates of freeholders remained the same; 40 shillings, the rates of owners or leaseholders were reduced to £5 and the rates of renters were reduced to £12 a year (Walton, 1998).

6.1.2.5 Critics of the Second Reform Act

Although the Reform Act of 1867 abolished several seats, the parliamentary system of distributing seats still tied to the old system (Vossen, 2005). Walton (1987) stated that “Medieval market towns...continued to return more than half the borough members and more than one fifth of the House of Commons” (as cited in Vossen, 2005, p.

11). Steinbach (2017) mentioned that the Act did not guarantee the equality of suffrage; one in three men in England, Wales, and Scotland versus one in six men in Ireland.

Another critic declared by Steinbach (2017) is the fact that the Second Reform Act disregarded the group of single young males who were not responsible for a house or families, although they belonged to the working class. Pugh (2002) divided this group into two categories; men who were sons living in their parents' house or who were servants living with their employers; and men who had movable residence (as cited in Murkens, 2014).

The other group that was excluded in this Reform Act is the group of women. As the Great Reform Act, the Representative of People Act of 1867 "also excluded women" (Steinbach, 2017, p. 52). Rendall (2000) added that "...the 1867 Act disadvantaged the position of women householders further by making illegal the convenient and cost-effective practice of 'compounding' (combining) rates into rent" (as cited in Murkens, 2014, "Consequences of the Reform Act," para.7).

6.1.3 The Third Reform Act

The third Parliamentary Reform Act enacted in the Victorian Age was the Third Reform Act 1884-1885. The following sections provide more details concerning this Act:

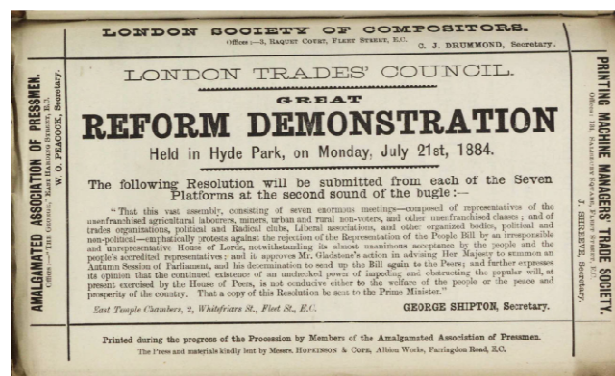
6.1.3.1 Background

The 1880's had witnessed passing many legislations, however, parliamentary reform was unwelcome. Among politicians, Gladstone was committed to parliamentary reform, despite the fact of the Queen's objection (Simkin, 2017b). He believed that "people living in towns and rural areas should have equal rights" (Simkin, 2017b, "Conservative Party and Parliamentary Reform," para. 3). When Gladstone introduced his proposal, the

Conservative party was opposed to believing that people in counties would vote against them (Trueman, 2015).

“The spread of education since 1870, had removed the chief objection against the extension of [the] franchise to agricultural labourers...” (Dutt, n.d, p. 140), therefore, agricultural workers are no more illiterate. Finally, on June 26th, the bill was passed by the House of Commons; however, it was rejected by the House of Lords (Simkin, 2017b). As a result, on 21st July, a massive demonstration was organized in Hyde Park to protest against the rejection of the Bill (Simkin, 2017b).

Figure 1: Great Reform Demonstration 1884



Although Gladstone threatened to mend the House of Lords, he refused that when one of his MPs advised him of doing so, saying that a hereditary element is good as an obstacle against misconduct (Simkin, 2017b). All this resulted in making some Conservatives ready for compromise and the Bill was passed but under the condition that it would be followed by Redistribution Bill (Mayer, 1999 as cited in Simkin, 2017b).

6.1.3.2 Leading Factors

On the ground of what is mentioned above, it can be concluded that there are four main factors that contributed in passing this reform; fear of revolution, fear of losing power, making an agreement, and spread of education:

- **Fear of Revolution**

When the House of Lords rejected the bill, the news spread and the people were angry. As a result, on July 21st, a demonstration was held in Hyde Park against the rejection of 1884 Reform Bill (Simkin, 2017b). In this demonstration, speeches were made in which the House of Lords was criticized. One of these speeches was made by Joseph Chamberlin in which he invited the people to refrain from being “subservient” to the House of Lords (Simkin, 2017b).

Other Parliamentary Members were afraid of revolution, in case the bill was rejected. In Germany, a socialist party was developed and politicians, such as Samuel Smith, feared its extension to Britain under the light of the current events. He, Samuel Smith in his speech in the House of Commons on November 6th, 1884, explained that “...the guidance of parties would pass from the hands of wise statesman into that of extreme and violent men” (as cited in Simkin, 2017b, “Gladstone and the House of Lords,” para. 8).

- **Fear of Losing Power**

Queen Victoria was always feeling inconvenience toward Gladstone. She wrote him many letters in which she warned him about his policies, and parliamentary reform was one of them (Guedalla, 1958 as cited in Simkin, 2017b). When the Lords rejected Gladstone’s proposal, the Queen believed that they took the right decision. She said that they reflected “the true feeling of the country” (Jenkins, 1995 as cited in Simkin, 2017b,

“Gladstone and the House of Lords,” para. 3). In addition, the Queen was outraged because of the speech of Joseph Chamberlain in the demonstration and she sent a complaining letter to Gladstone, apart from previous letters concerning other speeches made by his colleagues (Foot, 2005 as cited in Simkin, 2017b).

These continuous letters outraged Gladstone who, in August 1884, sent a letter to the Queen in which he commented that the Lords had always stood in the way of Liberals and he threatened to reconstruct or abolish them. Even though, he, Gladstone, admitted that the House of Lords is important against misconduct (Simkin, 2017b).

Chamberlain’ speech and Gladstone’s threat, in addition to John Morley’ statement on *The Spectator*, where he pointed out that “if the struggle once began, it was inevitable that the days of privilege should be numbered” (as cited in Simkin, 2017b, “Gladstone and the House of Lords,” para. 9), all resulted in a wave of fear among Conservatives who agreed later to pass the bill through compromise.

- **Making an Agreement**

When Gladstone proposed the bill, there was a disagreement among the House of Commons; whether to pass the bill or not. On one hand, the proposal received strong oppositions. One of these oppositions was William Ansell Day’s argument in which he stated that it was not the working classes who call for reform, but people who want to take advantage of it (Day, 1883 as cited in Simkin, 2017c).

On the other hand, George Goschen, who strongly opposed the 1867 Reform Act, supported Gladstone’s proposal of giving the rural workers the right to vote. In his speech in the House of Commons on March 3rd, 1884, he declared that “...the working classes have given proofs that they are deeply desirous to do what is right” (as cited in Simkin, 2017c, “1884 Reform Act,” para. 5). On June 26th, the Commons accepted the bill, although it almost resulted in dividing the House. However, it was rejected by the Lords.

Because of the Queen's complaining letters addressed to Gladstone concerning the speeches of his colleagues, Gladstone threatened to either mend or end the Lords (Simkin, 2017c). This had put pressure on the Queen and Lords, and many Conservatives changed their minds and started to be open for negotiation. Hamilton in his diary commented that it was time for compromise (as cited in Simkin, 2017c). Finally, Conservatives in the House of Lords accepted the bill, but in return, they "demanded a redistribution bill accompany any reform bill" (Vossen, 2005, p. 13), which had been met with acceptance by Gladstone and the bill became a law.

- **Spread of Education**

One of the major reasons behind refraining from giving suffrage for rural workers was the belief that they are not competent to take such responsibility, since they were not enough educated. Most politicians were afraid that "...rural folk were not sophisticated enough for [suffrage]...at least until they had been properly educated" (Steinbach, 2017, p. 55).

However, in 1870, the Elementary Education Act was passed and all places in England were Equipped with schools which enabled children from all social classes to grow up educated (Woodward, 1939). These advances "...affected the manners, outlook, and capacity of every class in society..." (Woodward, 1939, p. 455), what changed the view of seeing the rural workers as illiterate and uneducated. As a result, this "...had removed the chief objection against the extension of [the] franchise to agricultural labourers..." (Dutt, n.d, p. 140).

6.1.3.3 Definition of the Third Reform Act

The Third Reform Act is divided into two main Acts issued respectively in 1884 and 1885 (Southgate, 1940). The Reform Act of 1884, also known as the Representation of People Act of 1884, amended the household and the franchise qualification to be extended

to the counties after extending it to the boroughs in 1867 Reform Act (Southgate, 1940; Trueman, 2015). Moreover, the Reform Act of 1885, also known as the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885, redistributed parliamentary seats fairly compared with the distribution of population in towns and boroughs in all over the United Kingdom (Southgate, 1940).

However, the Third Reform Act consists of three Reform Acts; the Representation of People Act of 1884 and the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885, in addition to the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act of 1883 (Steinbach, 2017). This latter was passed in 1883 to prevent any corrupt practices by imposing penalties such as expensive fines, imprisonment, disqualification from sitting in parliament, etc (Mathiot, 1958).

6.1.3.4 Terms of the Third Reform Act

The third reform act enacted a set of terms which unified the franchise qualifications of 1867 to be extended to the counties in addition to the redistribution of seats. The terms can be divided as follows:

6.1.3.4.1 Electoral System

The franchise qualifications that the Third Reform Act issued can be summarized in the following points:

- Uniformed household and lodger franchise at elections in all counties and boroughs by virtue of the Reform Act of 1867;
- Inhabitants of dwelling-houses by virtue of any office, service or employment are considered as tenants, which enable them to gain the right to vote;
- Any man, who has any rent-charge or shares the same premise with other men, is prevented from the vote. In the second case, only one of them had the right to vote;
- A man is registered to vote when occupying any premise in a county or borough in UK with a yearly rental of 10 £ for at least one year;

- A man who occupies a premise in borough is prevented to vote at the county election (Glen, 1885).

6.1.3.4.2 Distribution of seats

The distribution of seats that the Third Reform Act made can be summarized in the following points:

- Merging towns with less than 15.000 people in their counties;
- One representative for towns with a population between 15.000 and 50.000 people;
- Two representatives for towns with a population between 50.000 and 165.000 people;
- Splitting counties and towns with more than 165.000 people to equal divisions with one representative for each (Hassan Al-Waily, 2009).

6.1.3.5 Critics of the Third Reform Act

Despite the fact that the Third Reform Act extended the franchise to the working class in the counties, the proportion of voters from the middle class is higher than the proportion of voters from the working class, although the working class represented the majority of the population (Steinbach, 2017).

In addition, property remained the main measure for qualification (Steinbach, 2017). Two million men still deprived of the right to vote (Steinbach, 2017). Moreover, as the Great Reform Act and the Second Reform Act, the Third Reform Act excluded women. Truman (2015) argued that “none of whom [women] had the right to vote regardless of their wealth” (“The 1884 Reform Act,” para. 4). Apart from this, the political power maintained in the hands of the House of Lords despite the fact of the increasing democracy (Steinbach, 2017).

6.2 The Consequences of the Reform Acts

Based on what have been previously stated, factors related to internal affairs such as revolution, authority, franchise extension, death of Lord Palmerston, compromise, and education, in addition to others related to external affairs such as the Union victory in the American Civil War were the main driving forces for passing the three Reform Acts.

However, before passing the Three Parliamentary Reform Acts, the political system in UK was different. For that, the Reforms had a great influence on the British political system and society. The following sections represent a comparison between the statistics before the Reforms and their results that was reflected in the Victorian political system and society.

6.2.1 Before the Reform Acts

Before the Parliamentary Reform Acts, there were three considerable variations mainly in the average of voters and representatives in each of the boroughs and the counties, the average of voters for each representative, and the average of population for each voter. In the boroughs, the gap between the number of representatives and the number of voters was wide compared with the one in the counties.

While in the counties there were 186 members elected by 268.500 voters, in the borough there were 472 members elected only by 209.500 voters. In addition, there was inequality in the distribution of seats for that the average of voters for each member differs from country to another. While in England and Wales we find about 848 voters for each member, in Scotland there are less than 89 voters and 390 voters in Ireland. Not to mention the diversity of the population that is represented by the voters. For instance, each voter in England and Wales represents about 32 people compared with 1750 people in Scotland and about 77 people in Ireland (Hassan Al-Waily, 2009).

6.2.2 The First Reform Act

The franchise extended the number of voters by 336,000 voters. In addition to the creation of new seats that belong to the large towns which are: 22 towns represented by 2 members for each and 21 towns represented by 1 member for each (Hassan Al-Waily, 2009).

Table 1 : Number of Representatives and Voters Before 1832

Country	Counties	Boroughs	Number of Representatives	Number of Population	Number of Voters
England	80	409	489	12.5 M	435 K
Wales	12	12	24	1.5 M	
Scotland	30	15	45	7 M	4 K
Ireland	64	36	100	3 M	39 K
Total	186	472	658	24 M	478 K

Source: Hassan Al-Waily, 2009, p. 8, [our translation]

6.2.3 The Second Reform Act

While 569.716 people gained the right to vote in the counties, 1.112.073 people had in the boroughs. To sum up, 1.641.789 people acquired the franchise in all of Britain. In addition, 31 seats were added to represent the counties and 31 seats were abolished in the boroughs. As a result, the total number of seats in all of Britain remained the same (Hassan Al-Waily, 2009).

Table 2: Number of Representatives and Voters 1832-1867

Number of Representatives						
Country	Counties		Boroughs		Total	
	1832	1867	1832	1867	1832	1867
England	144	172	327	291	471	463
Wales	15	15	14	15	29	30
Scotland	30	33	23	27	53	60
Ireland	64	64	41	41	405	105
Total	253	284	405	374	658	658
Number of Voters						
Country	Counties		Boroughs		Total	
	1832	1867	1832	1867	1832	1867
England	345 K	740.435	275 K	1.158.412	620 K	1.878.847
Wales	26 K	60.744	11 K	51.589	37 K	112.333
Scotland	33 K	76.077	31 K	163.779	64 K	239.856
Ireland	61 K	177.460	32 K	47.293	93 K	224.753
Total	465 K	1.034.716	349 K	1.421.073	814 K	2.455.789

Source: Hassan Al-Waily, 2009, p. 16, [our translation]

6.2.4 The Third Reform Act

In the counties, there were more 2.459.042 voters allowed to vote, at the same time, there were more 792.660 voters granted the franchise. To sum up, the total number of voters in all of Britain increased by 3.251.742 voters. Moreover, the number of seats in the counties increased by 94 seats. However, the number of seats in the boroughs decreased by 82 seats. To sum up, the total number of seats in all of Britain increased by 12 seats (Hassan Al-Waily, 2009).

Table 3: Number of Representatives and Voters 1867-1885

Number of Representatives						
Country	Counties		Boroughs		Total	
	1867	1885	1867	1885	1867	1885
England	172	234	291	231	463	465
Wales	15	19	15	11	30	30
Scotland	33	40	27	32	60	72
Ireland	64	85	41	18	105	103
Total	284	378	374	292	658	670
Number of Voters						
Country	Counties		Boroughs		Total	
	1867	1885	1867	1885	1867	1885
England	740.435	2.362.220	1.158.412	1.784.827	1.878.847	4.147.047
Wales	60.744	174.360	51.589	69.853	112.333	244.213
Scotland	76.077	325.529	163.779	248.829	239.856	574.358
Ireland	177.460	631.649	47.293	110.264	224.753	741.913
Total	1.034.716	3.493.758	1.421.073	2.213.733	2.455.789	5.707.531

Source: Hassan Al-Waily, 2009, p. 20, [our translation]

6.3 The Establishment of Democracy

Murkens (2014) stated that democracy was manifested through three waves of Parliamentary reform. The Three Parliamentary Reforms which were passed during the Victorian Age had a significant impact on the British political system as a whole and the British Parliament in particular, by which democracy found its path. However, there was a debate about whether it was intended or unintended.

The first step toward democracy was passing the Great Reform Act which extended the franchise to involve the middle class and politicized them (Steinbach, 2017). Moreover, Murkens (2014) emphasized that “the Great Reform Act 1832 increased the size and scope of the franchise and kick-started ‘the process of bringing democracy to the constitutional order’ (Tomkins, 2003, p. 165; Foley, 1999, p. 20)” (“Introductory section,” para. 2).

However, the actual purpose of proposing and passing the reform was not democratic. In fact, the political interest changed from being a discussion to resolve the state affairs to be a competition for gaining power (Himmelfarb, 1968 as cited in Vossen, 2005). In other words, “the debates at the time focused pragmatically on the defects of the unreformed system (corruption, high taxation, loss of community) and not on natural rights, popular sovereignty, fair representation, or the superiority of democracy to oligarchy” (Murkens, 2014, “Great Reform Act 1832,” para. 7). In addition to franchise extension, the 1832 Reform Act abolished a number of rotten boroughs in the Parliament which represents a step for democratic advance (Salmo, 2009 as cited in Murkens, 2014).

The year of 1867 marked the transitional stage toward universal suffrage in which the working class in urban areas took their right to vote. This period witnessed the victory of the Unions in the American Civil War which insured the possibility of democracy (Murkens, 2014). Nevertheless, Disraeli provoked the Conservatives to defeat the bill. He

alleged that “...democracy would destroy an element of English civilization...” (Vossen, 2005, p. 8). For that, the aim of the Second Reform Act was not to guarantee the right of the working class, but to limit the franchise qualifications so that it would not negatively impact the interest of the House of Lords (Vossen, 2005).

Another act that moved democracy to a new level is the Third Reform Act which extended suffrage to include the working class in rural areas. The Acts of 1883, 1884, and 1885, which composed the Third Reform Act, continued the work of the previous two reforms resulting in the growth of democracy in Britain. In doing so, the Third Reform Act constituted a political challenge for the House of Lords by establishing mass politics (Steinbach, 2017). The challenge was manifested in the Corruption and Illegal Practice Act which “was devised to suppress corruption at elections” (Southgate, 1940, p. 137). Therefore, the percentage of disputed seats increased more than 90% which was a sign that parliamentary seats were legally distributed (Steinbach, 2017).

In short, Albert Venn Dicey noted in 1905 that to a large extent the British political system nearly shifted to reach the final form of democracy before 1900 (as cited in Murkens, 2014). However, the Three Parliamentary Reform Acts, as Norman Gash pointed, was not passed for the belief in democracy but for the fear of illiterate majority supremacy over the educated minority (as cited in Murkens, 2014). Indeed, democracy was achieved by the unintended decision and grown through a gradual process.

6.4 Discussion

This chapter was devoted to study the issue of democracy in the British political system during the Victorian age. It was tackled through the Parliamentary reforms in order to identify whether democracy was intended or unintended decision and whether it was realized suddenly or gradually. This section of the study revealed that democracy was

achieved unintentionally. It was ushered through three primary phases before reaching its final form after the Victorian age.

The first phase was when the Great Reform Act of 1832 was passed as a result of several factors such as revolution which spread in all of Europe and authority which represents a major subject of conflict. This act aimed at extending franchise to the middle class in addition to redistributing parliamentary seats based on population distribution. It resulted in the abolition of the rotten boroughs which represented the first sight for democracy in Britain.

The second phase was when the Second Reform Act of 1867 was passed as a result of different factors like insistence on franchise extension, death of Lord Palmerston who was one of the major opponents, and the Union Victory in the American Civil War as a call for reform. This act aimed at extending franchise to the working class in urban areas. Thus, a part of democracy was reflected in the outcome of the 1867 Reform Act, in which the public interest, particularly the working class, started to be politically taken into account.

The third and final phase was when the Third Reform Act of 1883-1885 was passed as a result of various factors related to the revolution which was developed by violent people, power also as a subject of struggle, a compromise which was the final hope and education which was the major challenge. This act aimed at extending franchise to the working class in the rural areas. In addition to granting the universal male suffrage, it held an extra fundamental provision based on eliminating the old corruption and patronage which almost refined the final shape of democracy in Britain.

6.5 Conclusion

The democracy implementation in the political system was considered by many as an inevitable fate that was achieved against the desire of sovereignty and their plans. However, many experts in politics stated that this was only the beginning for a long process of establishing democracy in the British political system since there still a considerable proportion of population that remained disfranchised, in addition to the divergence in distributing seats.

As the Victorian age was only the starting point of democracy, it was clear that the universal franchise and fair distribution of seats is not impossible to be achieved. Despite the fact that Parliamentary Reforms were passed as anti-democratic laws, they paved the way for a future where reform is seen as a solution against chaos, and democracy as achievable objective.

Therefore, the British Parliament has to change its strategy against democracy as a part of its plan to serve its personal interest and start to earn the public opinion for the security of the country. Moreover, British people, also, have to see this as an opportunity that motivates them to develop themselves and to change their living style to prove that they deserve to hold this responsibility.

General Conclusion

Exploring the history of establishing the British Parliament in addition to having an overview in the Victorian Period paved the way to identify the secret behind the political change in that specific period. By revealing the intention of the British Parliament toward democracy led us to be able to understand the fact behind issuing the Parliamentary Reforms.

Since the sovereignty was dominated by the conservative belief, Reform and as any sort of political change was nearly impossible. However, the expansion of the revolutionary wave in Europe and the rapid change that UK witnessed as a result of Industrial Revolution were mainly the leading factors that paved the way for the possibility of accepting Reform.

The delay and the avoidance of accepting the demands for Reform had put UK into cycle of conflicts. In other words, the increased awareness among the British society, who demanded their right to be a part of their county policy, had contradicted the parliament belief of the incompetency of the majority for holding such responsibility.

The relationship between the Parliament and the public reached the edge resulting in severe crises and anti-governmental movements. The spread of violence and the conflicts among the representatives imposed pressure on the Parliament which led to accelerate the process of passing the Reform.

The process of passing the Reform was not actually in the advantage of the public. In other words, the Parliament real intention was to serve their personal interest, particularly, to maintain their authority and to avoid democracy. As a result, the Reforms created a series of inclusion and exclusion cycle. With the insistence of the public by demanding their legitimate right and the growth of Reformists, Reforms continued to pass and democracy was almost achieved.

The anti-democratic decision made by the Parliament, for the belief that democracy is a destructive system for the British civilization, ended up by accelerating the process of establishing democracy. The late of the Victorian Period marked the third phase of democracy in which it was manifested in the results of the Reforms paving the way for other reforms.

As a conclusion, it can be said that democracy was not expected to be implemented in the British political system since it was, for a long time, considered as a threat. Through the three Parliamentary Reforms, democracy was proved to be an inevitable future, regardless of the fact that it was not intended.

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تاريخ البرلمان البريطاني وتعنى بخصائص العصر الفيكتوري، إذ أنها تهدف إلى تحري قضية الديمقراطية في العصر السالف ذكره. وبهذا الصدد تقوم الدراسة على استكشاف الإصلاحات البرلمانية الثلاثة (1832 و 1867 و 1884-1885) نظرا لكونها عامل تأثير في تأسيس الديمقراطية في بريطانيا. ومن هذا المنطلق فإن التساؤل الرئيسي المثار في الدراسة الحالية يدور حول نشأة البرلمان البريطاني والظروف التي أقيمت في ظلها الديمقراطية بالإضافة إلى كونها مقصودة أم لا. بالنسبة إلى إطار تحليل البيانات، كان تحليل المضمون الأداة المستعملة في إطار المنهج التاريخي، ولهذا فإن العمل مقسم إلى ثلاثة فصول. يتتبع الفصل الأول أصل إنشاء البرلمان البريطاني ويناقش الظروف التي في ظلها تم إنشاؤه. ويمثل الفصل الثاني لمحة عامة عن الملكة فيكتوريا كما يسلط الضوء على خصائص بريطانيا تحت حكمها، والتي ظهرت في ظلها الديمقراطية. ويناقش الفصل الأخير مسألة الإصلاحات البرلمانية في هذا العهد وكيف ساهمت في تأسيس الديمقراطية في النظام السياسي البريطاني. وقد خلصت الدراسة في الأخير إلى وجود العديد من المحاولات للإصلاح قبل العصر الفيكتوري، إلا أنها لاقت الفشل. ولكن انتشار الفساد والمحسوبية ضمن البرلمان، بالإضافة إلى طبيعة هذا العصر كونه عصر التغيير والإصلاح، شكلت البيئة الأنسب لظهور الإصلاحات البرلمانية من بين العديد من التغييرات الأخرى، ما أدى بدوره إلى نشأة الديمقراطية كما تميزت عملية تطورها بكونها تدريجية وغير مقصودة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإصلاحات البرلمانية، البرلمان، الديمقراطية، العصر الفيكتوري، بريطانيا