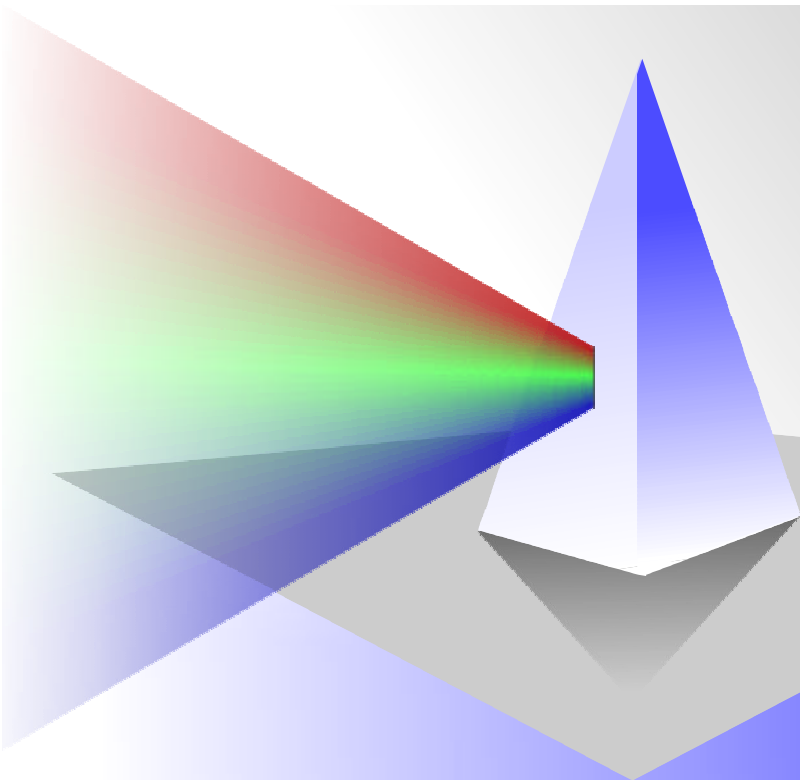


A2 Sociology



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).



Ideology

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.



CONSERVATIVE

Political

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

Beliefs

About the nature of the world.

Political objectives

Whatever these beliefs are designed to achieve.

Justifications

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

Instructions

About how these objectives can be realised.

Forms

Party

Systemic

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.

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.

Democratic

Totalitarian

Ideology

A set of fundamental ideas and practices (a totalitarian 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.

Single Party

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

Example: Modern China

Organisation

Control

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.

Dictatorship

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

Power

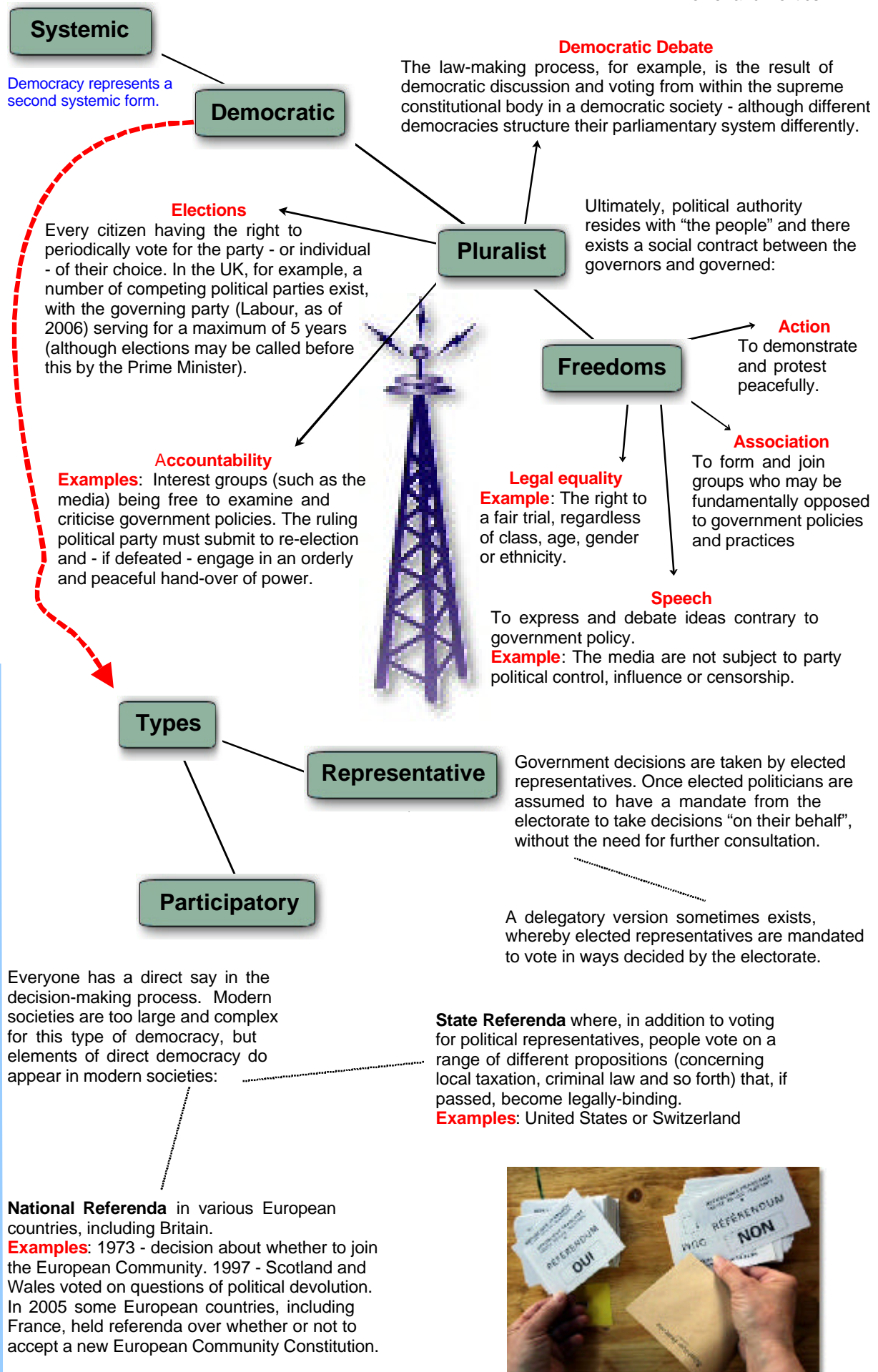
Exercised "from the centre, outwards". Decisions are made by a small group at the top of the Party hierarchy and disseminated to the mass of the party / population.

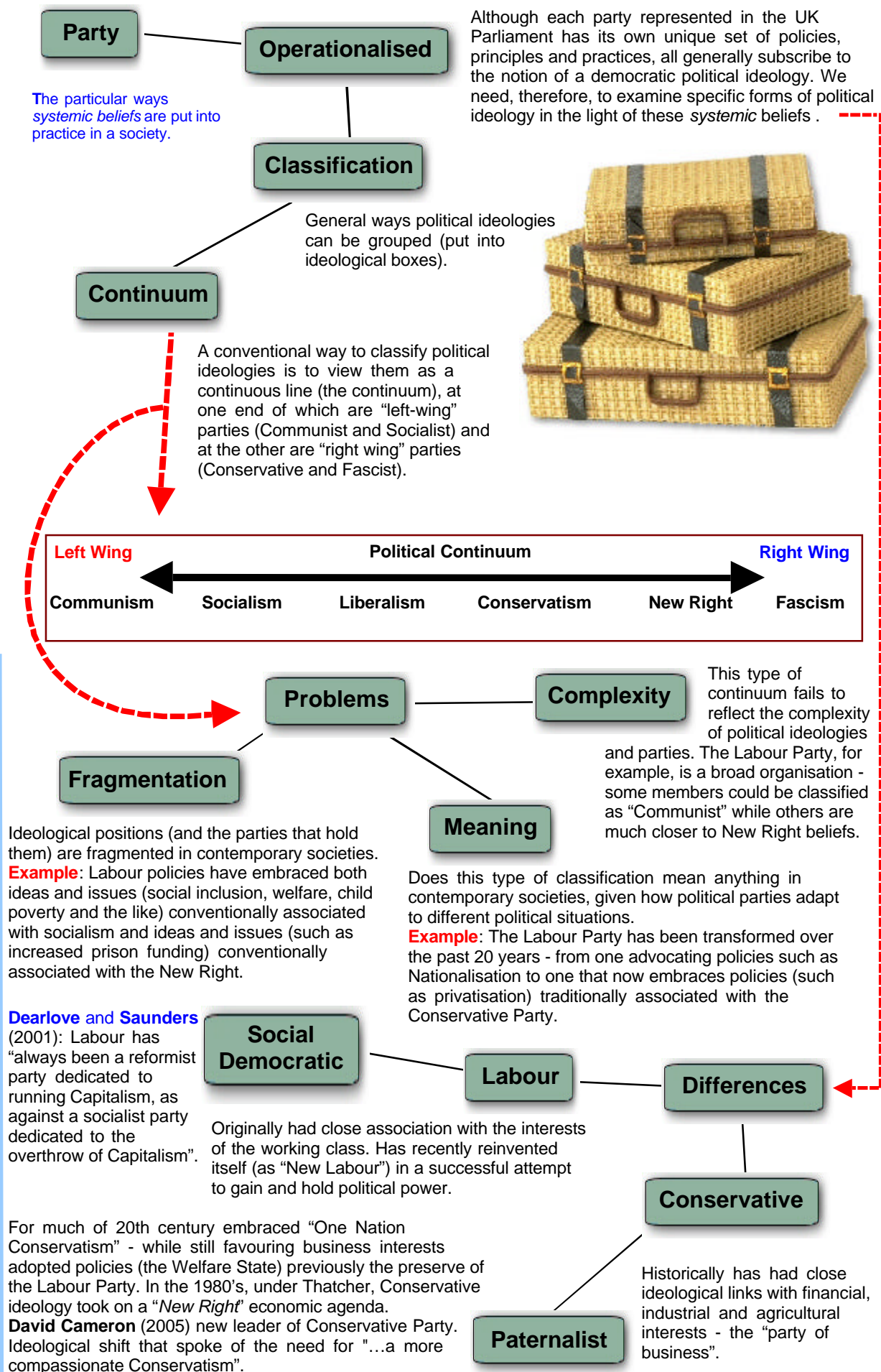
Friedrick and Brzezinski (1965): Party organisation is always strongly hierarchical with a high degree of centralised control and decision-making.

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.

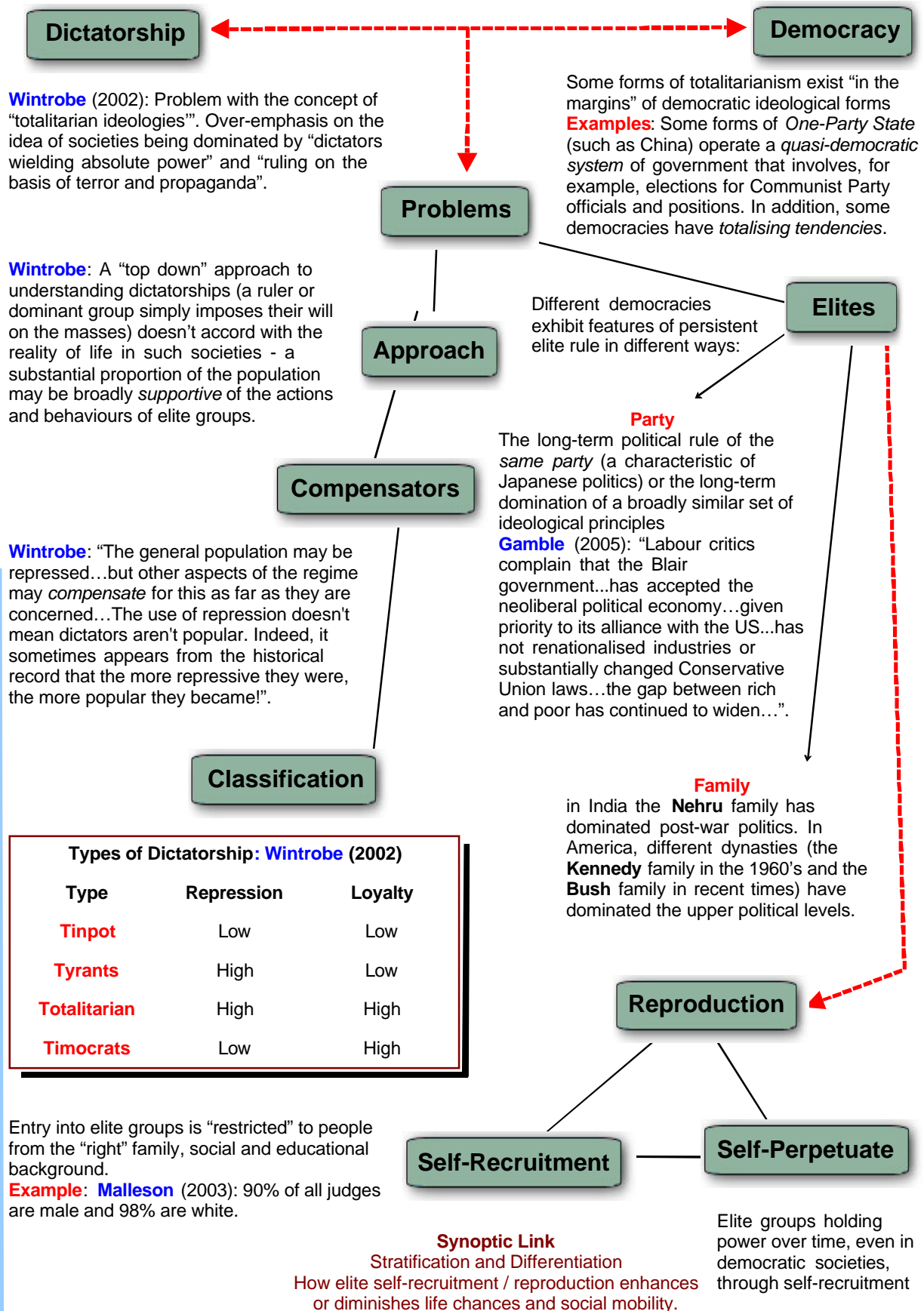
Policing

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.



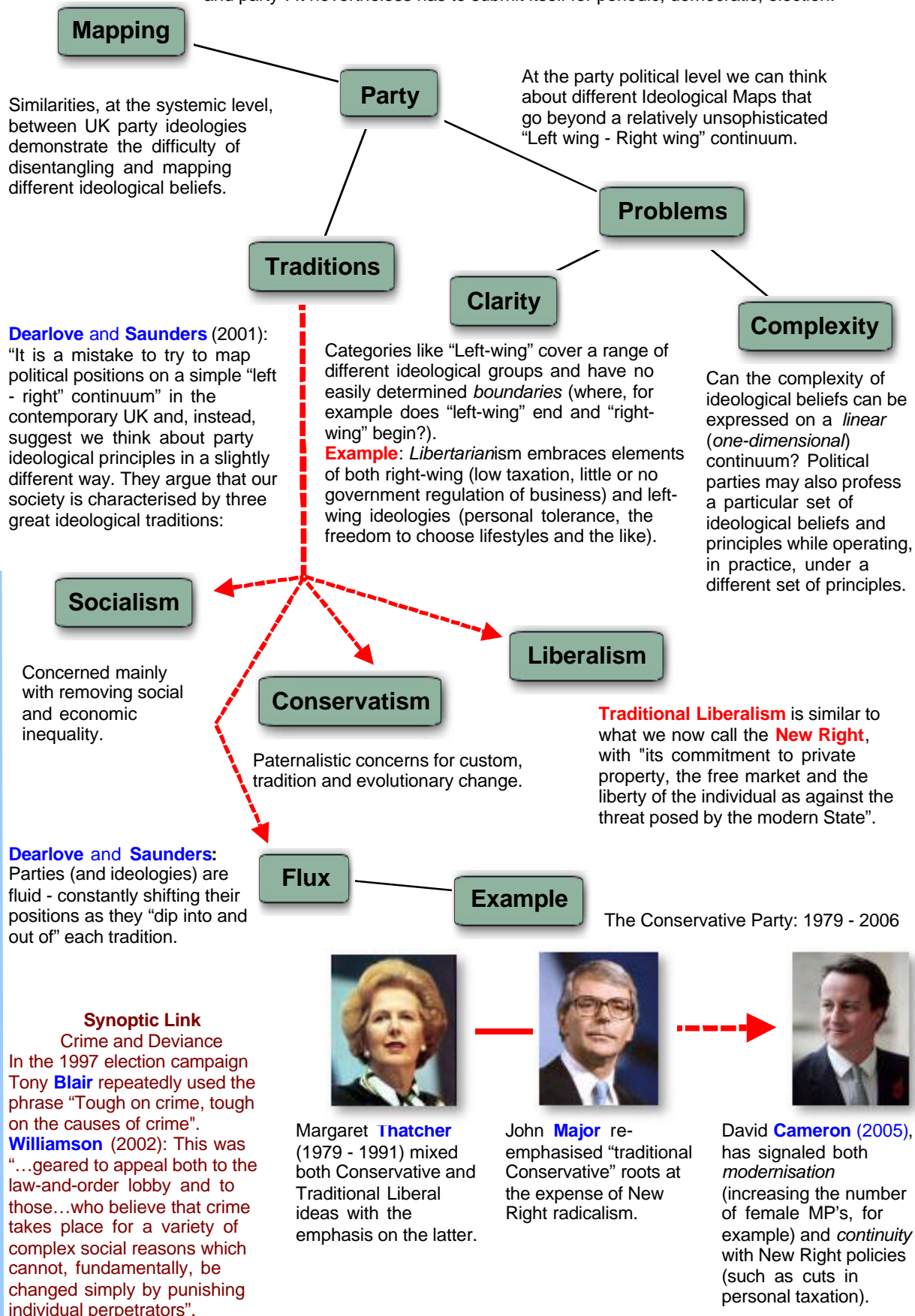


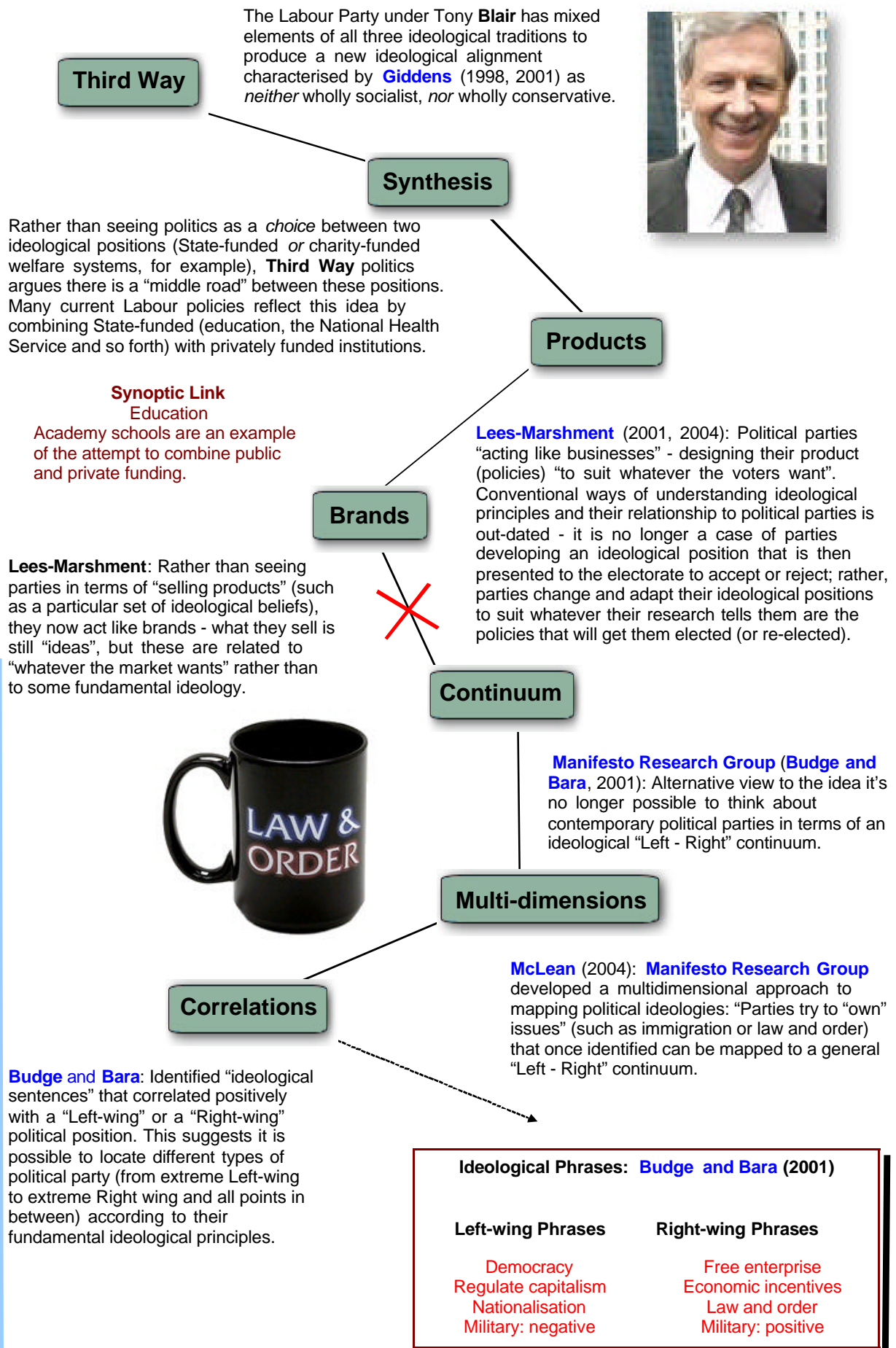
Elective Dictatorship - Hogg (1976): "The powers of our Parliament are absolute and unlimited. And in this, we are almost alone. All other free nations impose limitations on their representative assemblies. We impose none". Once elected and with a majority in Parliament, governments can "rule" without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



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.





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.