

Chapter 1 – Power Sharing

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Question 1:

What are the different forms of power sharing in modern democracies? Give an example of each of these.

Answer:

Different forms of power sharing in modern democracies:

Horizontal division of power: It is the sharing of power among the different organs of government. The division of government into the executive, the legislature and the judiciary is an example of horizontal division of power. In such a power sharing arrangement, different organs of government, placed at the same level, exercise different powers. This separation of powers ensures that no organ exercises unlimited power. Each organ checks the others, thereby putting in place a system of checks and balances. The division of power between the Council of Ministers headed by the Indian Prime Minister, the Parliament of India and the Indian Supreme Court is an example of this kind of power sharing.

Vertical division of power: It is the sharing of power among governments at different levels — a general government for the entire country and governments at the provincial or regional level. For example, in India, the Constitution defines the way power is to be shared between the Central or Union government and the various State governments. There are certain matters on which only the Central government can take decisions, while there are others on which only an individual state government has an exclusive right for decision making.

Division of power among social groups: Power can also be shared among different groups which differ socially. The system of 'community government' in Belgium is an example of this type of power division. This government is elected by people belonging to one language community (Dutch, French and German-speaking), and has the power to take decisions regarding cultural, educational and language-related issues.

The system of reserved constituencies in India is another example.

Division of power between political parties, pressure groups and movements:

Political parties are the organisations which aim to control power by contesting elections. In a democracy, citizens have the freedom to choose among the various contenders for power (the different political parties or the different alliances comprising political parties). Such a freedom of choice entails competition among the different parties, which in turn ensures that power does not remain in one hand, and is shared among different political parties representing different ideologies and social groups.

Pressure groups and movements also share governmental power, either through participation in governmental committees or by influencing the decision-making process.

Question 2:

State one prudential reason and one moral reason for power sharing with an example from the Indian context.

Answer:

A prudential reason for power sharing is that it leads to an avoidance 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. In India, seats have been reserved in legislatures for the socially weaker sections keeping in mind this prudential reason for power sharing.

A moral reason for power sharing is that it upholds the spirit of democracy. In a truly democratic setup, the citizens too have a stake in governance. In India, the citizens can come together to debate and criticise the policies and decisions of the government. This in turn puts pressure on the government to rethink its policies and reconsider its decisions. This active political participation is in keeping with the moral reason for power sharing.

Question 3:

After reading this chapter, three students drew different conclusions. Which of these do you agree with and why? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

Thomman – Power sharing is necessary only in societies which have religious, linguistic or ethnic divisions.

Mathayi – Power sharing is suitable only for big countries that have regional divisions.

Ouseph – Every society needs some form of power sharing even if it is small or does not have social divisions.

Answer:

Ouseph's statement is the most logical, and thus, should be agreed on. Power sharing not only prevents conflict between various groups in the society but it also inculcates a sense of worth in the citizens. The people will be more satisfied with the government if they have a say in the decision-making process.

Question 4:

The Mayor of Merchtem, a town near Brussels in Belgium, has defended a ban on speaking French in the town's schools. He said that the ban would help all non-Dutch speakers integrate in this Flemish town. Do you think that this measure is in

keeping with the spirit of Belgium's power sharing arrangements? Give your reasons in about 50 words.

Answer:

This measure is not in keeping with Belgium's power sharing arrangements. The arrangements seek to maintain peace between the French and Dutch-speaking communities. By banning French, the mayor will cause civil unrest. Both the languages should be made acceptable in the town's schools. This bilingual education system will be a better way to integrate the people of the town.

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Question 5:

Read the following passage and pick out any one of the prudential reasons for power sharing offered in this.

"We need to give more power to the panchayats to realise the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the hopes of the makers of our Constitution. Panchayati Raj establishes true democracy. It restores power to the only place where power belongs in a democracy – in the hands of the people. Given power to panchayats is also a way to reduce corruption and increase administrative efficiency. When people participate in the planning and implementation of developmental schemes, they would naturally exercise greater control over these schemes. This would eliminate the corrupt middlemen. Thus, Panchayati Raj will strengthen the foundations of our democracy."

Answer:

"When people participate in the planning and implementation of developmental schemes, they would naturally exercise greater control over these schemes. This would eliminate the corrupt middlemen."

Question 6:

Different arguments are usually put forth in favour of and against power sharing. Identify those which are in favour of power sharing and select the answer using the codes given below? Power sharing:

- A. reduces conflict among different communities
- B. decreases the possibility of arbitrariness
- C. delays decision making process
- D. accommodates diversities
- E. increases instability and divisiveness
- F. promotes people's participation in government
- G. undermines the unity of a country

(a)	A	B	D	F
(b)	A	C	E	F
(c)	A	B	D	G
(d)	B	C	D	G

Answer:

(a)	A	B	D	F
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Question 7:

Consider the following statements about power sharing arrangements in Belgium and Sri Lanka.

- A. In Belgium, the Dutch-speaking majority people tried to impose their domination on the minority French-speaking community.
- B. In Sri Lanka, the policies of the government sought to ensure the dominance of the Sinhala-speaking majority.
- C. The Tamils in Sri Lanka demanded a federal arrangement of power sharing to protect their culture, language and equality of opportunity in education and jobs.
- D. The transformation of Belgium from unitary government to a federal one prevented a possible division of the country on linguistic lines.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) A, B, C and D
- (b) A, B and D
- (c) C and D
- (d) B, C and D

Answer:

- (d) B, C and D

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Question 8:

Match list I (forms of power sharing) with List II (forms of government) and select the correct answer using the codes given below in the lists:

	List I		List II
1.	Power shared among different organs of government	A.	Community government

2.	Power shared among governments at different levels	B.	Separation of powers
3.	Power shared by different social groups	C.	Coalition government
4.	Power shared by two or more political parties	D.	Federal government

	1	2	3	4
(a)	D	A	B	C
(b)	B	C	D	A
(c)	B	D	A	C
(d)	C	D	A	B

Answer:

	1	2	3	4
(c)	B	D	A	C

Question 9:

Consider the following two statements on power sharing and select the answer using the codes given below:

- A.** Power sharing is good for democracy.
- B.** It helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups.

Which of these statements are true and false?

(a) A is true but B is false
(b) Both A and B are true
(c) Both A and B are false
(d) A is false but B is true

Answer:

(b) Both A and B are true
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