

In a democracy all power does not rest with any one organ of the government. An intelligent sharing of power among legislature, executive and judiciary is very important to the design of a democracy.

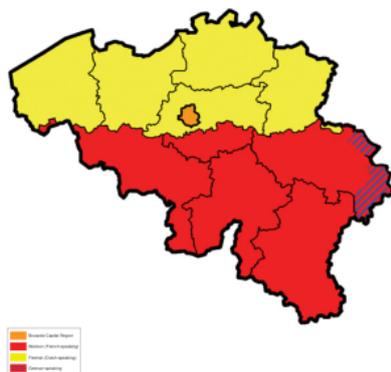
BELGIUM AND SRI LANKA

BELGIUM

- Belgium is a small country in Europe, smaller in area than the state of Haryana.
- It has borders with France, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg.
- It has a population of a little over one crore, about half the population of Haryana.
- The ETHNIC composition of this small country is very complex. Of the country's total population, 59 per cent lives in the Flemish region and speaks Dutch language. Another 40 per cent people live in the Wallonia region and speak French. Remaining one per cent of the Belgians speak German.
- In the capital city Brussels, 80 per cent people speak French while 20 per cent are Dutch-speaking.

The minority French-speaking community was relatively rich and powerful. This was resented by the Dutch-speaking community who got the benefit of economic development and education much later.

This led to tensions between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities during the 1950s and 1960s. The tension between the two communities was more acute in Brussels. Brussels presented a special problem: the Dutch-speaking people constituted a majority in the country, but a minority in the capital.



Communities and regions of Belgium

SRILANKA

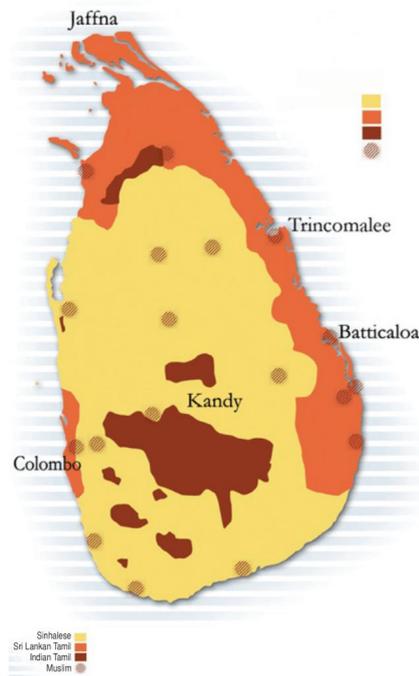
- Sri Lanka is an island nation, just a few kilometres off the southern coast of Tamil Nadu. It has about two crore people, about the same as in Haryana.
- Like other nations in the South Asia region, Sri Lanka has a diverse population. The major social groups are the Sinhala-speakers (74 per cent) and the Tamil-speakers (18 per cent).
- Among Tamils there are two sub-groups. Tamil natives of the country are called 'Sri Lankan Tamils' (13 per cent). The rest, whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers during colonial period, are called 'Indian Tamils'.
- Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the north and east of the country. Most of the Sinhala-speaking people are Buddhists, while most of the Tamils are Hindus or Muslims. There are about 7 per cent Christians, who are both Tamil and Sinhala.

MAJORITARIANISM IN SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The leaders of the Sinhala community sought to secure dominance over government by virtue of their majority. As a result, the democratically elected government adopted a series of MAJORITARIAN measures to establish Sinhala supremacy.

MAJORITARIAN:- A belief that the majority community should be able to rule a country in whichever way it wants, by disregarding the wishes and needs of the minority.

As a result, the relations between the Sinhala and Tamil communities strained over time.



Ethnic Communities of Sri Lanka

- The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil as an official language, for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in securing education and jobs.
- But their demand for more autonomy to provinces populated by the Tamils was repeatedly denied.
- By 1980s several political organisations were formed demanding an independent Tamil Eelam (state) in northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

The distrust between the two communities turned into widespread conflict. It soon turned into a CIVIL WAR. As a result thousands of people of both the communities have been killed. Many families were forced to leave the country as refugees and many more lost their livelihoods.

Civil war: A violent conflict between opposing groups within a country that becomes so intense that it appears like a war.

ACCOMMODATION IN BELGIUM

The Belgian leaders took a different path. They recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities. Between 1970 and 1993, they amended their constitution four times so as to work out an arrangement that would enable everyone to live together within the same country. The arrangement they worked out is different from any other country and is very innovative.

Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model:

- 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 majority of members from each linguistic group. Thus, no single community can make decisions unilaterally.
- Many powers of the central government have been given to state governments of the two regions of the country. The state governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.
- Brussels has a separate government in which both the communities have equal representation. The French speaking people accepted equal representation in Brussels because the Dutch-speaking community has accepted equal representation in the Central Government.
- 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.

Belgian model very complicated. But these arrangements have worked well so far. They helped to avoid civic strife between the two major communities and a possible division of the country on linguistic lines. When many countries of Europe came together to form the European Union, Brussels was chosen as its headquarters.

WHY POWER SHARING IS DESIRABLE?

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Two different sets of reasons can be given in favour of power sharing.

1. Firstly, power sharing is good because it helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups. Since social conflict often leads to violence and political instability, power sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order. This is also known as **PRUDENTIAL** reason for power sharing.
2. Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise, and who have to live with its effects. This is also known as moral reason for power sharing.

Prudential: Based on prudence, or on careful calculation of gains and losses. Prudential decisions are usually contrasted with decisions based purely on moral considerations.

FORMS OF POWER-SHARING

One basic principle of democracy is that people are the source of all political power. In a democracy, people rule themselves through institutions of self-government.

In democracy Everyone has a voice in the shaping of public policies.

Some of the most common arrangements of power sharing in democracy are :

1. Power is shared among **different organs of government, such as the legislature, executive and judiciary**. Such a separation ensures that none of the organs can exercise unlimited power. Each organ checks the others. This results in a balance of power among various institutions.
2. Power can be shared among **governments at different levels** – a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. Such a general government for the entire country is usually called federal government. In India, we refer to it as the Central or Union Government. The governments at the provincial or regional level are called by different names in different countries. In India, we call them State Governments.
3. Power may also be shared among **different social groups such as the religious and linguistic groups**. 'Community government' in Belgium is a good example of this arrangement. This method is used to give minority communities a fair share in power.
4. Power sharing arrangements can also be seen in the way **political parties, pressure groups** and movements control or influence those in power. In a democracy, the citizens must have freedom to choose among various contenders for power. In a democracy, we find interest groups such as those of traders, businessmen, industrialists, farmers and industrial workers.

They also will have a share in governmental power, either through participation in governmental committees or bringing influence on the decision-making process.