



Paramountcy, Civil Service, Judiciary, Police and the Army under the Company; British Policy and Paramountcy in the Princely States under the Crown

I. Administration under the East India Company

The East India Company's rule marked the beginning of a centralized colonial structure in India. It developed key institutions like the **civil services**, **army**, **judiciary**, and **police** to maintain control. The doctrine of **paramountcy** was gradually asserted over both conquered territories and princely states.

1. Doctrine of Paramountcy under the Company

- **Conceptual Development:** Though not formally stated, the Company gradually asserted **paramountcy** over Indian rulers by military conquest, alliances, and annexation.
 - **Key Tools of Expansion:**
 - **Doctrine of Lapse** (Lord Dalhousie): Annexed states without male heirs (e.g., Jhansi, Satara, Nagpur).
 - **Subsidiary Alliance System** (Lord Wellesley): Forced rulers to accept British troops and control over foreign affairs.
 - **Political Consequence:** Indian rulers lost autonomy in diplomacy, defense, and eventually internal governance.
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2. Civil Services under the Company

- **Purpose:** To ensure administrative control and revenue collection across British territories.



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- **Cornwallis Reforms (1793):**

- Created a **hierarchical, merit-based bureaucracy** known as the **Indian Civil Service (ICS)**.
- Reserved top posts exclusively for the British; Indians were excluded.

- **Charter Act of 1853:**

- Introduced **open competitive exams** for civil services in theory, but exams were conducted only in London.
 - ICS became the “steel frame” of British administration.
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3. Judiciary under the Company

- **Dual Legal System:**

- **Supreme Court** (Regulating Act of 1773) applied English law to British subjects.
- **Adalat system** for Indians: Developed by Warren Hastings, combining Islamic and Hindu laws with British oversight.

- **Cornwallis Code (1793):**

- Separated judiciary from executive.
- Established **civil and criminal courts** in districts.

- **Deficiencies:**

- Partiality, language barriers, and the complexity of laws alienated the Indian population.
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4. Police System under the Company

- Initially, the police function was performed by **zamindars** and village headmen.
 - **Lord Cornwallis** introduced reforms:
 - Created a formal **police hierarchy** at district and thana level.
 - Headed by a **Daroga** (sub-inspector), supervised by magistrates.
 - **Main Objectives:**
 - Maintenance of law and order, protection of British interests.
 - The system was known for **corruption, brutality, and bias** against Indians.
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5. The Army under the Company

- **Structure:**
 - Divided into three presidency armies (Bengal, Bombay, Madras).
 - Dominated by Indian sepoy with European officers.
 - **Discrimination:**
 - Indians faced racial prejudice, poor pay, limited promotions.
 - **Role:**
 - Used for expansion (Anglo-Mysore, Anglo-Maratha wars).
 - Played a crucial part in suppressing local revolts.
 - **1857 Revolt:**
 - Triggered by sepoy discontent, culminating in the mutiny of 1857.
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II. British Policy and Paramountcy in the Princely States under the Crown (Post-1858)

After the Revolt of 1857, direct governance shifted to the **British Crown** through the **Government of India Act, 1858**. The policy toward princely states was reformulated to maintain stability and loyalty.

1. Formalization of Paramountcy

- **Queen Victoria's Proclamation (1858):**
 - Assured Indian princes of the **security of their territories and titles**.
 - Promised non-intervention in internal matters if loyalty was ensured.
 - **Meaning of Paramountcy:**
 - Implied **supremacy of British authority** in all matters of external relations, defense, and communications.
 - The **Viceroy** was the final authority in disputes, even within princely states.
 - **Doctrine of Lapse** was officially abandoned but **paramountcy was retained** as a principle of indirect control.
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2. Political Structure and Control

- **Residents and Political Agents:**
 - Deployed in princely states to act as **British representatives**.



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- Interfered in succession disputes, internal reforms, and foreign relations.
 - **Classification of States:**
 - Princely states were categorized as **salute states** and **non-salute states**, depending on their importance.
 - **Sanads and Treaties:**
 - Rulers were bound by formal treaties; violation led to British intervention.
 - **Indirect Rule:** The British maintained **nominal sovereignty of rulers** while retaining effective control.
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3. Indian Princes under Crown Rule

- **Role in Administration:**
 - Most princes functioned as **loyal collaborators**, assisting the Raj.
 - Few introduced **modernization or reforms** within their states (e.g., Baroda, Mysore, Travancore).
 - **Control over Succession and Durbars:**
 - British reserved the right to approve heirs and successions.
 - Durbars were used to reinforce loyalty and hierarchy.
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4. Paramountcy as a Political Tool

- Used to **suppress dissent**, interfere in governance, or remove uncooperative rulers.
- **Curzon's reforms** emphasized centralization and control of princely states.
- Paramountcy **legally unchallengeable**—decisions were based on Crown prerogative,



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not law.

Conclusion

Under the East India Company, a centralized administrative system was built around a strong civil service, structured judiciary, coercive police, and a militarized state. The assertion of **paramountcy** laid the foundation for indirect British control over princely states. Under the Crown, this policy was formalized and became a cornerstone of British imperial governance in India, maintaining the **illusion of native sovereignty while enforcing imperial dominance**. This dual system of governance—direct in British India and indirect in princely states—lasted until independence in 1947.
