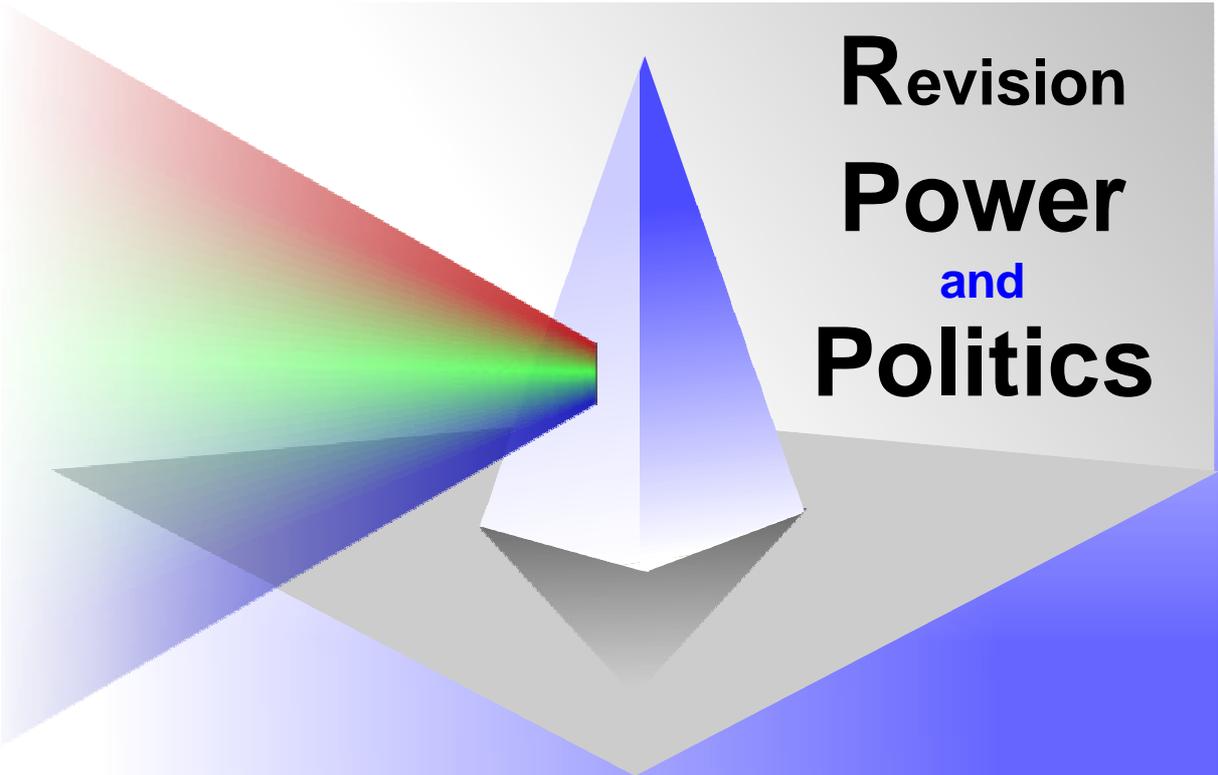


A2 Sociology



Revision Power and Politics

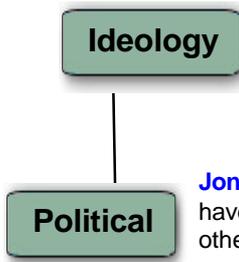
Different Political Ideologies
and their
Relationship to Different Political Parties

Chris. Livesey: www.sociology.org.uk

Political Ideologies and Political Parties

Mullins (1972): Political ideologies involve: "A program of collective action for the maintenance, alteration or transformation of society".
Gerring (1997): "Ideologies" (a set of related beliefs and values) become political ideologies when they "specify a concrete programme of action" (such as a party manifesto).

Bjørnskov (2004): Ideology is: "Hotly disputed...difficult to define and consequently difficult to measure".
 Involves general ideas about how we think about (and behave in) the social world.



Jones (2004): Political ideologies have the same basic features as other forms of ideology:

Beliefs
 About the nature of the world.

Justifications
 For those beliefs (and about the superiority of such beliefs when compared to other ideologies).

Political objectives
 Whatever these beliefs are designed to achieve.

Instructions
 About how these objectives can be realised.



Relate to the particular ways systemic beliefs are operationalised within a society.
Example: In the UK, although each party represented in Parliament has its own unique set of policies, principles and practices, all generally subscribe to the notion of a democratic political ideology.



Relate to broad (and fundamental) beliefs about the basis and general organisation of political behaviour in a society - they refer, in other words, to the idea of political systems.



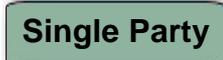
A set of fundamental ideas and practices (a totalist ideology) that are the only permissible political ideas.

Grobman (1990): Totalist ideologies involve "Complete political, social, and cultural control over their subjects".

Examples (20th century): Soviet Union under the control of Stalin (*Communism*) Nazi Germany under the control of Hitler (*Fascism*).



General Pinochet in Chile (1980's): Powerful dictator at the head of an oligarchic group.



Unlike democracies, where different parties and ideologies may be in competition (pluralism), totalitarian societies are organised around a single party.
Example: Modern China



Can take different forms, from a single powerful figure (a leader) to a powerful group (an oligarchy).

Friedrick and Brzezinski (1965): Party organisation is always strongly hierarchical with a high degree of centralised control and decision-making.



This system extends control *downwards* into every area of social life and the legal system is usually under the control or influence of the Party hierarchy.

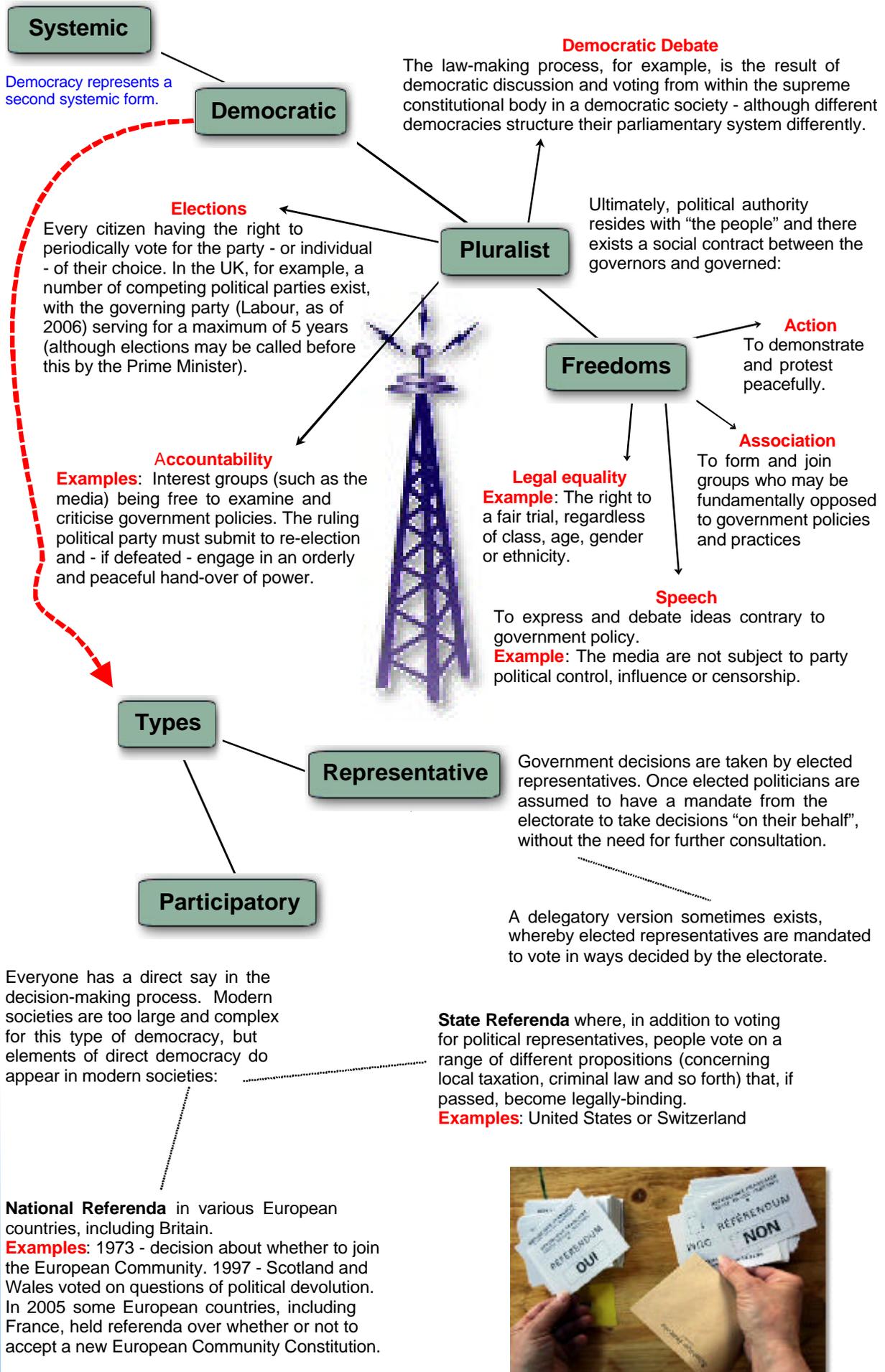


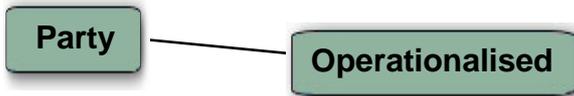
Exercised "from the centre, outwards". Decisions are made by a small group at the top of the Party hierarchy and disseminated to the mass of the party / population.

Extends across all areas of society - economic, political and ideological. This may involve the development of a *Corporate State* structure, as well as Party control of all means of communication - press and television, for example.



A common feature is a "secret police force" whose main role is to maintain and extend the existing political order. Such policing may involve imprisonment without trial, torture or even death.





The particular ways systemic beliefs are put into practice in a society.

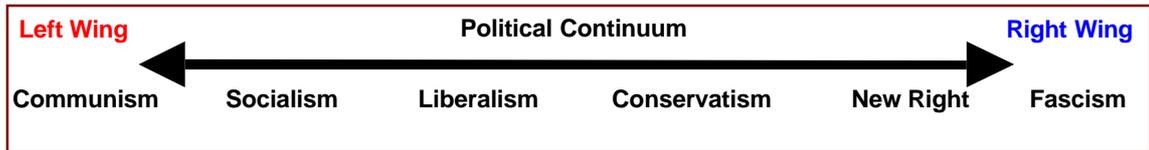
Although each party represented in the UK Parliament has its own unique set of policies, principles and practices, all generally subscribe to the notion of a democratic political ideology. We need, therefore, to examine specific forms of political ideology in the light of these systemic beliefs.



General ways political ideologies can be grouped (put into ideological boxes).



A conventional way to classify political ideologies is to view them as a continuous line (the continuum), at one end of which are "left-wing" parties (Communist and Socialist) and at the other are "right wing" parties (Conservative and Fascist).



Ideological positions (and the parties that hold them) are fragmented in contemporary societies.

Example: Labour policies have embraced both ideas and issues (social inclusion, welfare, child poverty and the like) conventionally associated with socialism and ideas and issues (such as increased prison funding) conventionally associated with the New Right.



This type of continuum fails to reflect the complexity of political ideologies and parties. The Labour Party, for example, is a broad organisation - some members could be classified as "Communist" while others are much closer to New Right beliefs.

Does this type of classification mean anything in contemporary societies, given how political parties adapt to different political situations.

Example: The Labour Party has been transformed over the past 20 years - from one advocating policies such as Nationalisation to one that now embraces policies (such as privatisation) traditionally associated with the Conservative Party.

Dearlove and Saunders (2001): Labour has "always been a reformist party dedicated to running Capitalism, as against a socialist party dedicated to the overthrow of Capitalism".



Originally had close association with the interests of the working class. Has recently reinvented itself (as "New Labour") in a successful attempt to gain and hold political power.



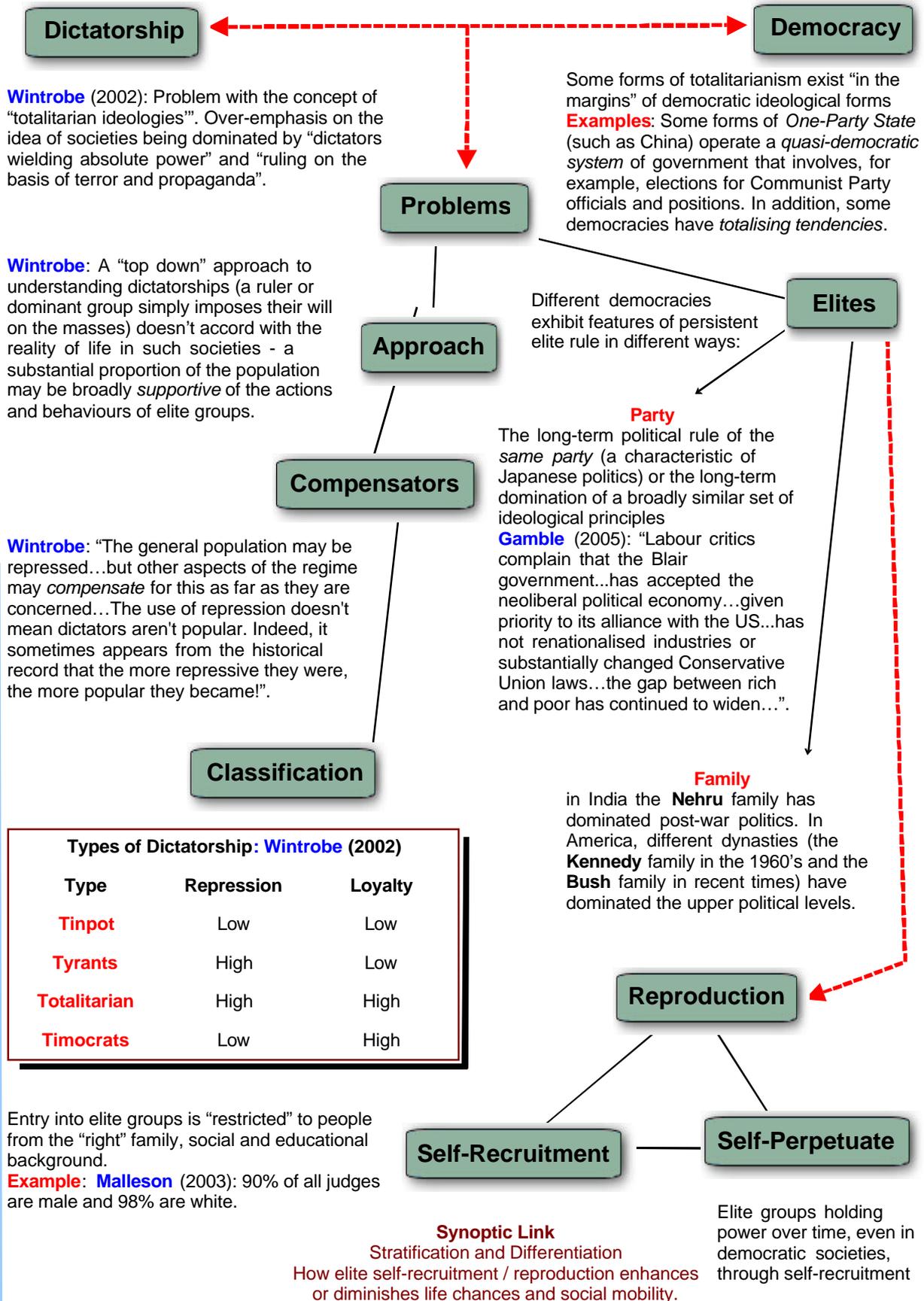
For much of 20th century embraced "One Nation Conservatism" - while still favouring business interests adopted policies (the Welfare State) previously the preserve of the Labour Party. In the 1980's, under Thatcher, Conservative ideology took on a "New Right" economic agenda.

David Cameron (2005) new leader of Conservative Party. Ideological shift that spoke of the need for "...a more compassionate Conservatism".



Historically has had close ideological links with financial, industrial and agricultural interests - the "party of business".

Elective Dictatorship - Hogg (1976): "The powers of our Parliament are absolute and unlimited. And in this, we are almost alone. All other free nations impose limitations on their representative assemblies. We impose none". Once elected and with a majority in Parliament, governments can "rule" without too much regard to opposition ideas.

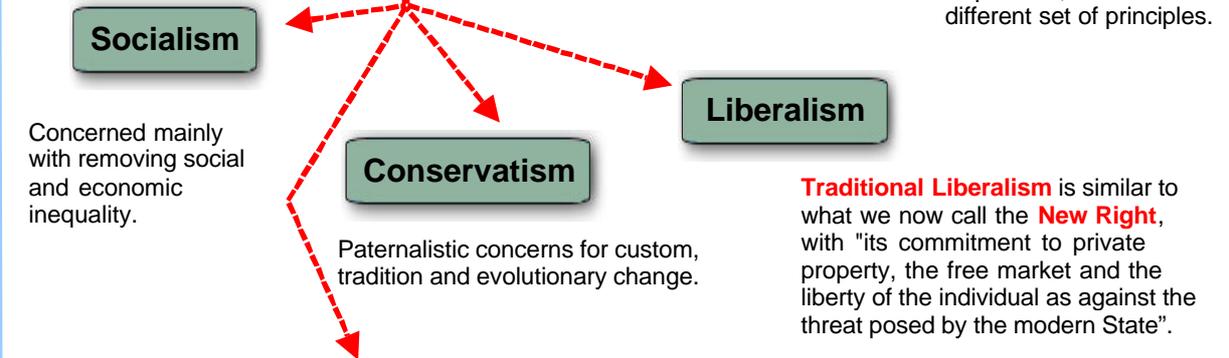
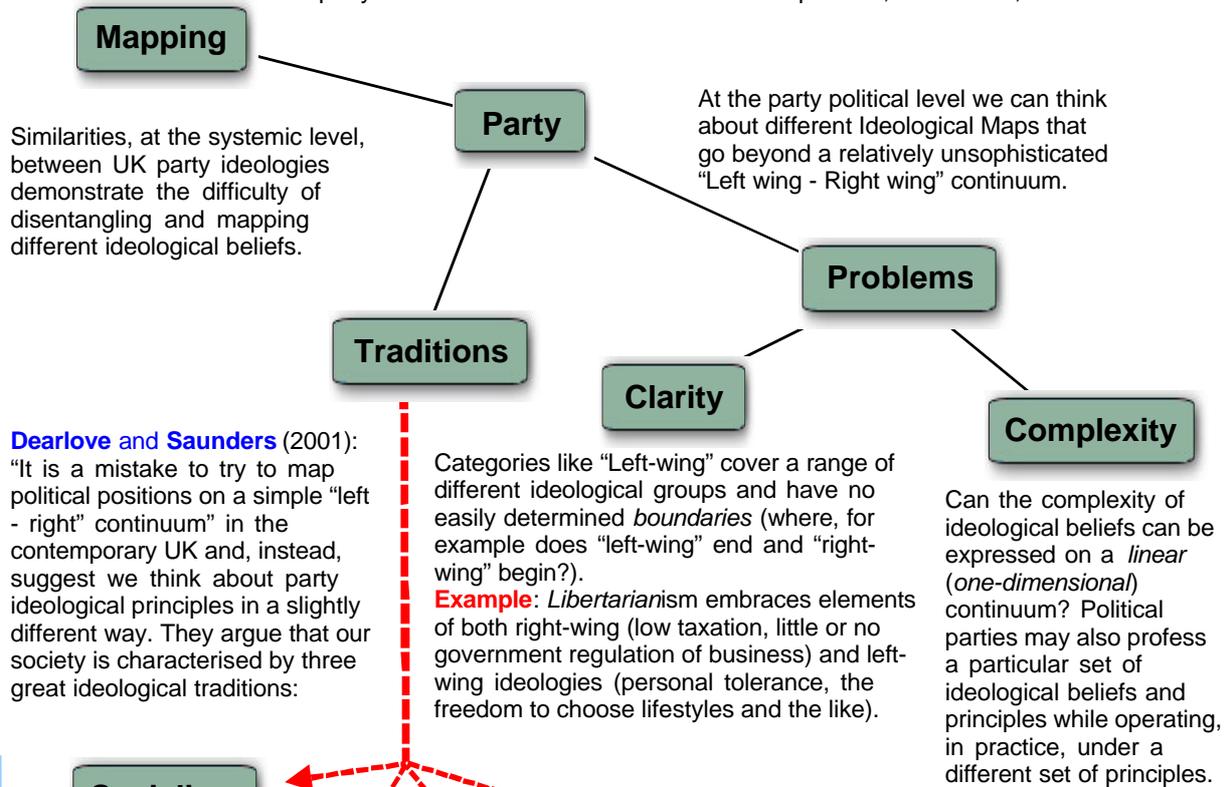


Types of Dictatorship: Wintrobe (2002)

Type	Repression	Loyalty
Tinpot	Low	Low
Tyrants	High	Low
Totalitarian	High	High
Timocrats	Low	High

Differences between democratic and totalitarian forms of ideology and practice should not be *overstated*.

Gamble (2005): Labour has governed in an "...authoritarian, centralist style, running the government through a small circle around the leader, sidelining cabinet, parliament and party". It nevertheless has to submit itself for periodic, democratic, election.



Dearlove and Saunders: Parties (and ideologies) are fluid - constantly shifting their positions as they "dip into and out of" each tradition.

Example The Conservative Party: 1979 - 2006

Synoptic Link
Crime and Deviance
 In the 1997 election campaign Tony **Blair** repeatedly used the phrase "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime".
Williamson (2002): This was "...geared to appeal both to the law-and-order lobby and to those...who believe that crime takes place for a variety of complex social reasons which cannot, fundamentally, be changed simply by punishing individual perpetrators".



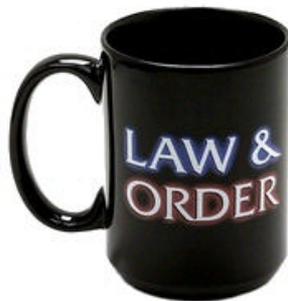
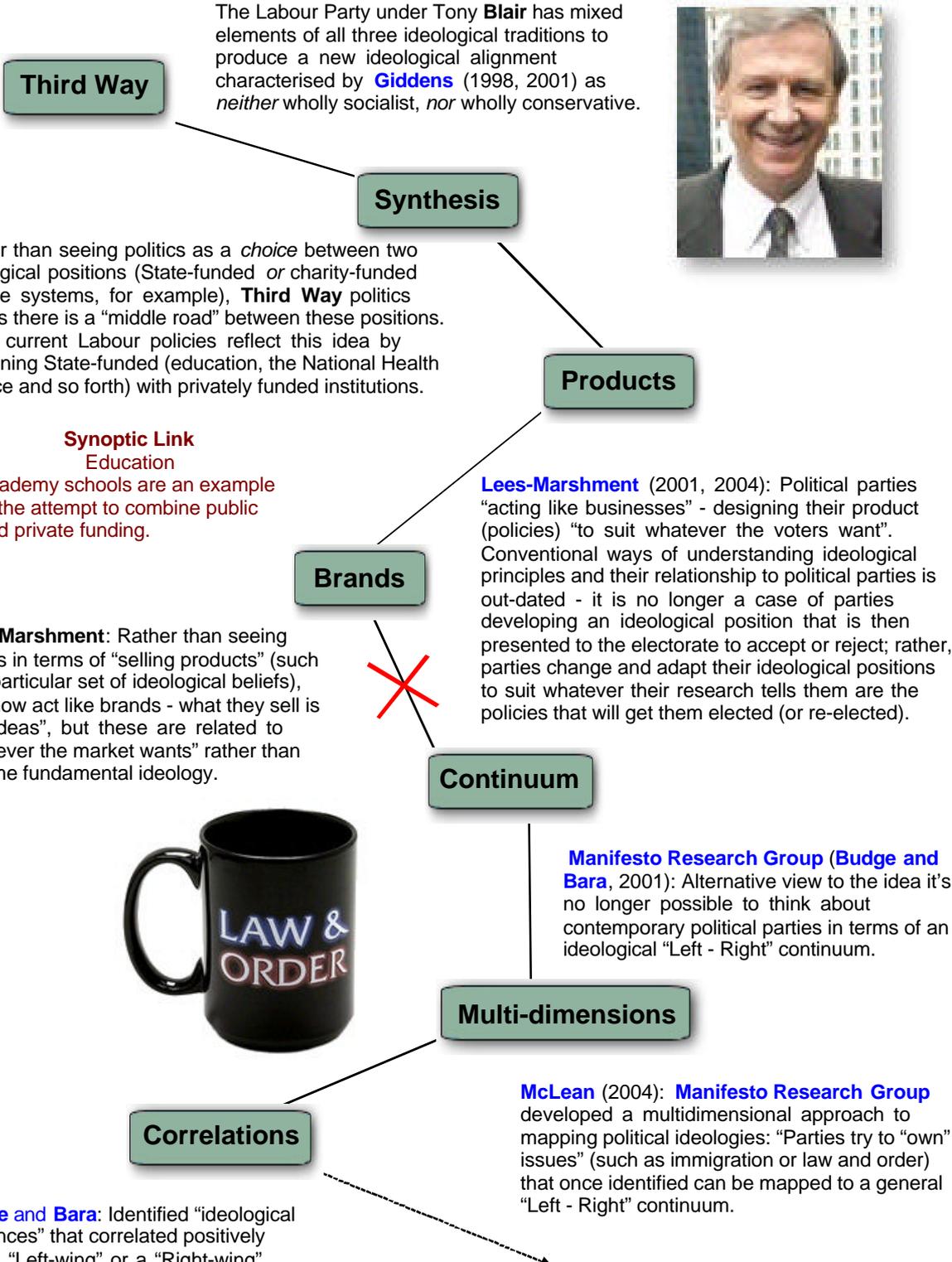
Margaret **Thatcher** (1979 - 1991) mixed both Conservative and Traditional Liberal ideas with the emphasis on the latter.



John **Major** re-emphasised "traditional Conservative" roots at the expense of New Right radicalism.



David **Cameron** (2005), has signaled both *modernisation* (increasing the number of female MP's, for example) and *continuity* with New Right policies (such as cuts in personal taxation).



Ideological Phrases: Budge and Bara (2001)

Left-wing Phrases	Right-wing Phrases
Democracy	Free enterprise
Regulate capitalism	Economic incentives
Nationalisation	Law and order
Military: negative	Military: positive

Exam Questions**12 marks**

Briefly examine the view that there is now a high degree of political consensus in modern Britain.

40 marks

Assess the view that differences between British political parties have been steadily diminishing over the past thirty years.

**40 marks**

Analyse and evaluate the sociological arguments and evidence for the view that ideological differences between political parties have become less distinct over the last twenty years.