

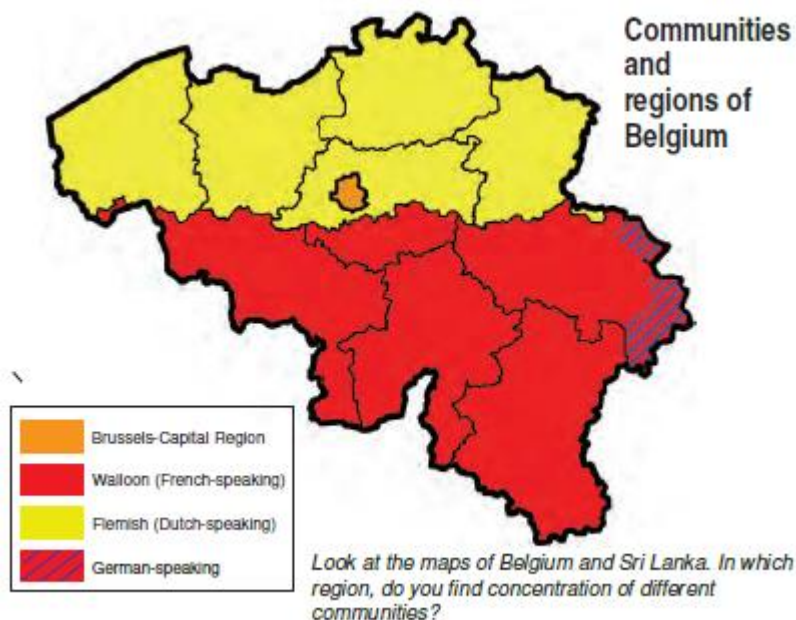
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Ch: POWER SHARING (REVISION NOTES)

Story of Belgium

Belgium is a small country in Europe with a population of over 1 crore, about half the population of Haryana. Of the country's total population, 59% speaks Dutch language, 40% of people speak French and the remaining 1% speak German. Look at the map below to know the language variation of Belgium. The minority French-speaking community was rich and powerful, so they got the benefit of economic development and education. This created tensions between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities during the 1950s and 1960s.



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.

Here are some of the elements of the Belgian model.

1. 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.

2. The state governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.
3. Brussels has a separate government in which both communities have equal representation.
4. 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.

The Belgium model was very complicated but it helped to avoid civic strife between the two major communities.