

Historical Underpinnings

Important Dates

- **1600:** The East India Company got the exclusive right of trading in India under the charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I.
- **1608:** The British came to India as traders in the form of the East India Company.
- **1765:** The Company obtained the diwani rights of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa.
- **1858:** The British Crown assumed the direct responsibility for the governance of India in the wake of the 'Sepoy Mutiny'.

Constitutional Developments under the Company Rule (1773–1853)

Constitutional Developments under the Crown Rule (1858–1947)

Act / Year	Major Provisions / Features	Significance / Impact
Government of India Act, 1858	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India to be governed in the name of Her Majesty. • Governor-General of India redesignated as Viceroy of India (Lord Canning became the first Viceroy). • Ended the system of double government by abolishing the Board of Control and Court of Directors. • Created the Secretary of State for India, holding complete authority over Indian administration. • Established a 15-member Council of India to assist the Secretary of State (purely advisory). • Secretary of State-in-Council constituted as a body corporate, capable of suing and being sued in India and England. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked the beginning of direct Crown rule in India. • Strengthened the centralized bureaucracy under the British Parliament. • Increased British political control and reduced Company influence.
Indian Councils Act, 1861	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of representative institutions—Indians associated with law-making for the first time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked the shift from highly centralized rule to limited provincial decentralization.

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<p>Regulating Act, 1773</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor of Bengal became Governor-General of Bengal (Warren Hastings first GG of Bengal). • Governors of Bombay & Madras were made subordinate to the GG of Bengal. • Created the Supreme Court at Calcutta (1774) with a Chief Justice & 3 judges. • Prohibited the servants of the Company from engaging in any private trade. • Court of Directors (CoD) to report on Indian affairs to the British Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first step taken by the British Government to control and regulate the affairs of the East India Company in India. • For the first time, the political and administrative functions of the Company were recognized. • Laid the foundations of central administration in India.
<p>Pitt's India Act, 1784</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a dual system of control — Board of Control for political matters and Court of Directors for commercial matters. • Reduced the Company's autonomy; the British Government strengthened its authority over Indian administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company's territories in India were, for the first time, called "British possessions in India." • The British Government was given supreme control over the Company's affairs and its administration in India.
<p>Charter Act, 1813</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolished the East India Company's trade monopoly in India, except for trade in tea and opium with China, which continued. • Allowed Christian missionaries to come to India for the purpose of enlightening the people. • Provided for the spread of western education among the inhabitants of British territories in India (₹1 lakh per year for education). • Authorised local governments to impose taxes on persons, but they could not punish individuals for non-payment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marked the beginning of State involvement in education in India. • Opened India to other British traders and missionaries.

<p>Charter Act, 1833</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governor-General of Bengal was made Governor-General of India, with all civil and military powers (Lord William Bentinck = first GG of India). • The Governors of Bombay and Madras were deprived of their legislative powers. • Ended the commercial activities of the East India Company — it became purely administrative. • Attempted to introduce open competition for civil services, but this was later rejected due to opposition from the Court of Directors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final step towards centralisation of Indian administration. • Laid the foundation for the Indian Civil Service (ICS). • Marked a major shift from a commercial body to an administrative body.
<p>Charter Act, 1853</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separated the legislative and executive functions of the Governor-General’s Council. • Added 6 new legislative members, marking the beginning of a separate Legislative Council. • Introduced open competition in civil services (merit-based recruitment). • Extended the Company’s rule without prescribing a fixed tenure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First time Indians got representation in the legislative process. • Laid the foundation of modern bureaucracy and legislature in India.
<p>Act / Year</p>	<p>Major Provisions / Features</p>	<p>Significance / Impact</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization initiated— legislative powers restored to Bombay & Madras. • Provided for new Legislative Councils for Bengal, NW Provinces, and Punjab. • Empowered the Viceroy to make rules/orders for the convenient transaction of council business. • Recognized portfolio system (allocation of work among members). • Empowered the Viceroy to issue ordinances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First step towards the association of Indians in legislation.

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	<p>independently for emergencies.</p>	
<p>Indian Councils Act, 1892</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased the number of additional (non-official) members in Central & Provincial Councils, but official majority retained. • Expanded council functions—members could discuss the budget and question the executive (limited). • Provided for nomination of non-official members based on recommendations of Provincial Councils and local bodies. • Introduced indirect elections (nomination from local bodies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundation of limited parliamentary practice. • The first faint beginning of electoral politics in India.
<p>Indian Councils Act, 1909 (Morley–Minto Reforms)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate electorates for Muslims. • Increased size of Central & Provincial Councils. • Non-official majority in provinces. • Indians allowed in the Viceroy’s Executive Council (S.P. Sinha first). • Supplementary questions allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First time communal representation was introduced (basis of communal politics). • Expanded legislative participation, but still limited powers.
<p>Government of India Act, 1919 (Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced diarchy in provinces (Transferred vs Reserved subjects). • Bicameral legislature at the Centre. • Direct elections were introduced. • Separate provincial budgets. • Extended communal electorates. • Established Public Service Commission (1926). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning of responsible government in provinces. • First time bicameralism and direct elections.

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Government of India Act, 1935	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abolished provincial diarchy; introduced provincial autonomy. • Proposed All-India Federation (not implemented). • Introduced diarchy at the Centre (not implemented). • The Federal Court was established. • Franchise extended to 10% population. • RBI was established in 1935. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blueprint of the Indian Constitution. • Basis for federal structure, judiciary, and provincial autonomy.
Indian Independence Act, 1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ended British rule; created two dominions—India & Pakistan. • Granted full sovereignty to both. • Viceroy replaced by Governor-General (of respective dominions). • Constituent Assemblies empowered to draft Constitutions. • Princely states are free to join either dominion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal end of British sovereignty. • India became independent on 15 August 1947.