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Q.6

Local government reforms, designed and implemented across Pakistan during three military regimes in 1959, 1979 and 2001. Overview of causes of failure and success of the aforementioned reforms.

Pakistan inherited the model of Local governance through the British Parliamentary system. The first and foremost practical step towards Local government reforms was taken by first military dictator General Ayub Khan (1958-1969). He aimed to revitalize the local government system, similar to what the British did during colonial times. Ayub Khan introduced a system called 'Basic Democracies' in 1960, comprising various levels of local government. This system was controlled by the bureaucracy, limiting local autonomy. Ayub Khan nominated 'Basic Democrats' to work at national and provincial levels, indicating central control. He favoured rural areas to gain support from rural elites. Ayub Khan's government combated corruption and introduced lands and labour reforms. Despite these reforms, Ayub Khan's authoritarian measures and media control led to public outrage. The public, including the middle urban class, launched an 'anti-Ayub movement'. Ayub Khan

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eventually transferred power to next government in 1969, restoring democracy.

After a brief period of local government reforms, another military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq, overthrew the civilian regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leading to a constitutional and political crisis in Pakistan through martial law. Zia's regime was characterized by ultra-nationalist and religious sentiments and aimed to revive local government reforms. He centralized administration at federal and provincial levels while allowing electoral representation at local level. This centralization suspended the 1973 constitution and Eight Amendment was passed in 1985, giving significant powers to the head of state. Zia's government introduced local government reforms, allowing direct elections for local bodies in all four federative units.

Zia aimed to reduce bureaucracy involvement in local affairs and continued the tradition of non-party based local elections to prevent political party influence. Zia abolished direct district councils separating rural and urban areas. Under Zia, there were three levels of local government in rural areas and various committees in urban areas. Administrative responsibilities shifted from provincial to local levels.

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Zia's government introduced laws to promote unity among local representatives for decision-making specially in rural areas. These reforms were considered the most effective giving local government significant importance and funds to manage their affairs until 1995.

The last form of Local government reforms<sup>s</sup> was experienced by General Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008). He ousted the civilian government. He served both as the Chief Executive and later as President. General Pervez Musharraf introduced 'Devolution of Power' Plan, the most comprehensive local govt reform in Pakistan. The Plan was well planned, aiming to restructure district government and promote accountability, even though there was no elected provincial government when it began. Key features included elected district governments, reserved seats for women and non-Muslim minorities, and transfer of power from provincial to local level. Accountability changes shifted power dynamics with the provincial secretariat answering to elected heads of District and Tehsil governments. Fiscal change included a rule-based fiscal transfer system, but it struggled to effectively distribute funds to local governments.

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The plan aimed to legitimize military control but had consequences for political parties, sometimes disrupting local elections. The reform sought to centralize political power which sometimes compromised the representative nature of local institutions. Lack of consensus, weak ownership, and military involvement led to dysfunction in local government. The Devolution plan's full implementation faced challenges and continued until the next government took up the devolution agenda. His regime was characterized by his support for the U.S. War on Terror.

ii Causes of failure and success of the aforementioned reforms.

a, Causes of failure:

The most prominent factor undermining the success of local government reforms has been the non-representative nature of these governance structures. This non-representative character has resulted in significant challenges, with government, both military and civilian, failing to fulfil their constitutional obligations. The postponement and mismanagement of local government elections have perpetuated a state of non-functionality within these systems.

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Intergovernmental conflict and Resource Allocation hurdles, ~~these intermittent conflict between provincial and local gov't tier have currt.~~ Success is often hinged on overcoming issues related to bad governance. The local government system had limited constitutional protection, which added to uncertainty surrounding its future. ~~and~~ Persistent societal issues, including illiteracy, poverty, corruption, and nationalist tendencies, have exacerbated the shortcomings of Local governance structures, undermining the achievements of developmental objectives.

b Causes of (limited) success:

To mitigate the issues, civil society members and institutions have been encouraged to maintain vigilance, remain informed, and engage proactively in fostering channels of communication between local leaders and communities they serve. Despite the myriad challenges faced, there remains a glimmer of hope that prior efforts will eventually yield more ~~efficient~~ efficient and effective Public service delivery.