



Introduction

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Chapter 1 : Power sharing

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Introduction

Power sharing refers to the sharing or division of power between various political parties and various sections of society.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Introduction

Power Sharing in Belgium and Sri Lanka

Belgium : Belgium, a small European country, has Dutch-, French- and German-speaking populations. While 59% of the total population of the country live in the Flemish region and speak Dutch, the other 40% of the people live in the Wallonia region and speak French. In Brussels, the capital of Belgium, about 80% of the people speak French, while the remaining 20% speak Dutch.

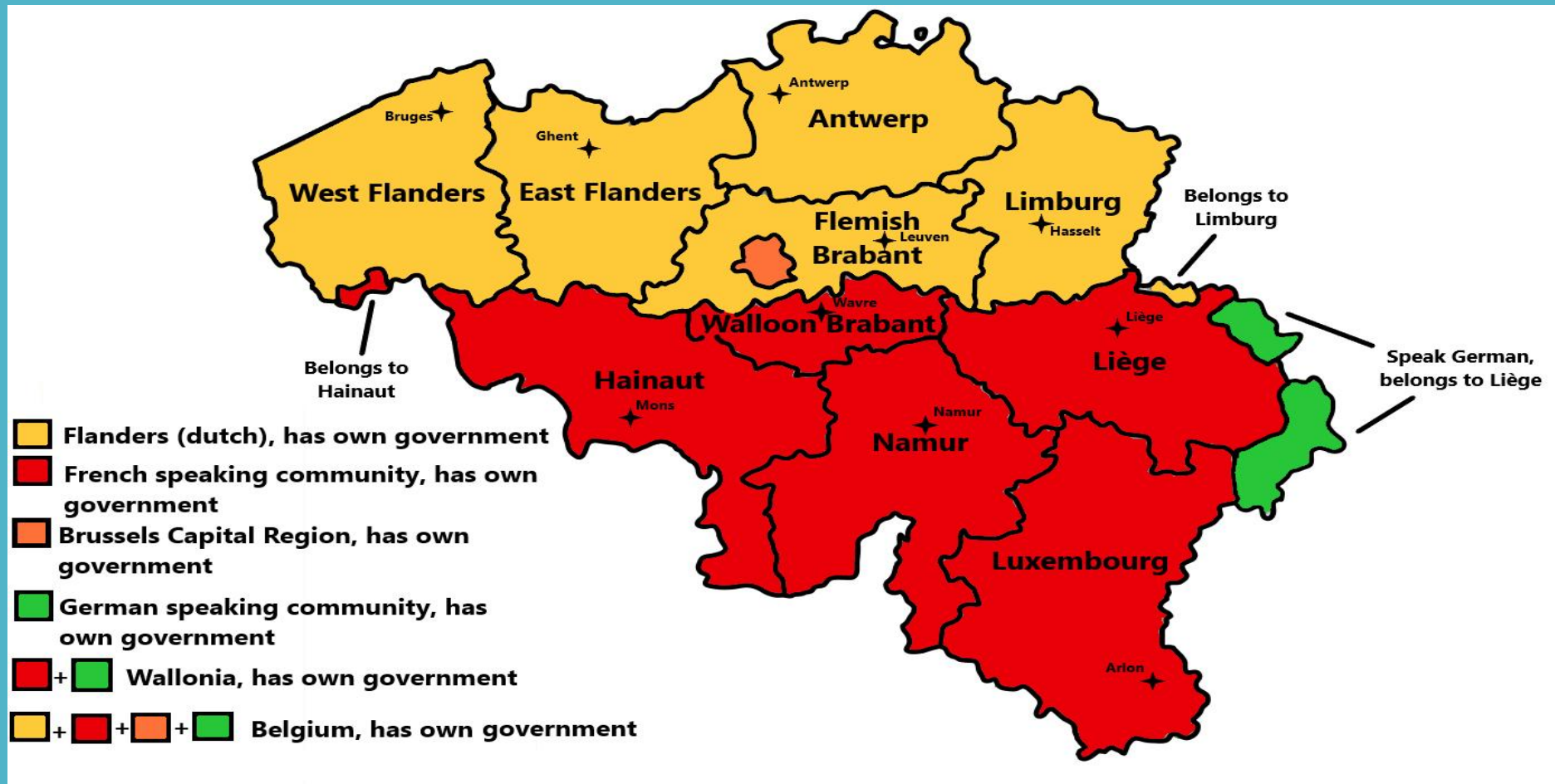
Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Belgium :

The minority French-speaking population was rich and powerful. This was resented by the Dutch-speaking population as they received the benefits of education quite late. This sparked tension between the two communities. However, this problem was solved by the political leaders of Belgium who wanted the people to coexist peacefully with one another.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Belgium :



Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Belgium :

Accommodation in Belgium

In Belgium, the government handled the community difference very well. Between 1970 and 1993, Belgian leaders amended their constitution four times and came up with a new model to run the government.

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Belgium :

Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model.

- The Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers shall be equal in the Central Government. Some special laws require the support of the majority of members from each linguistic group. Thus, no single community can make decisions unilaterally.
- The state governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.

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Belgium :

Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model.

- Brussels has a separate government in which both communities have equal representation.
- Apart from the Central and the State Government, there is a third kind of government. This 'community government' is elected by people belonging to one language community – Dutch, French and German-speaking – no matter where they live. This government has the power regarding cultural, educational and language-related issues.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Belgium :

These arrangements in Belgium were successful and avoided any kind of tension between the two linguistic communities. This also negated any possibilities of the division of the country on linguistic lines.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Sri Lanka :

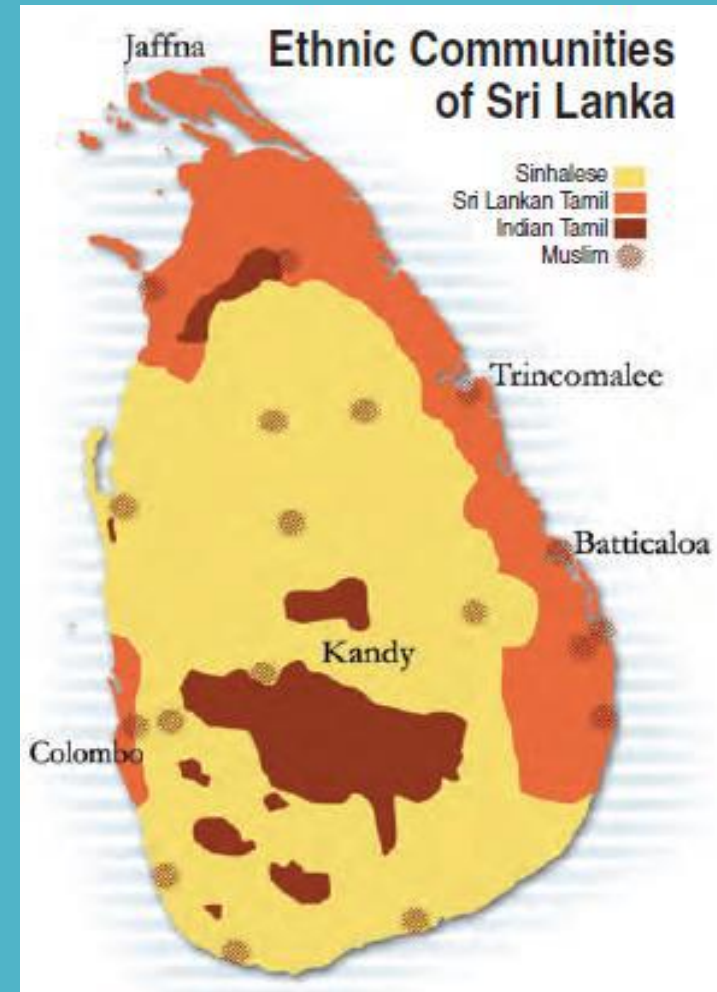
It is an island nation having a population of 2 crores, about the same as in Haryana. Sri Lanka has a diverse population. The major social groups are the Sinhala-speakers (74%) and the Tamil-speakers (18%). Among Tamils, there are two subgroups, “Sri Lankan Tamils” and “Indian Tamils”.

- Sri Lankan Tamils (13 percent) – Tamil natives of the country
- Indian Tamils (5 percent) – came from India during the colonial period as plantation workers.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Sri Lanka :

You can see the map (right) to know the population distribution of different communities of Sri Lanka.



Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Sri Lanka :

Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka became independent of colonial rule in 1948. There were two major communities—Sinhalese and Tamilians. The Sinhalese were in majority, and hence, after being elected to power, the Sinhalese leaders followed a series of majoritarian policies in order to ascertain the supremacy of their community.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Sri Lanka :

- By an Act passed in 1956, Sinhala was recognised as the only official language of the country.

Preferential positions in government jobs were given to the Sinhalese.

- All these measures led to dissent among the Tamilian community which finally culminated into a civil war, with the Tamilians demanding the formation of an independent Tamil state in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka. Thousands of people were killed in the civil war.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

We find that both Belgium and Sri Lanka dealt with the issue of power sharing differently. In Belgium, the leaders respected the interests of both linguistic groups and avoided any possibilities of clashes among the Dutch- and French-speaking communities. In Sri Lanka, however, the assertive policies of the majority community led to a civil war threatening the unity and integrity of the country.

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Need of Power Sharing:

Power sharing is desirable because of two main reasons. They are

- **Prudential reason:** It reduces any chances of conflicts between social groups. By avoiding conflicts, political stability and unity of the country can be maintained. Dictatorship of the majority community can be oppressive for the minority and can even wreck the majority community as well.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Need of Power Sharing:

- **Moral reason: Power sharing is the true spirit of democracy. Every section of community has the right to be consulted on how they are to be governed. Governance should be carried out keeping in mind the larger interests of each section of the community.**

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Different Forms of Power Sharing:

In democracies, power is shared in various ways. These are

1. Sharing of power among different organs of government

- A government has three organs-legislature, executive and judiciary. Separation or division of power among the three organs ensures that no organ becomes too powerful.
- In such a system, one organ also keeps a check on the other organ of the government. This results in maintaining balance of power.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

1. Sharing of power among different organs of government

- For example, judges who are appointed by the executive can check the functioning of the executive or the legislature.
The ministers

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Different Forms of Power Sharing:

2. Power sharing among different levels of government

- In a federal government, there are two main levels of government-the Union or the Central Government and the State Government.
- While the Central Government looks after the administration and law and order of the entire country as a whole, the State Governments look after the administration and law and order in their own states.
- Municipal corporations and village panchayats are the local units of administration

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Different Forms of Power Sharing:

3. Sharing of power among different social groups

- Sharing of power among various social, linguistic or ethnic communities is another form of power sharing.
- Representation given to the weaker sections of society and religious minorities in the Government ensure the diversity and unity of the country.
- In India, the system of reserved constituencies in the assemblies and in the Parliament is an example of power sharing among different social and ethnic groups.

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Different Forms of Power Sharing:

4. Power sharing among political parties, pressure groups and movements

- In a democracy, more than one political party exists. People have the freedom to vote for any political party. Such competition among various political parties guarantees that power is not concentrated in the hands of one political party only.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

4. Power sharing among political parties, pressure groups and movements:

- Sometimes, an alliance of one or more political parties is voted to power. This is known as a coalition government.
- Many sections of society such as traders, farmers and workers may form their own interest groups and can influence the decision-making body of the Government. This ensures that voices of each section of society are heard.

Chapter 1 : Power sharing

Different Forms of Power Sharing:

Thus we find that power sharing is an important requirement and feature of democratic societies.

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