

in 1839 following an inquiry into the causes of the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada in 1836-37. One of Durham's key recommendations was that full self-government should be granted to the governments in the colonies in all matters of concern to them. Under the recommendations of the *Report*, authority was reserved to the Imperial Government only in those fields deemed necessary to maintain imperial unity; such functions included control of foreign relations, the regulation of commerce, the determination of the constitution and the disposal of public lands. All other powers and functions, including the expenditure of public funds, were to be transferred to the colonial governments, to be administered by an executive council responsible to the elected legislative assembly and exercised only so long as they retained the support of a majority in the assembly. Following the Union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1840, this recommendation was implemented by stages during the next decade, the testing-point being the acceptance of the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849 by Lord Elgin and by the British Government; this acceptance effectively established the practice of full responsible self-government over the very wide range of matters within the control of the governments in the colonies. Subsequently, the conception of responsible government with a wide area of local autonomy was widely applied throughout the British Empire; the changes flowing from general application of this conception have been immense.

A second major development occurred over the period 1867-1939 as Canada gradually came to assume more and more responsibility for its relations with other countries and for its own defence. Out of the pressures, strains, persuasion and dialogue with Britain up to the Versailles Peace Conference at the end of the First World War, and subsequently in the Twenties and Thirties, Canada, supported on occasion by Australia and the other Dominions, succeeded in asserting its independence from the Imperial power by a series of agreements and precedents that in turn became the basis for further political developments. Following the First World War, Canada and the other Dominions successfully asserted the claim to independent representation at conferences, beginning with Versailles, and to diplomatic representation in foreign countries. The altered relation was registered by a communiqué from the Imperial Conference of 1926. Drawing upon the recommendations of the *Balfour Report*, the communiqué defined Britain and the Dominions as "autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations".

The Statute of Westminster, 1931, gave legal effect to the substance of the decisions reached in 1926 and established the legislative equality of the Dominion Parliaments with the British Parliament.

In part as a result of developments in the Second World War, the movement toward independence in the then colonial areas of South and Southeast Asia became irresistible. On August 15, 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided to create the two sovereign countries of India and Pakistan. A year later, Ceylon (since 1972 Sri Lanka) achieved complete independence.