THE IMPORTANCE OF SEPARATION OF POWERS

Democratic government is characterised by the separation of powers.

This system divides the state into three branches – the legislative, executive and judicial branch – and gives each the power to fulfil different tasks. Tasks are assigned to the different branches and their institutions in such a way that each of them can check the exercise of power by the others. As a result, no single branch can become so powerful as to control the system completely.

The separation of powers is important because it provides a vital system of ‘checks and balances’: Firstly, it ensures that the different branches control each other. This is intended to make them accountable to each other – these are the ‘checks’. Secondly, it divides power between the different branches of government. This balance aims to ensure that no individual or group of people in government is ‘all powerful’.

Power is shared and not concentrated in one branch. The main purpose of the separation of powers is therefore to prevent the abuse of power.