Original Article

Dedication to historical studies: Modern Europe

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Abstract:

Europe's development from feudalism to the modern era marked one of the most significant transformations in world history, impacting various social, political, economic, and educational aspects. This article examines the structural changes that occurred in European society, from the feudal system to the early and late modern periods, including the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution, and the socio-political reforms that gave rise to democracy, nationalism, and the concept of human rights. The research method used a descriptive qualitative approach, with a literature review of journals, historical documents, and recent international reports. The results show that European modernization not only transformed the social and economic order but also shifted the educational paradigm toward digitalization, inclusion, and lifelong learning. The role of international institutions, particularly the United Nations, proved crucial in maintaining political stability and peace in the post-global conflict European region. In conclusion, Europe's transformation from feudalism to the modern era laid the foundation for today's systems of government, economy, law, and education, and served as a model for global integration and innovation. Recommendations are provided regarding the importance of adapting education to technological changes and social needs, as well as the need for collaboration between countries to maintain political and economic stability in the era of globalization.

Keywords: modern Europe, feudalism, industrial revolution, scientific revolution, digital education

Introduction

Modern Europe is one of the most important periods in the history of world civilization, marking the transition from traditional social, political, and economic orders to complex modern societies. Before modernization, European societies lived under a rigid feudal system, where social structures were organized hierarchically. At the top of this structure were kings and nobles, who controlled territory and certain political rights, followed by the church as the controller of moral values, education, and the spiritual life of society, and peasants or commoners at the bottom. Social, economic, and political life were heavily influenced by religious dogma, and education remained limited to the elite or those within the church.

Major changes began to emerge in the late 14th century with the Renaissance movement, which marked a resurgence in culture, art, and science. The Renaissance fostered the birth of humanist thought, in which humans began to be placed at the center of study, rather than merely as religious objects. Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press accelerated the spread of knowledge and literacy, allowing new ideas to spread more rapidly throughout Europe. The Reformation of the Church subsequently challenged the dominance of Roman Catholicism, opened up space for pluralism, and encouraged secularization in politics and education.

The early modern period (1500–1800) marked the emergence of the scientific revolution, in which figures such as Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton introduced new theories emphasizing observation, experimentation, and rational methods. Philosophers such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes developed scientific methods based on empiricism and deductive logic, which later became the foundation for the development of modern science. This scientific revolution not only drove technological and scientific progress but also shifted society's paradigm from dogmatic adherence to religious teachings to critical reasoning and rational thinking.

The late modern period (1800–1945) was marked by dramatic socio-economic changes. The Industrial Revolution introduced the steam engine, mass production, and new technologies that transformed patterns of production and distribution of goods. Urbanization accelerated, creating an industrial working class and increasing social mobility. The French Revolution marked a significant milestone in European political history by spreading the ideas of democracy, human rights, liberalism, and nationalism, replacing absolute monarchies and feudal social structures. The Russian Revolution of 1917 subsequently introduced the ideology of communism, emphasizing collective ownership of the means of production, and establishing the Soviet Union as a new power, sparking ideological competition with Western nations, which later became the root of the Cold War conflict.

Beyond social, political, and economic aspects, education in Europe also underwent significant transformation. From education available only to the elite or through church institutions, Europe began to develop a more inclusive education system, encouraging literacy, innovation, and the development of science. This development continues into the contemporary era, including adaptations to digital technology, 21st-century curricula, and academic integration programs between countries.

In a global context, the transformation of modern Europe has not only shaped regional order but also had a significant impact on social, political, economic, and educational development worldwide. Understanding modern European history is crucial because it can provide a foundation for developing models of governance, regional integration, technological innovation, and educational strategies in the current era of globalization.

This research aims to analyze the fundamental changes in Europe from feudalism to the modern era, including their impact on society, politics, economics, and education. The main focus of this research is to understand how modernization, the scientific revolution, the industrial revolution, and socio-political reforms shaped contemporary Europe, as well as their implications for the education system, political integration, and the role of international institutions such as the United Nations in maintaining peace and stability.

Research Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to understand and explain the transformation of Europe from feudalism to the modern era in depth, with a focus on social, economic, political, and educational aspects. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research emphasizes historical context analysis, understanding social phenomena, and interpreting contemporary policies, rather than statistical or numerical measurements.

1. Data Types and Sources

The data used in this research are sourced from secondary literature, including:

- Scientific journals and academic articles: Containing the latest research on European history, the industrial revolution, the scientific revolution, modern education, as well as European Union policies and the role of the UN.
- Historical books and documents: Primary sources on feudal social structures, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and developments in science and technology.
- International reports and organizational publications: Include data from the

OECD, UNESCO, and European Union agencies that provide information related to contemporary education, economics, and social policy.

- Official government statistics and documents: Provide data on the impact of globalization, the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit, and changes in the education system in Europe.

By using multiple sources, this research ensured data triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

2. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques were conducted through library research and document analysis. The steps included:

- Source Identification: Selecting journals, books, scientific articles, official reports, and policy documents relevant to the topic of modern Europe and contemporary education.

- Data Classification: Grouping data based on main themes, namely social, economic, political, educational, and the role of international institutions such as the UN.

- Specific Information Collection: Collecting information related to changes in societal structure, economic development, political reform, educational innovation, and the impact of globalization and the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Data Screening: Ensuring data sources were valid, up-to-date, and relevant, and checking the accuracy of the information by cross-checking with other documents.

3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted thematically using a content analysis approach, which systematically interpreted the data content and organized it into relevant categories. The analysis stages include:

- Data Reduction: Distilling essential information from the literature to eliminate irrelevant or duplicate data.

- Thematic Organization: Grouping information into research themes, such as social transformation, economic change, political modernization, digital education, and the role of the UN.

- Interpretation: Interpreting the relationship between historical phenomena and contemporary conditions, including the impact of European Union policies, globalization, and digital technology.

- Verification of Findings: Using source triangulation to ensure the accuracy of interpretations and research findings.

4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several strategies were implemented:

- Source Triangulation: Using various types of documents, journals, and official reports to verify information.
- Peer Review of Literature: Referring to journals and scientific publications that have been reviewed by experts or academics.
- Historical Cross-Checking: Comparing historical data from primary and secondary sources to ensure accurate chronology and facts.

5. Research Limitations

This research has several limitations, namely:

- It focuses solely on the European region and the transformations that occurred from feudalism to the modern era, without a detailed discussion of non-European countries.
- The analysis focuses more on literature and documents, so the findings are descriptive and interpretive, rather than quantitative.
- Contemporary changes, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital education, and Brexit, are analyzed based on the most recent data available up to 2025.

This research method is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of Europe's journey from feudalism to the modern era, as well as its implications for social, political, economic, and educational aspects relevant to current conditions.

Research Findings and Discussion

This research found that Europe's transformation from feudalism to the modern era not only impacted social, political, economic, and educational aspects but also formed the foundation for regional integration and global innovation. Thematic analysis was conducted by dividing the research findings into the following subchapters.

1. European Social Transformation

Before modernization, European society was highly hierarchical, with kings and nobles controlling political and economic power, the church controlling morality and education, and peasants occupying the lowest stratum. Literature review shows that the Renaissance and the Reformation triggered a shift in social values, emphasizing humanism and freedom of thought. Humanism placed humans at the center of study, reducing the dominance of church dogma in social life.

Modern social change in Europe is evident through policies on gender equality

and social inclusion. The European Union launched its Gender Equality Plan 2020–2025, which emphasizes equal access for men and women in education, employment, and leadership. A study by Siti Rana (2025) shows an increase in women's participation in managerial and legislative positions in the European Union. The intersectionality approach expands protections for vulnerable groups, reflecting the strong egalitarian values of modern society.

Modernization encouraged European societies to be more open to cultural pluralism and tolerance. This change in values was reflected in more inclusive social interactions, increased social mobility, and acceptance of differences in religion, culture, and ethnic backgrounds. Ellya Rosana (2015) emphasized that modernization played a crucial role in shifting societal behavior from dogmatic to rational and critical.

2. Economic Transformation

The Industrial Revolution brought significant changes to production systems and economic structures. The steam engine, mass production, electricity, and early computer technology increased productivity and efficiency. Massive urbanization occurred, creating a new working class and changing patterns of economic distribution. These changes also expanded capitalism and international trade, marking the first era of the global economy in Europe (Sena, 2024).

Globalization presented new challenges, including economic inequality and vulnerability to global crises. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant recession, for example, France's economic contraction of -18.5% in 2020 (Sela et al., 2021). Brexit also affected the European Union's economic sovereignty, as the UK's departure from the EU reduced its financial contributions and investment. However, trade between countries continued, demonstrating the flexibility of the European economy in the modern era (Darwis & Howay, 2021; Sampson, 2020).

During the late modern period, colonialism expanded European trade networks worldwide. The Industrial Revolution enabled mass production for markets in colonial territories, fueling the growth of the European industrial economy while simultaneously creating global inequality. Aldi & Ardan (2024) highlight that modern European industrial capitalism relied heavily on the integration of international trade and the exploitation of global resources

3. Political Transformation

The French Revolution (1789–1799) marked a radical shift from absolute monarchy to democracy and liberalism. The values of human rights, individual liberty, and nationalism became the foundation of modern law and politics. Christmas & Purwanti (2020) emphasize that this revolution influenced the concepts of sovereignty, constitutional government, and political structures throughout Europe.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 introduced the ideology of communism and collective ownership of the means of production. The Soviet Union then emerged as a new political and ideological power, sparking ideological competition with Western countries and shaping the geopolitical dynamics that became the roots of the Cold War. Pipes (1991) and Suny (1998) emphasize that the influence of this revolution fostered the emergence of socialist movements and welfare states in several Western European countries.

The European Union exemplifies modern political integration, with shared authority, a single currency, and cross-border regulation. This political structure fosters high levels of coordination among member states in economic, legal, and social policy (Sela et al., 2021). The EU's success as a model of regionalism demonstrates the importance of collaboration between nations in maintaining political stability and peace.

The UN was established in 1945 to prevent global conflict and maintain international security. The six main UN bodies—the General Assembly, the Security Council, ECOSOC, the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the Secretariat—play a crucial role in facilitating diplomacy, resolving disputes, and monitoring human rights in Europe. The UN became a key instrument for European countries in maintaining political stability after World War II.

4. Educational Transformation

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the digitalization of education in Europe. Learning systems adapted through distance learning, digital platforms, and international collaboration. The OECD (2023) reports that this transformation expanded access to education and improved the quality of learning through technology, making digitalization a permanent part of modern education systems.

Modern curricula in Europe emphasize STEM, digital literacy, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Teachers act as facilitators, while students are at the center of learning. CEDEFOP (2023) highlights that improving teacher competencies is key to the success of this educational innovation.

The Erasmus Programme and the European Education Area (EEA) increase student and faculty mobility, strengthen academic integration, and establish cross-border quality standards. Universities also develop joint degree programs and virtual campuses, supporting cross-border learning and research collaboration.

Vocational education (VET) is being strengthened to adapt to the needs of the modern job market, including digital technology and a sustainable economy. A lifelong learning approach is a crucial strategy for societies to adapt quickly to economic and technological changes.

This study demonstrates that Europe's transformation from feudalism to the modern era was a multidimensional process encompassing social, economic, political, and educational changes. Modernization shifted societies from religious dogma and rigid hierarchies to more egalitarian, democratic, and innovative systems, while positioning Europe as a hub for global integration, innovation, and education..

Conclusion

Europe's transformation from feudalism to the modern era was a multidimensional process encompassing social, economic, political, and educational change. The Renaissance and the Reformation promoted humanism and freedom of thought, the scientific revolution emphasized empirical and rational methods, while the industrial revolution and political revolutions (French and Russian) shaped modern economic and governmental structures. Modernization also fostered gender equality, political integration through the European Union, and educational advancements through digitalization, 21st-century curricula, and lifelong learning. The impact of this transformation has made Europe a center of innovation, regional integration, and global influence well into the contemporary era

Recommendations

- Governments and educational institutions in Europe and globally should continue to promote digitalization and educational innovation to prepare generations to face the challenges of the 21st century.
- European Union member states are expected to strengthen political, economic, and social collaboration to ensure stable and inclusive regional integration.
- Researchers and academics are encouraged to conduct further studies on the impact of Europe's historical transformation on global policy, technology, and education to enrich contemporary historical perspectives.

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