Chapter 13: Power Sharing

Exercise 13.1 — Exercises

Q1 What are the different forms of power sharing in modern democracies? Give an example of each of these.

SOLUTION

The chapter describes four forms of power sharing in modern democracies:

1. Horizontal distribution of power – power is shared among different organs of government, such as the legislature, executive and judiciary, placed at the same level. Each organ checks the others through a system of checks and balances so that none can exercise unlimited power. Example: the way the judiciary can check the functioning of the executive or laws made by the legislature.

2. Federal (vertical) division of power – power is shared among governments at different levels: a general (federal/central) government for the whole country and governments at the provincial, state or regional level, with the constitution laying down the powers of each. Example: the division of powers between the Central (Union) Government and the State Governments in India.

3. Power shared among different social groups – such as religious and linguistic groups, so that they do not feel alienated. Example: the 'community government' in Belgium (or reserved constituencies for weaker sections and women in India).

4. Power shared among political parties, pressure groups and movements – in a democracy citizens choose among competing parties, and when two or more parties form an alliance and are elected they form a coalition government. Example: a coalition government formed by an alliance of political parties (interest/pressure groups also share power by influencing decision-making).

Answer: Four forms: (i) among organs of government – horizontal distribution (legislature/executive/judiciary); (ii) among governments at different levels – federal division (Union and State Governments in India); (iii) among social groups – e.g. community government in Belgium; (iv) among political parties/pressure groups – e.g. a coalition government.

Q2 State one prudential reason and one moral reason for power sharing with an example from the Indian context.

SOLUTION

The chapter gives two sets of reasons why power sharing is desirable, calling the first set prudential and the second moral.

Prudential reason: 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 ensures the stability of the political order; imposing the will of the majority over others may look attractive in the short run but in the long run undermines the unity of the nation. Indian example: sharing power between the Central Government and the State Governments (federal division) reduces conflict and holds a diverse country together.

Moral reason: Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy. Democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise, who have a right to be consulted on how they are governed; a legitimate government is one where citizens acquire a stake through participation. Indian example: reserved constituencies for weaker sections and women give diverse social groups a share and a voice in government.

Answer: Prudential: power sharing reduces conflict and ensures stability (e.g. Centre–State federal division in India). Moral: power sharing is the very spirit of democracy – those affected have a right to be consulted (e.g. reserved constituencies giving weaker sections a share).

Q3 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.

SOLUTION

Ouseph's conclusion is correct. Thomman and Mathayi limit power sharing to divided or large countries only, but the chapter's moral reason makes power sharing universal.

Power sharing is the very spirit of democracy: a democratic rule involves sharing

power with all those who are affected by its exercise and who have a right to be consulted on how they are governed. This holds true even for a small society without social divisions. Moreover, the horizontal sharing of power among the legislature, executive and judiciary applies to every democracy, regardless of its size or divisions.

Answer: Ouseph – every society needs some power sharing, because power sharing is the very spirit of democracy and the horizontal sharing among organs of government applies to every democracy, big or small, divided or not.

Q4 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.

SOLUTION

No, this measure is not in keeping with the spirit of Belgium's power sharing arrangements.

Belgium's leaders shared power precisely to respect and accommodate both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking communities, and they even set up a 'community government' so that no linguistic group would feel alienated or dominated. Banning French in the schools imposes the will of one linguistic community over another, which is exactly the kind of domination that the Belgian arrangements were designed to prevent. It therefore goes against the spirit of accommodating diversity.

Answer: No – Belgium's arrangements were designed to accommodate both linguistic communities so none feels dominated; banning French imposes one group's will over another, which is against that spirit.

Q5 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. Giving 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.”

SOLUTION

A prudential reason stresses that power sharing will bring out better outcomes (it is based on a careful calculation of gains and losses), as opposed to a moral reason which values power sharing in itself.

The passage offers this prudential reason: giving power to the panchayats reduces corruption and increases administrative efficiency, because when people participate in the planning and implementation of developmental schemes they exercise greater control over them and eliminate the corrupt middlemen. These are better practical outcomes, so this is a prudential argument.

Answer: Giving power to panchayats reduces corruption and increases administrative efficiency (people who participate in schemes control them better and eliminate corrupt middlemen) – a prudential reason based on better outcomes.

Q6 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

SOLUTION

Arguments in favour of power sharing are the positive outcomes it brings; A, B, D and F are all benefits, while C, E and G are drawbacks alleged against it.

A (reduces conflict among communities), B (decreases the possibility of

arbitrariness), D (accommodates diversities) and F (promotes people's participation in government) are all in favour. C (delays decision making), E (increases instability and divisiveness) and G (undermines the unity of a country) are arguments against, so they are excluded. The correct code is (a) A B D F.

Answer: (a) A B D F

Q7 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

SOLUTION

Statement A is incorrect: in Belgium the French-speaking community was relatively richer and more powerful, and it was the Dutch-speaking majority that resented this – the majority did not impose its domination on the minority. So any option containing A must be wrong, which eliminates (a) and (b).

Statements B, C and D are correct: in Sri Lanka the government's policies sought to establish the dominance of the Sinhala-speaking majority; the Tamils demanded arrangements (of a federal, power-sharing kind) to protect their culture, language and equality of opportunity in education and jobs; and Belgium's shift from a unitary to a federal set-up prevented a possible split on linguistic lines. Between the remaining options, (d) B, C and D is correct.

Answer: (d) B, C and D

Q8 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: 1. Power shared among different organs of government; 2. Power shared among governments at different levels; 3. Power shared by different social groups; 4. Power shared by two or more political parties. List II: A. Community government; B. Separation of powers; C. Coalition government; D. Federal government. Codes: (a) 1-D 2-A 3-B 4-C (b) 1-B 2-C 3-D 4-A (c) 1-B 2-D 3-A 4-C (d) 1-C 2-D 3-A 4-B

SOLUTION

Match each form of power sharing to its corresponding form of government:

1. Power shared among different organs of government = Separation of powers (B).
2. Power shared among governments at different levels = Federal government (D).
3. Power shared by different social groups = Community government (A) – as in Belgium.
4. Power shared by two or more political parties = Coalition government (C).

So 1-B, 2-D, 3-A, 4-C, which is code (c).

Answer: (c) 1-B, 2-D, 3-A, 4-C

Q9 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

SOLUTION

Both statements are true according to the chapter.

A is true because power sharing is the very spirit of democracy – it is both morally right and produces a more legitimate, stable government. B is true because the chapter's prudential reason states that power sharing helps to reduce the possibility of conflict between social groups, since social conflict often leads to violence and instability. Hence both A and B are true, code (b).

Answer: (b) Both A and B are true