Uprisings Against Ayub Khan

Background of Ayub's Rule

Ayub Khan came into power in 1958 by overthrowing the civilian government through a military coup. This marked the beginning of Pakistan's first military dictatorship. To give some democratic cover to his rule, he introduced the **Basic Democracies system**, but in reality, it limited political participation and did not give real power to the people. His government was centralized, meaning decisions were taken by him and his close advisors, leaving ordinary people without representation. At first, some welcomed his rule because he promised stability, but as time passed, the lack of democracy became a serious issue. The political voices of the people, students, and opposition leaders grew louder, and gradually dissatisfaction spread across the country.

Economic Disparities

Although Ayub Khan is often remembered for economic progress in industries and agriculture, the benefits of his policies were not equally shared. The rich industrialists and landowners grew wealthier, while the poor remained poor. The gap between the rich and poor widened. East Pakistan, despite being more populated, was neglected in development and resource distribution, while West Pakistan saw rapid growth. This created resentment and feelings of injustice among Bengalis. Farmers and workers also felt exploited because economic reforms only strengthened landlords and industrial elites. Inflation and unemployment began to rise, especially affecting the middle and lower classes. Students were the first to react, protesting against inequality and lack of opportunities. These economic disparities became one of the strongest reasons behind opposition against Ayub.

Political Opposition

Ayub Khan's political policies also fueled anger. The most important event was the **1965 Presidential Election**, when Ayub Khan contested against **Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah**, the sister of Quaid-e-Azam. She was supported by almost all major opposition parties. The election was considered unfair and rigged because it was held under the Basic Democracies system where Ayub had influence. This damaged his credibility as many people felt he had cheated democracy. In response, opposition parties united and formed the **Combined Opposition Parties (COP)**. This alliance included different religious groups, nationalist leaders, and democratic forces, all with one goal: to end Ayub's authoritarian rule. This unity increased pressure on his government and weakened his legitimacy further

Student and Public Protests

Students played the most active role in bringing down Ayub Khan's rule. They were unhappy with rising inflation, unemployment, and lack of career opportunities. Universities became the

centers of resistance, where student organizations planned rallies and demonstrations. These movements soon inspired the general public. Traders, teachers, and workers joined the protests, turning them into a nationwide struggle. Clashes between police and students became common, leading to violence and deaths, which only increased public anger. Slogans for democracy, equality, and freedom became louder, and the public's demand for Ayub's resignation grew stronger every day. His government tried to suppress these protests but failed, as the movement gained momentum with mass participation

Fall of Ayub Khan

By 1969, Ayub Khan's rule had become extremely weak. Continuous protests, strikes, and demonstrations made it impossible for him to govern. His support base had collapsed, and even the army was not fully backing him anymore. Finally, under massive pressure, Ayub Khan resigned and handed power to **General Yahya Khan**, another military leader. This marked the end of Ayub's decade-long rule. His downfall proved an important lesson: dictatorships cannot survive when people unite for their rights. However, his resignation did not bring immediate stability. Instead, it opened the door to further political chaos, deepened the divisions between East and West Pakistan, and eventually led to the 1971 crisis. The fall of Ayub highlighted the importance of democracy, equal distribution of resources, and political freedom in Pakistan's history.