# IAS Red Notes

STPOL001

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## Historical Background

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**The Evolution of Governance in India under British Rule**

**The Company Rule (1773-1858)**

**1. Regulating Act 1773:** The British Parliament passed the Regulating Act in 1773 to address corruption and inefficiencies in the administration of the East India Company. This act marked the beginning of parliamentary control over the company's affairs and established a Governor-General in Bengal with supervisory authority over the other presidencies. Warren Hastings was appointed as the first Governor-General under this act. The act also created a Supreme Court in Calcutta to ensure justice within company territories.

**2. Amending Act 1781:** This act aimed to rectify the issues that arose from the implementation of the Regulating Act of 1773. It clarified the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and sought to define the relationship between the Governor-General's Council and the court, thereby addressing conflicts between the two entities.

**3. Pitts India Act 1784:** Named after Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, this act established a dual system of governance. A Board of Control was set up to oversee the company's political affairs, while the Court of Directors managed commercial activities. This act further increased parliamentary oversight and aimed to balance power between the British government and the East India Company.

**4. Act of 1786:** This act provided additional powers to the Governor-General, allowing them to override the majority decisions of their council in special circumstances. This was to ensure strong leadership and decisive governance in critical situations.

**5. Charter Act 1793:** This act renewed the East India Company's charter for another 20 years and allowed the company to maintain its monopoly over trade in the East. It also increased the salaries of the company's officials and permitted them to acquire property in India.

**6. Charter Act 1813:** The Charter Act of 1813 ended the East India Company's monopoly over trade in India, except for the trade in tea and trade with China. This act opened up Indian trade to other British merchants, promoting competition and economic growth. It also allocated funds for the promotion of education and the spread of Christianity in India.

**7. Charter Act 1833:** This act marked a significant shift in the governance of India. It centralized power by designating the Governor-General of Bengal as the Governor-General of India, with authority over the entire British Indian territory. This act also abolished the East India Company's trade monopoly completely and introduced laws to combat discrimination based on race or religion.

**8. Charter Act 1853:** The final Charter Act before the end of the company's rule, it allowed the company to retain its administrative responsibilities without a fixed term. It introduced a competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and expanded the legislative council to include more members.

**The Crown Rule (1858-1947)**

**1. Government of India Act 1858:** Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the British Crown assumed direct control over India, ending the East India Company's rule. The Government of India Act of 1858 established the office of the Secretary of State for India, who was responsible for Indian affairs and answerable to the British Parliament. This act marked the beginning of the British Raj.

**2. Indian Council Act 1861:** This act reintroduced legislative councils and expanded them to include Indian members, thereby involving Indians in the governance process. It was a step towards including local opinions and promoting cooperation between British authorities and Indian leaders.

**3. Indian Council Act 1892:** The Indian Council Act of 1892 further expanded the legislative councils and allowed for the indirect election of some of their members. This act aimed to include more Indian representation in governance, reflecting the growing demand for greater Indian participation in administrative matters.

**4. Indian Council Act 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms):** Named after Lord Morley and Lord Minto, this act introduced significant changes, including the expansion of legislative councils and the introduction of separate electorates for Muslims. This was intended to address communal tensions and ensure minority representation, but it also sowed the seeds of division based on religion.

**5. Government of India Act 1919 (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms):** This act introduced the system of dyarchy in provinces, dividing subjects into "transferred" and "reserved" categories. Indian ministers were given control over transferred subjects like education and health, while British officials retained control over reserved subjects like finance and law and order. This act was an attempt to decentralize power and increase Indian participation in governance.

**6. Government of India Act 1935:** This act was the most comprehensive piece of legislation passed by the British Parliament for India. It proposed the establishment of a federal structure, with provinces and princely states coming together under a central government. The act also introduced provincial autonomy, allowing provinces to govern themselves independently in certain matters. However, it fell short of granting complete self-governance, as the British retained control over defense and foreign affairs.

**7. Indian Independence Act 1947:** The final legislative act of the British Parliament concerning India, this act led to the partition of India and the creation of two independent dominions: India and Pakistan. The act transferred all legislative and executive powers to the respective constituent assemblies, marking the end of British rule in the Indian subcontinent.

**Conclusion**

The evolution of governance in India under British rule was marked by a series of legislative acts that gradually shifted power from the East India Company to the British Crown, while also attempting to involve Indians in the administrative process. These acts laid the foundation for modern Indian governance and influenced the political landscape of the country. The transition from company rule to crown rule and eventually to independence was a complex process shaped by various factors, including economic interests, administrative challenges, and growing demands for self-governance. This historical journey highlights the significant role of legislative acts in shaping India's governance and the eventual emergence of an independent nation.

**Did You Know?**

- **The Charter Act of 1813, also known as the East India Company Act of 1813, was a law passed by the British Parliament.**
- **'Magna Carta' is the Charter of Rights issued by King John of England in 1215 under pressure from the barons.**