

Separation and fusion of powers

Today, we may find two basic models (forms) for the governance of democratic states.

Separation of powers

First is the separation of powers (also known as *trias politica*) which is developed by French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu. It is the doctrine that the individual branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial) have separate and unique powers the others cannot impinge upon.

Under this model, the state is divided into branches, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility.

The powers and responsibilities are divided among the legislative branch, executive branch, and judicial branch.

A legislature, or legislative branch, is the branch of the authority empowered to make the laws that are then enforced by the executive branch and interpreted by the judicial branch.

Executive branch is the branch of authority that is responsible for carrying out the laws. This is the branch of authority that is broadly responsible for implementing, supporting, and enforcing the laws made by legislative branch and interpreted by the judicial branch.

Judiciary, or judicial branch, is the branch of authority responsible for administration of justice.

The court systems of local, state, and/or federal authorities, responsible for interpreting the laws passed by the legislative branch and enforced by the executive branch.

A legislature passes the laws.

An executive enforces the laws.

A judiciary interprets the laws.

In separation of powers, each branch is largely independent of the others. *Independent* in this context means that selection of each branch happens independently of the other branches.

Each branch may choose to block action of the other branches through the system of checks and balances.

The framers of the Constitution designed this system to ensure that no one branch would accumulate too much power and that issues of public policy and welfare would be given comprehensive consideration before any action was taken.

Separation of powers is characteristic of presidential systems, for example and most representative is the USA.

Fusion of powers

The opposite of separation of powers is the fusion of powers, often characteristic of parliamentary democracies.

In this form, the executive, which often consist of a president and cabinet ("government"), is drawn from the legislature (parliament).

Although the legislative and executive branches are connected in parliamentary systems, there is often an independent judiciary.

A parliamentary system is a system of government in which the ministers of the executive branch are drawn from the legislature and are accountable to that body.

"Mixed systems" fall somewhere in between, usually near the midpoint; the most notable example of a mixed system is France's (current) Fifth Republic.