**The Rise and Growth of Modern Nation States**

**The Birth of the Modern Nation State**

In earlier centuries, it was the norm for kings to rule and kingdoms to reign supreme. The modern day concept of the nation state is a relatively new phenomenon when one considers the arc of history. For instance, it was only during the time of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in the late 17th and 18th centuries in Europe for the concept of the nation state to be born. The leading thinkers of that era speculated on the social contract between man and the state and posited the idea that a form of a nation state that takes care of its citizens by giving them rights and at the same time by placing certain responsibilities on them. This was the guiding principle behind the Treaty of Westphalia that gave birth to the rise of the modern nation state. Hence, the modern conception of the nation state is said to be the Westphalian norms of governance.

**The Enlightenment and the Nation State**

Of course, the 17th and 18th centuries witnessed the birth of the nation state only in Europe and the United States where the American Revolution brought forth the concept of a state. It was after the Civil War between the North and the South that the overriding theme of unification and the birth of the American state known as the United States of America came into existence. As for the other parts of the world, they either were ruled by Kings and Princes or were colonized by the Western powers. Countries like India were under the dominion of the British who ceded independence only in the aftermath of World War Two. Talking of World War Two, it can be said that it was the decisive turning point in the history of humanity as the end of the war brought forth into existence many nation states.

**Democracy Blooms and Retreats**

The growth of the modern nation state picked up pace after the war and during the 1960s when many African states became independent from their colonial rulers. Further, with the spread of modern communication technologies, it was easier for the indigenous people to rise up as a unit and overthrow their colonial masters thus accelerating the birth of the modern nation state. However, it has to be noted that despite these changes, the concept of the nation state has been under attack from both globalization and internal fissures. This is a rather sad aspect of the modern day nationality as globalization has meant that nation states cede power to the giant conglomerates and corporations and at the same time the resistance to globalization in the form of revolts leads to corrosion in the authority of the state.

**Final Thoughts**

Finally, the recent Arab Spring has again raised hopes about the spread of freedom and the desire of the peoples of the world to be governed by representative democracies instead of by authoritarian rulers. It is with the hope that the retreat of democracy would be temporary and the age old yearning of the human spirit to be free would be actualized that this article ends.