

Using the United Kingdom as a case study for determining the effects that economic development and democracy have on each other, we can observe that while these two subjects feed off one another as a nation develops, economic development pushed the UK towards its now democratic regime.

According to the California Association for Local Development, one could classify economic development as “the creation of wealth from which community benefits are realized” (CALED). During the Industrial Revolution in the UK, the state enjoyed an influx of wealth like it had never seen before. This wealth allowed the United Kingdom to make decisions to improve the quality of life and services among its people.

The UK is known as the “...birthplace of the Industrial Revolution” (O’Neil 35), as well as recognized for having “...the world’s oldest democracy” (O’Neil 35). It is undoubtable that these two developments aren’t a coincidence. When we first begin to see evidence of a rising democracy in the UK, it is directly following the industrial revolution and the influx of money to middle-class UK citizens, many of whom owned the very factories leading their country into a period of wealth. These citizens now have more to contribute to their government in the form of taxes, and as a result of their peoples increased wealth, the government, in general, now has a heightened ability to expand both social services and improve country infrastructure with these new funds.

The United Kingdom’s people, knowing their government is currently benefiting from their hard-earned money and feeling as though they are now prime contributors to the improving development of their nation, want their interests represented when the government is deciding what to use this surge of funding on. In order to get citizens interests represented, the UK government needed to transition away from their history of a monarchical basis of governing and give more everyday people of the public a voice. Democracy in simple terms is defined as “emphasizing the large role of the public in government” (O’Neil 8). All throughout United Kingdom history, only the wealthy elite were allowed to have a say in politics. We see the shift towards democracy starting within the period of their Industrial Revolution, when in 1832 a Reform Act was passed that expanded those eligible to vote, effectively doubling the size of those able to participate the British electorate.

Because of the rampant economic development of the United Kingdom in the 18th and 19th centuries, the number of people possessing the wealth to be active in the UK’s political sphere expanded. As a direct result of this economic upturn, voting rights and involvement in politics were granted more widely to UK citizens. In this case study, economic development prompted a social push towards an expansion of civilian influence in political affairs and the steady beginning of the United Kingdom’s democracy.

## Works Cited

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1. What is the relationship between democracy and successful national economic development? Which causes which, or do they occur simultaneously?