

## Freedom

Modern Western Europe, from the Renaissance on, gradually formulated the notion of political freedom—that is individual self-independence and choice, within the political entity—of independence which grew along with rising economies, of autonomy in self-government. In the Middle Ages European polities were by and large fragmented into small units under the direct and personal hegemony of nobles, clerical power bases, or rogue semi civilized bands, on the margins of the civilized world. From the Renaissance on—we think of individual thinkers like Petrarch, Sir Thomas More, or Francis Bacon—we hear voices calling for new levels of individual political freedom within the framework of political ideas. Eighteenth century European thought, the so called Enlightenment, stressed the independence of the thinking individual, and by the example of some great minds in philosophy and natural science—Descartes to Kant—opened along many paths the prospect of true human freedom, the right of each political entity, through its elected officials, to choose its own style of governance. By the end of the eighteenth century—with the direction changing Revolutions in France and the United States—it became a fixed though still often violated position that every political entity, with all its citizens in it, deserves the right of self-governance.

The Age of political freedom, in Western governance, has since its Golden statements, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, already drawn sufficient counteraction—or just retroaction-- from various parts of the globe. Political freedom has been widely challenged by the notion that man in society cannot handle too much freedom, and needs the strong governing hand of such a firm system as is represented by a Communism, in which a uniform economy is taken as the springboard for a state in which freedom of choice is systematically subordinated to what is seen as the collective advantage.