Class 10 Political Science Chapter 1: Power-sharing - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Power Sharing Class 10 notes cover Class 10 Political Science (Democratic Politics) Chapter 1 completely: the stories of Belgium and Sri Lanka, majoritarianism in Sri Lanka, accommodation in Belgium, why power sharing is desirable (prudential and moral reasons), the Lebanon case, and the four forms of power sharing in modern democracies.

You also get a Belgium vs Sri Lanka comparison table, a forms of power-sharing table, key terms, NCERT-style questions with answers, 10 MCQs and a free PDF with no signup.

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Chapter Overview

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

The chapter starts with two contrasting stories. Belgium accommodated its linguistic communities through innovative power-sharing and kept the country united, while Sri Lanka’s majoritarian policies alienated the Tamils and led to civil war. From these stories it draws general conclusions about why and how power should be shared.

Important Topics and Concepts

Belgium: a complex ethnic composition

- Belgium is a small European country, smaller in area than Haryana, bordering France, the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg, with a population of a little over one crore.
- 59 per cent live in the Flemish region and speak Dutch; 40 per cent live in Wallonia and speak French; 1 per cent speak German.
- In the capital Brussels, 80 per cent speak French and 20 per cent Dutch.
- The minority French-speaking community was richer and more powerful, which the Dutch-speaking community resented as it got the benefits of development and education later. This led to tensions in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Brussels, where the national majority (Dutch) was a minority.

Sri Lanka: a diverse population

- Sri Lanka is an island nation off the southern coast of Tamil Nadu with about two crore people.
- Sinhala-speakers form 74 per cent and Tamil-speakers 18 per cent. Tamils include Sri Lankan Tamils (13 per cent), concentrated in the north and east, and Indian Tamils, whose forefathers came from India as plantation workers.
- Most Sinhalas are Buddhists; most Tamils are Hindus or Muslims; about 7 per cent are Christians, both Tamil and Sinhala.

Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka became independent in 1948. Sinhala leaders sought dominance over government by virtue of their majority.
- In 1956, an Act recognised Sinhala as the only official language, disregarding Tamil.
- Governments followed preferential policies favouring Sinhala applicants for university positions and government jobs.
- A new constitution said the state shall protect and foster Buddhism.
- These measures alienated Sri Lankan Tamils, who felt denied equal political rights, discriminated against in jobs and ignored.
- Tamils demanded recognition of Tamil, regional autonomy and equal opportunity; their demand for autonomy was repeatedly denied. By the 1980s, organisations demanded an independent Tamil Eelam in the north and east.
- Distrust turned into a civil war that killed thousands, made many refugees and caused a terrible setback to social, cultural and economic life. It ended in 2009.

Accommodation in Belgium

- Belgian leaders recognised regional differences and cultural diversity. Between 1970 and 1993, they amended their constitution four times.
- The constitution prescribes an equal number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers in the central government; some special laws require the support of a majority of members from each linguistic group, so no single community can decide unilaterally.
- Many powers of the central government were given to state governments of the two regions; state governments are not subordinate to the central government.

- Brussels has a separate government in which both communities have equal representation. The French-speaking people accepted equal representation in Brussels because the Dutch-speaking community accepted equal representation in the central government.
- A third kind of government, the ‘community government’, is elected by people of one language community (Dutch, French or German) wherever they live, and has power over cultural, educational and language-related issues.
- The model is complicated but has worked: it avoided civic strife and a possible division of the country, and Brussels was chosen as the headquarters of the European Union.

Lessons from Belgium and Sri Lanka

Both are democracies, but they handled power sharing differently. Belgium realised that unity is possible only by respecting the feelings and interests of different communities and regions, leading to mutually acceptable arrangements. Sri Lanka shows that if a majority community forces its dominance and refuses to share power, it can undermine the unity of the country.

Why is power sharing desirable?

- Prudential reasons: power sharing reduces the possibility of conflict between social groups. Since social conflict leads to violence and instability, power sharing ensures stability of the political order. Imposing majority will may look attractive in the short run but undermines national unity in the long run; tyranny of the majority harms both minority and majority.
- Moral reasons: power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. Democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise; people have a right to be consulted on how they are governed; a legitimate government is one where citizens, through participation, acquire a stake in the system.
- Prudential reasons stress better outcomes; moral reasons value the act of power sharing itself.

The case of Lebanon

After a civil war, Lebanon’s leaders agreed on rules for sharing power among communities: the President must be a Maronite Catholic Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Deputy Prime Minister an Orthodox Christian and the Speaker a Shi’a Muslim. Christians agreed not to seek French protection and Muslims agreed not to seek unification with Syria. The pact continues though Muslims are now a clear majority. The story of Khalil, who cannot reach the top post, raises the dilemma between ‘normal’ competitive democracy and fixed power-sharing for peace.

Forms of power sharing in modern democracies

- Power sharing emerged in opposition to the idea of undivided political power. In a democracy, people are the source of all power, and political power should be distributed among as many citizens as possible.
- 1. Horizontal distribution: among organs of government at the same level (legislature, executive, judiciary). Each organ checks the others, creating a system of checks and balances.
- 2. Vertical division (federal division): among governments at different levels: a general (federal, central or union) government and provincial or regional (state) governments, and further to municipalities and panchayats.

- 3. Among social groups: such as religious and linguistic groups; examples are Belgium's community government and reserved constituencies for weaker sections and women in India.
- 4. Among political parties, pressure groups and movements: competition among parties ensures power does not stay in one hand; coalition governments share power; pressure groups and movements influence decisions.

Forms of Power Sharing at a Glance

A favourite 3- and 5-mark question.

Form	Shared among	Example
Horizontal	Legislature, executive, judiciary	Checks and balances in India
Vertical / federal	Central, state and local governments	Union, states, panchayats in India; Belgian regional governments
Social groups	Religious, linguistic groups, weaker sections, women	Community government in Belgium; reserved constituencies in India
Parties and groups	Political parties, pressure groups, movements	Coalition governments; Germany's grand coalition (2005)

Prudential vs Moral Reasons

Learn the difference with one line each.

Prudential reasons	Moral reasons
Based on careful calculation of gains and losses	Based on the value of power sharing itself
Reduce conflict between social groups	Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy
Ensure political stability	People have a right to be consulted
Avoid tyranny of the majority	Citizens get a stake in the system, making government legitimate

Belgium vs Sri Lanka: Comparison

Aspect	Belgium	Sri Lanka
Population	A little over one crore	About two crore
Communities	Dutch 59%, French 40%, German 1%	Sinhala 74%, Tamil 18% (Sri Lankan Tamils 13%)
Approach	Accommodation and power sharing	Majoritarianism
Key measures	Equal Dutch and French ministers; powers to state governments; equal representation in Brussels; community government	Sinhala as only official language (1956); preferential jobs and university policies; state to protect Buddhism
Result	Unity maintained; Brussels became EU headquarters	Tamil alienation; demand for Tamil Eelam; civil war till 2009

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Ethnic	A social division based on shared culture and belief in common descent
Majoritarianism	Belief that the majority community should rule in any way it wants, disregarding the minority
Civil war	A violent conflict between opposing groups within a country that becomes like a war
Community government	Government elected by one language community in Belgium, dealing with cultural, educational and language issues
Prudential	Based on careful calculation of gains and losses
Horizontal distribution of power	Sharing of power among organs of government at the same level
Checks and balances	System in which each organ of government checks the others
Vertical division of power	Sharing of power among different levels of government
Federal government	General government for the entire country
Coalition government	Government formed by two or more parties together
Tamil Eelam	Independent Tamil state demanded in north and east Sri Lanka

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is majoritarianism? How did it affect Sri Lanka?

Majoritarianism is the belief that the majority community should rule as it wishes, ignoring the minority. In Sri Lanka, Sinhala-only language policy, job and university preferences and protection of Buddhism alienated the Tamils and led to a civil war.

Q2. What were the main elements of the Belgian model?

Equal number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers in the central government; special laws needing majority support from each linguistic group; powers to state governments; equal representation in Brussels; and a community government for cultural, educational and language matters.

Q3. Why did the Sri Lankan Tamils feel alienated?

They felt that the constitution and government policies denied them equal political rights, discriminated against them in jobs and opportunities, and ignored their language and culture, and that no major Sinhala-led party was sensitive to them.

Q4. Give two prudential reasons for power sharing.

Power sharing reduces the possibility of conflict between social groups, and it ensures the stability of political order because social conflict often leads to violence and instability.

Q5. Give the moral reason for power sharing.

Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. People affected by decisions have a right to be consulted on how they are governed, and citizens acquire a stake in the system through participation, which makes the government legitimate.

It is a system in which the legislature, executive and judiciary exercise different powers and check one another, so that no organ can exercise unlimited power, resulting in a balance of power.

Q7. What is community government in Belgium?

It is a third kind of government elected by people belonging to one language community, Dutch, French or German, no matter where they live. It has power over cultural, educational and language-related issues.

Q8. How is power shared among political parties and pressure groups?

Competition among parties ensures power does not remain in one hand and changes between parties. Coalition governments share power among parties, and pressure groups and movements influence those in power.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Compare the ways in which Belgium and Sri Lanka dealt with the question of power sharing.

Belgium recognised regional and cultural diversity and amended its constitution four times between 1970 and 1993.

It provided equal Dutch and French ministers, special laws requiring support of each linguistic group, strong state governments, equal representation in Brussels and community governments.

As a result, civic strife and a possible division of the country were avoided.

Sri Lanka followed majoritarianism: Sinhala as the only official language (1956), preferences for Sinhalas in jobs and universities, and state protection of Buddhism.

Tamil demands for autonomy were denied, leading to the demand for Tamil Eelam and a civil war that ended in 2009.

Lesson: respecting diversity strengthens unity, while majority dominance undermines it.

Q2. Explain the different forms of power sharing in modern democracies with examples.

Horizontal distribution among legislature, executive and judiciary, with checks and balances, as in India.

Vertical division among central, state and local governments; the constitution lays down their powers, as in India and Belgium.

Sharing among social groups through community government in Belgium and reserved constituencies for weaker sections and women in India.

Sharing among political parties, pressure groups and movements through party competition, coalition governments and the influence of interest groups.

These forms ensure that power is spread among as many citizens as possible.

Q3. Why is power sharing desirable? Explain with prudential and moral reasons.

Prudentially, it reduces conflict between social groups and avoids violence and instability.

It avoids the tyranny of the majority, which harms both minority and majority in the long run.

Morally, power sharing is the spirit of democracy.

People have a right to be consulted on how they are governed, and participation gives citizens a stake in the system, making government legitimate.

MCQs with Answers

1. What share of Belgium's population speaks Dutch?(a) 40 per cent (b) 59 per cent (c) 74 per cent (d) 80 per centAnswer: (b) 59 per cent

2. In Brussels, the majority of people speak(a) Dutch (b) German (c) French (d) EnglishAnswer: (c) French

3. Sri Lanka became independent in(a) 1947 (b) 1948 (c) 1956 (d) 1970Answer: (b) 1948

4. The Act making Sinhala the only official language of Sri Lanka was passed in(a) 1948 (b) 1956 (c) 1970 (d) 1983Answer: (b) 1956

5. Between 1970 and 1993, Belgium amended its constitution(a) Twice (b) Three times (c) Four times (d) Five timesAnswer: (c) Four times

6. The community government in Belgium deals with(a) Defence and foreign affairs (b) Cultural, educational and language issues (c) Taxes and trade (d) Police and courtsAnswer: (b) Cultural, educational and language issues

7. Sharing of power among legislature, executive and judiciary is called(a) Vertical distribution (b) Horizontal distribution (c) Federal division (d) Community governmentAnswer: (b) Horizontal distribution

8. Which is a prudential reason for power sharing?(a) It is the spirit of democracy (b) It reduces the possibility of conflict (c) People have a right to be consulted (d) Citizens get a stake in the systemAnswer: (b) It reduces the possibility of conflict

9. The civil war in Sri Lanka ended in(a) 1990 (b) 2001 (c) 2009 (d) 2015Answer: (c) 2009

10. Which city is the headquarters of the European Union?(a) Paris (b) Brussels (c) Berlin (d) AmsterdamAnswer: (b) Brussels

Quick Revision Points

- Belgium: Dutch 59% (Flemish), French 40% (Wallonia), German 1%; Brussels 80% French.
- Sri Lanka: Sinhala 74%, Tamil 18% (Sri Lankan Tamils 13%); independent 1948.
- Majoritarian measures: Sinhala-only Act 1956, job/university preferences, protect Buddhism.
- Result: Tamil alienation, demand for Tamil Eelam, civil war till 2009.
- Belgium: four amendments 1970–1993; equal ministers; state governments; Brussels equal representation; community government.
- Brussels is EU headquarters.
- Prudential reasons: reduce conflict, stability.
- Moral reasons: spirit of democracy, right to be consulted, legitimacy.

- Lebanon: fixed posts for communities.
- Forms: horizontal (checks and balances), vertical (federal), social groups, parties and pressure groups.

Chapter Summary

Power sharing is central to democracy. Belgium, with Dutch, French and German-speaking communities, accommodated diversity through equal representation, strong regional governments and community governments, and stayed united. Sri Lanka followed majoritarian policies favouring the Sinhala majority, alienating the Tamils and leading to a civil war that ended in 2009.

Power sharing is desirable for prudential reasons, as it reduces conflict and ensures stability, and for moral reasons, as it is the spirit of democracy. It takes four forms: horizontal sharing among organs of government, vertical sharing among levels of government, sharing among social groups, and sharing among parties, pressure groups and movements.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- The Belgium vs Sri Lanka comparison is the most asked question; learn the table.
- Forms of power sharing with examples is a common 5-mark question.
- Remember figures: 59/40/1 for Belgium, 74/18/13 for Sri Lanka, 1956 Act, 1970–1993 amendments.
- Case-based questions may use the Lebanon story or cartoons from the chapter.
- Distinguish prudential and moral reasons clearly in answers.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is power sharing?

The distribution of power among different organs, levels of government, social groups and political parties so that no one holds all power.

Why did Belgium succeed and Sri Lanka fail?

Belgium respected all communities through power sharing, while Sri Lanka imposed majority dominance, leading to civil war.

What are the forms of power sharing?

Horizontal, vertical (federal), among social groups, and among political parties, pressure groups and movements.

Is Power Sharing in the 2026-27 syllabus?

Yes. It is Chapter 1 of Democratic Politics II for 2026-27.

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Conclusion

Power Sharing shows that sharing power makes a democracy stronger, not weaker. Learn the

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Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE social science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

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