

# 5 POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

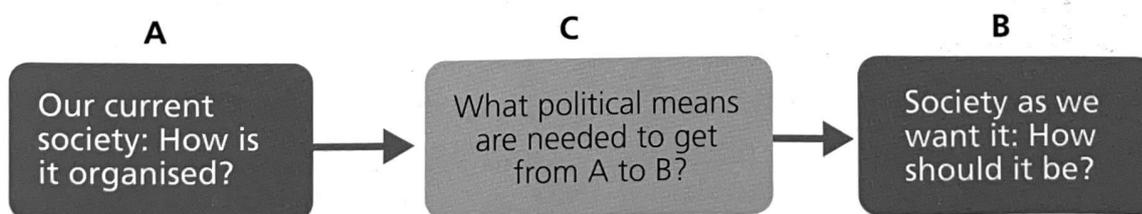
- What is an ideology?
- How do the ideologies view the significance of market and state?
- How do the political ideologies view humans and society?
- What is populism?
- How do the political parties act in relation to each other?

A **political ideology** consists of three parts, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. It has assumptions about how our current society is organised (Box A), assessments of how a good society should be organised (Box B), and finally an idea of which political means should be applied to move from A to B (Box C). The assumptions of a political ideology (Box A) could relate to the nature of humanity – are human beings considered sensible and independent or weak and of limited sense – while the as-

sessments (Box B) indicate how the role of the state should be.

Based on Figure 5.1, we can now define a political ideology as: a set of more or less systematic thoughts and assessments of how society is and should be, which can be used to defend or criticise a political system. Using this definition, we can look at what a political ideology can be used for (what function it has) at a certain point in the development of a society. Those in power may use one ideology to defend –

**Figure 5.1** Three components of a political ideology



Source: The figure was prepared by Jacob Graves Sørensen.

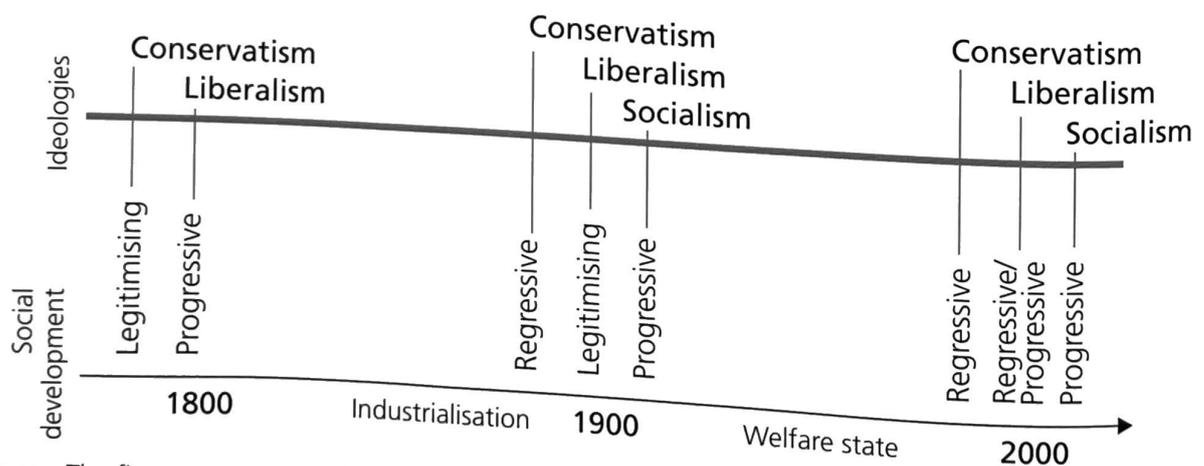
legitimise – the existing conditions in society because, to them, Box B is almost identical to Box A, while other groups use other ideologies to criticise the same society. If the purpose of the criticism is to return society to a former state, we can talk about a **regressive** ideology, while an ideology aimed at bringing society to a completely new form that has never been tried before is called **progressive**.

Figure 5.2 shows how the three classical ideologies have different functions at different times in history. The figure also shows that the three ideologies change their function over time. Liberalism was progressive during the absolute monarchy while it became legitimising after industrialisation with the related capitalist system. Finally, after the development of the welfare state from the 1960s and onwards, it became regressive. In the 21st century, liberalism has once again assumed a progressive form. None of the three classical ideologies in the figure legitimise our present society. This is done by social liberalism. We will hear more about that later in the chapter. It is important to note that the ideas and values of the political parties

can act as either regressive, legitimising or progressive narratives of the direction society should take. In social studies, we often work with **comparative method**. This method involves systematic comparisons of political ideologies, political parties, political systems, etc. When we apply the comparative method to political ideologies, we systematically ask the same questions to all of them:

- **View of human life:** Does the ideology consider people as independent, strong and sensible creatures (people can create a good life for themselves) or does it consider people weak and indecisive (people need help)?
- **Perception of society:** Are people so interdependent that they are components in society almost like an organism (an organic perception of society)? Or could people, in principle, live alone, as if on a deserted island? For practical reasons, though, they have agreed to form a society (a mechanical perception of society – they have consciously chosen to establish a social mechanism).

**Figure 5.2** The function of the political ideologies in different periods



Source: The figure was prepared by Jacob Graves Sørensen.

- **View of the role of the state:** Should the state only take care of the most necessary functions (because members of society can manage independently) and become a night-watchman state? Or is a large, powerful state needed, which in addition to handling the three parts of the separation of

## 5.1 The three classical ideologies: Liberalism, conservatism and socialism

In 1748, the French philosopher and political thinker Charles Montesquieu (1689-1755) introduced his idea of the separation of powers into the legislative, executive and judicial power, but he was not alone in addressing the design of society in that period. John Locke (1632-1704) had already formulated his thoughts on *political liberalism* before 1700; and in the light of merchants' need of freedom due to the greatly increased trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Adam Smith (1723-1796) formulated *economic liberalism*. The thoughts of these three thinkers were highly significant for the American Constitution, written in the 1780s, and the French Revolution from 1789 to 1799. Throughout the middle ages and until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, classical *conservatism* had been the only political ideology, and perhaps because of that, nobody had formulated the thoughts of conservatism in writing because it was considered natural that kings, nobility and church held all the power. But at the great upheavals in France during the revolution, Edmund Burke (1729-1797) found that the time was right to formulate the

thoughts of conservatism in response to liberalist thinkers. Following the industrial revolution in England (around 1780-1800), the capitalist system gradually began to dominate the European economies, and this system led to serious exploitation of workers. This inspired Karl Marx (1818-1883) to formulate the third major classical ideology: socialism – also called Marxism – which was later adjusted by Lenin (1870-1924) and other theorists. This led to numerous branches of the ideology which are collectively called socialism.

### Classical liberalism

**Classical liberalism** (*liber* = free in Latin) designates the first descriptions of a liberalist ideology which appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The core of classical liberalism is that all humans are born equal and free. Each person is unique and has inviolable rights. According to the father of liberalism, John Locke, all people have the right to life, property and freedom. For liberalism, human freedom is important not only because of inviolable rights, but also because liberalism considers man to be independent, strong and sensible. This means that people know best what serves them well, and what needs they have. Man is thus a rational and conscious creature that can follow his own interests and does not need authorities. In short,

*Freedom* is a keyword for classical liberalism. According to Liberals, people are free to do what they want as long as they do not violate the freedom of others. Classical liberalism thus focuses on the indi-

Classical liberalism		
View of human life	Perception of society	View of the role of the state
Humans are independent, strong and sensible. They have inviolable rights that give them the right to life, property and maximum freedom.	The state is solely established for practical reasons (mechanical perception of society).	Night-watchman or minimal state: The state should consist of police, military and courts, and its task is to ensure that the freedom of citizens is not violated. The state should be small and leave as much as possible to the citizens and the free market.

Economic liberalism		
View of human life	Perception of society	View of the role of the state
Humans are sensible and know their own needs and interests best. Every man for himself.	Everyone will gain prosperity if individuals and businesses are free to do as they please. Society consists of independent individuals.	The state must be small and leave the planning of production to the free market forces.

vidual, or to put it another way: The individual is above the state. The individual is the definitive unit, and the state has only been established for practical reasons because it is easier to establish courts and wage war jointly than separately. Thus, it is a *mechanical perception of society*. As classical liberalism puts the individual and its freedom at its core, the role of the state should be limited.

The task of the state is to ensure that citizens' rights to life, freedom and property are respected. The ideal is what we call a *night-watchman state* or a *minimal state*. Such a state consists only of police, military and law courts. The state should only provide law and order to make sure citizens do not violate each other's freedom. Moreover, since the people are better at controlling society than any leader, there should be democracy, which means that the state authority is elected by the

people. At such elections, the existence of "a free market of ideas and opinions" is important – citizens must have freedom of speech.

As mentioned earlier, Adam Smith was particularly concerned with the economic aspect of liberalism. The point was that if the state does not interfere, there will be a free market and a balanced supply and consumer demand. In the free market, consumers will be able to pursue their own interests and needs completely freely, and businesses will regulate their production according to consumers' interests and needs.

In this way, the free market will be self-regulating or governed by what Smith calls "the invisible hand". In this system, society will achieve the maximum prosperity thanks to competition although both consumers and businesses act selfishly. Smith emphasised the need for free

trade between countries – to the benefit of everyone. Liberalism is advocating **capitalism**. Capitalism is an economic system with emphasis on private property rights. Human labour can be bought and sold like products, and production is planned by the businesses to ensure business owners the maximum profit. A feature of liberalism is that the natural rights of people must be protected, but to the extent possible, everyone has a duty to provide for themselves throughout life. It is not the job of the state to maintain the existence of individuals.

### Traditional conservatism

“Ideology is rubbish,” said Poul Schlüter, former chairman of the Danish Conservative People’s Party and Prime Minister of Denmark (1982-1993). The sentence quite accurately expresses the basic scepticism of **conservatism**: Why should we believe in abstract and theoretical utopias about man and society? As previously mentioned, Edmond Burke (1729-1797) is regarded as the father of conservatism. In his work “Reflections on the Revolution in France” (1790), Burke rejects the notion that politics could build on abstract ideas. Burke was thus critical of liberalism’s highly optimistic belief in human reason and the free choice.

Burke’s argument is that human beings generally have a fairly limited sense and therefore make mistakes. As a result, individuals’ thoughts about social change may be disastrous for humanity. In this way, conservatism is just as much criticism of other ideologies (especially liberalism), as it is an ideology. Nevertheless, we regard

conservatism as an ideology because it contains a definite perception of human life, society and the state, and because it has a set of assumptions and values that also affect politics today.

Conservatism’s core perception is that, instead of pursuing fast and uncertain changes, we must learn from previous generations’ knowledge and experience and preserve the values of our culture and traditions. A stable, harmonious and peaceful society is a clear goal for conservatism. Society is perceived as an organism. Similar to a body, where all organs have a function, every citizen has an impact on society’s function – that is an *organic* perception of society. Conservatism claims that every citizen has his/her place in society and must carry out his/her duties if the community is to function. Conservatism, however, does not necessarily consider all citizens as being equally important. Traditional conservatism claims there is a natural order or hierarchy in society with God at the top as the creator of nature and the order of society, then the king, the priests, etc. Therefore, traditional conservatism is associated with the words: God, King and Fatherland.

Since human beings have limited sense and can make mistakes, the citizens must leave important decisions to authorities, such as citizens with experience or insight. According to conservatism, the state has a defined and balanced role in society. It should not interfere with the natural tasks of family, church and the law courts. These institutions must carry out their own tasks. However, the supporters of this ideology are not in favour of the minima-

Traditional conservatism		
View of human life	Perception of society	View of the role of the state
Humans have limited sense and may make mistakes. They are equipped with different intellectual prerequisites.	Society is an organism (organic perception of society) where all citizens have functions. However, these functions are not equally important. Society is based on traditions, values and institutions which are central to a harmonious and stable society.	The state must be defined and balanced in relation to the other important institutions in society, such as family, businesses and organisations. The state should also secure our cultural heritage.

list state of liberalism – the state must safeguard cultural institutions, values and ways of thinking so that these are not lost. It must ensure cohesion in society. In conservatism, the relationship between the state and the citizen is mutual: *rights* are granted by the state, and the citizens respond to these rights with their *duty* toward the state and the nation.

### Socialism

Karl Marx (1818-1883) originally formulated **socialism**. He criticised liberalism and the repression of the working classes by industrialism in his works *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Das Kapital* (1867). To Marx, man is a social and working creature closely connected to social communities and shaped by society's norms and values. According to Marxism, there is a basic, built-in conflict in capitalism. On the one hand, the working classes sell their labour, and in return they receive payment in the form of wages. The workers' labour is thus traded as a commodity in capitalist economy in line with food, clothing, etc. The workers are interested in getting higher wages, especially

because the value of the production they make is higher than the pay they receive. On the other hand, the employers decide and plan production in the enterprises. Employers are not interested in paying more to the workers, but have an objective interest in achieving the maximum surplus – called profit – for their business.

According to Marx, these conflicting interests were the reason for *the class struggle* between workers and employers. The point is that the workers are being exploited because their work is worth more than their wages. Marx claimed that the class conflict cannot be resolved if society is based on capitalism. Instead, the class struggle will lead to an increasing number of conflicts and eventually lead to the collapse of capitalism because of the fundamental contradictions.

Instead, Marx argued that abolishing private property and introducing socialism would be useful. In socialism there is common ownership: The state would own the means of production (the enterprises) and the workers control them. In this way, there is no conflict between workers and employers, and profits are distributed according to work performance instead of

Socialism		
View of human life	Perception of society	View of the role of the state
Humans are social and working creatures shaped by society and dependent on solidarity.	The current capitalist society is characterised by conflicts of interest and class struggle between employers and employees. Therefore, capitalism will disappear, and socialism will emerge.	The socialist state must be big and strong and assume ownership of productions. It must try to actively create equality and prosperity for all citizens. It must also eliminate old liberal and capitalist ideas.
Communism		
View of human life	Perception of society	View of the role of the state
Humans are social and working creatures shaped by society and dependent on solidarity. Individuals will care for, and consider all others.	Organic perception of society. The communist society is classless, and there is no conflict of interest or class struggle.	The state becomes redundant and disappears.

ownership. Socialism is often associated with the phrase: *From each according to his abilities to each according to his needs*. *Solidarity* is thus a key concept of socialism. In socialism, there are *mutual rights and liabilities* between citizen and state, but emphasis is on the state safeguarding the citizens' political, civil and social rights.

Marx was not only a socialist, but also a communist. He considered socialism to be a transitional form of society in which a strong state must gradually eradicate the bourgeoisie's liberalist and capitalist ideas. If successful, the different classes will disappear in the long term and a *communist society* will emerge. According to Marx, communism is a classless society in which individuals care about society and not just themselves. When people are so considerate, a state will no longer be needed. In the communist society, the state will die, and everybody will be able to perform ac-

ording to ability and enjoy according to need. It has been discussed whether Marx perceived communist society as a utopia or as the highest stage of evolution. Today most socialist political parties do not aim for a communist society, while communist parties still believe communism is possible. Although there are many different socialist views today, most of them share the criticism of capitalism launched by Marx and support the idea that the state must safeguard a high level of equality in society.

## 5.2 Ideological branching

Today, the classical political ideologies of liberalism, conservatism and socialism constitute a number of basic perceptions of humans, society and the state, but social reality, political goals and the means of the state have changed in step with social developments and the political de-

bate. Instead, the old ideologies have proliferated, and variants have emerged. The following are the most central variants in Danish politics in recent times.

### Social liberalism

**Social liberalism** appeared at the same time as Karl Marx criticised liberalism and capitalist society. John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was the philosopher who formulated the theory of social liberalism. Like Marx, he could easily see problems of industrial society, but his criticism was less extensive than that of Marx. Mill had the same perception of humanity and society as classical liberalism and – contrary to Marx – he thought it was enough to adjust the role of the state, so it became slightly larger and stronger. The state was to regulate more than the night-watchman state. In economic terms, social liberalism agrees with the liberalist assumption that a free market economy is the most effective way to distribute resources.

But, like the Socialists, the Socialist Liberals claim the free market has some inherent problems. Social liberalism does not argue that free competition will necessarily lead to increased prosperity for all, but only for those who are competitive in the labour market – society's weakest groups will not enjoy Adam Smith's invisible hand. Moreover, consumers and businesses in a free market are likely to consider their own selfish interests, and this may lead to overconsumption that does not allow future generations to enjoy the same benefits. To compensate for the inherent flaws, the state should provide financial assistance to the weakest groups

and ensure a sustainable development. Several modern Danish political parties can be described as social liberal. "De radikale", for example, were created on a social liberal basis in 1905.

### Social conservatism and national conservatism

Like social liberalism, **social conservatism** is critical of the free market economy. Social conservatism argues that in free competition all citizens will fight each other, and as a result liberalism cannot ensure the goal of conservatism, which is a stable and harmonious society. The role of the state must be to ensure some control of the market to prevent conflicts from threatening society with dissolution. The Danish Conservative People's Party was formed in 1916 and has largely evolved into a social conservative (or social liberal) party. National Conservatism is a conservative ideology, which seems to have regained its strength in the 2010s.

**National conservatism** is based on the classical conservative values of experience, tradition, hierarchy, authority and order. The concept of nation is strongly emphasised because the nation and, in particular, the national identity is perceived as the existential framework of Denmark's historical, cultural and social community which gives people attachment and value. Without the nation-state, the experience and traditions that form the basis of Danish culture will erode, and Danish society, as we know it, will dissolve. With its strong focus on the nation-state, Danish national conservatism is opposed to the EU.

## Social democracy

As ideologies, both social liberalism and social conservatism have moved away from the mother ideologies and towards socialism. **Social democracy**, on the other hand, has moved away from socialism and towards liberalism so now the three ideologies are relatively close. In the late 19th century, socialism branched into two different movements – revolutionary and reformist socialism. Social democracy is reformist socialism advocating the change of capitalist society by democratic means. Social democracy accepts the free market, but argues that the state should regulate the market and ensure fair living conditions for all citizens, such as education and health insurance. That is what we understand as a welfare state. Not surprisingly, the Social Democrats are the Danish party based on social democracy.

## Revolutionary socialism

In contrast to social democracy's reformist version of socialism, **revolutionary socialists** argue that the transition from capitalism to socialism can only be realised through major political and economic changes, and it may be necessary to use violence. The Red-Green Alliance (Enhedslisten) and various communist parties have perceived themselves as revolutionary socialists.

## Neoliberalism

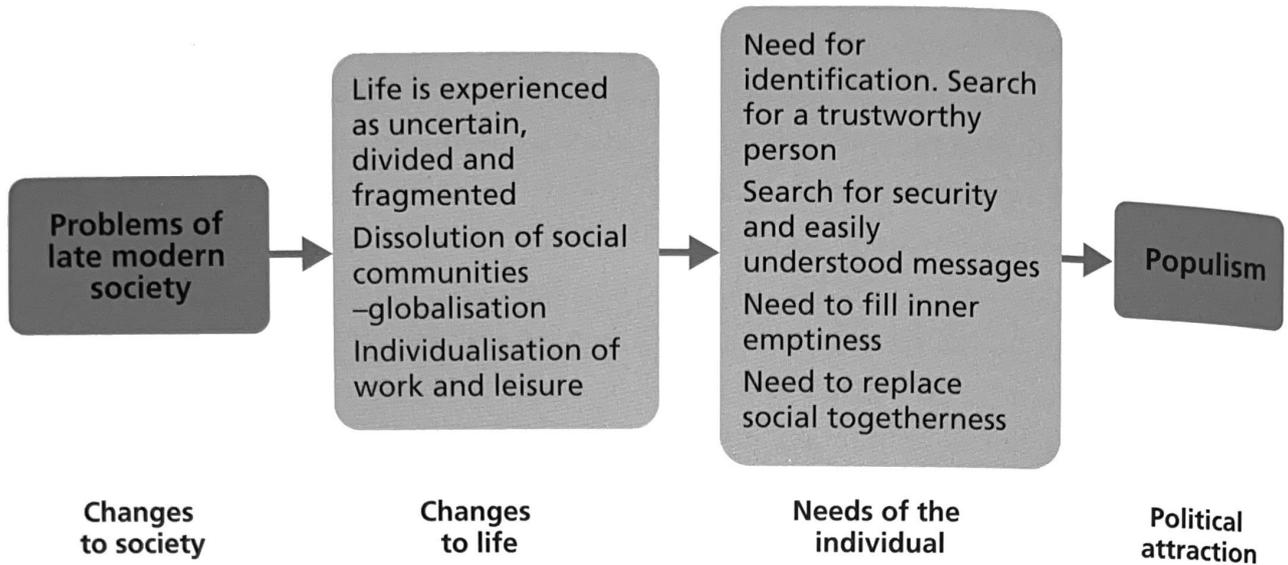
While social liberal, social conservative and social democratic thinkers unite different ideologies, other ideologists have attempted to reformulate an original clas-

sical ideology in a contemporary context. This applies to **neoliberalism**. The American philosopher Robert Nozick (1938-2002) has formulated thoughts that have also inspired Danish politicians – mainly in parties like the Liberal Party (Venstre) and Liberal Alliance. Nozick's theory was based on liberalism's assumption that humans are inviolable and free, and he emphasised that humans should always be perceived as a goal and never as a means for others to succeed. The consequence is that humans must never be forced into something, but should always enter into agreements voluntarily. Nozick compares tax collection with slavery because citizens will not voluntarily pay to all the state's activities. Why should retired people pay tax to support students, for example? Retired people do not benefit from the state supporting students financially (SU). Neoliberalism argues that the state's role in society should quite literally be minimal.

## Green ideology

The three classic ideologies are all in favour of economic growth and increased prosperity. Disagreement is about how these goals should be achieved, which means to use, and how to distribute society's resources. The **green ideology** takes an opposite point of view. It is opposed to continued economic growth because growth does not adequately care about the environment and the climate. According to green ideology, a clear political goal must be to adjust human way of life to be consistent with nature's sustainability.

**Figure 5.3** Citizens' attraction to populism in late modern society



Note: The figure was prepared by Jacob Graves Sørensen for "Ideologi og politik" by Hans Lystrup, Systime 1989.

The green agenda also includes a desire for a more balanced everyday life and the empowerment of the citizens. Like everything else in nature, humans are organisms, and human life should be adapted to nature. This implies that the exaggerated speed of late modern people, who are eager to perform highly at work or school, is a completely wrong way of life, but a "natural" consequence of living in a society designed to pursue economic growth. The green ideology therefore argues in favour of a radically different idea of growth with focus on reduced working hours as production must be reduced and take place with the conservation and improvement of the entire ecosystem in mind. Much of the stress that affects people in Denmark and around the world and makes them sick, according to the green ideology, could be reduced if society was established in an ecologically sustainable manner.

### Populism

Unlike the other political ideologies, **populism** is not a traditional ideology, but rather a political trend that has always been part of politics. However, populism has gained immense political tailwind in recent years due to the recession and financial crisis in the late 2000s and early 2010s, increasing immigration to the EU and the United States from non-western countries, and increasing economic inequality. Populism has broad and strong political appeal in the electorate. The phenomenon seems to be linked to its ability to present itself as a representative of the real people who have been deceived and lied to by a political elite. According to populist politicians, the elite is a closed and exclusive group concentrating only on developing and exploiting the system to enrich themselves at the expense of the real people.

Populism argues that it will break with the elites and their cultural, political, so-

cial and economic systems which, it says, are invented to minimise the opportunities of the real people.

*Right-wing populism* will put an end to the whole idea of pluralism and diversity and stop the immigration that threatens the national cohesion and the possibility of real people to experience progress within the national community.

*Left-wing populism* will break with the existing economic thinking by tearing down the social structures. Among others, the French leftist presidential candidate Mélenchon stated he would require all citizens earning more than three million a year to pay 100% in taxes of each penny they earned more than three million. The populists question the political discussions because they refuse to compromise. Since they represent the real people, their proposals must necessarily be in accordance with the will of the people and therefore simply need to be implemented *in extenso*. The growth of populism has been evident in the 2010s with major progress for people such as Donald Trump in the United States, Marine Le Pen in France, Nigel Farage of UKIP in the United Kingdom, and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands.

### 5.3 Parties and ideologies

To give an impression of the ideological positions of the parties, we normally use a **left-right axis based on redistribution policy** with the left end favouring economic equality and a strong state, while the right end prefers economic freedom and limited state influence. See Figure 5.4.

The left-right axis indicates different attitudes to economic equality. If you are **left-wing**, you belong to the **red bloc**, and then, by tradition, you support a high degree of social equality, a high degree of redistribution of society's resources through taxes, and a large welfare state. The left wing is thus characterised by the ideologies of socialism and social democracy. If, on the other hand, you prefer liberalism and want a high degree of economic freedom, low taxes and free economic choices, this implies limited government power and makes you **right-wing** and belonging to the **blue bloc**.

In developed countries, however, where citizens increasingly have their basic material needs met, the parties' competition for votes is no longer only focused on redistribution policy, as in Figure 5.4. New and non-material issues are also high on the political agenda – we call them **new politics** or **value-based politics**. Such is-

Figure 5.4 Danish political parties from left to right based on redistribution policy



### Text Box 5.1

#### Red and blue bloc – everyday differences in political attitudes

The political parties are usually grouped in the **red bloc** and the **blue bloc**. It is a somewhat simplified representation, but provides an overview of how the political parties differ in terms of redistribution policy and value-based policy. The parties most

often categorised as red bloc and those most often categorised as blue bloc disagree in several policy areas. We have tried to illustrate how the parties in the blue and red blocs respectively relate to a few policy areas.

Area	Red bloc	Blue bloc
Political parties	Social Democrats, Socialist People's Party, Alternative, Red-Green Alliance and Social Liberals	Liberal Party, Liberal Alliance, Danish People's Party and The Conservatives
Economy	Not complete consensus on the economic policy. Unlike the others, the Social Liberals favour a higher retirement age and new economic reforms as in the 2011-2015 period. The party's view of the economy is close to that of the blue bloc.	Relatively high consensus on the economy, but the Danish People's Party is against reductions in public budgets. The party's views on public budgets and the significance of universal welfare benefits are more in line with the red bloc.
Climate	The five parties agree that the climate and the environment must have very high priority.	Not complete agreement on climate and environmental policy. The Conservatives would prefer a greener "blue bloc" policy.
Immigration	Strong disagreement between the Social Democrats and the other parties. SocDem supports tightening in the area of immigration and refugees and is close to the blue bloc.	Mainly agreement, but sometimes criticism in the blue bloc that the Danish People's Party makes immigration the most important policy area in Denmark.
Legal policy	Consensus on high priority on preventive action against crime. In recent years, the SocDems have supported a stricter course, but continue to emphasise the preventive effort.	Agreement that justice must be fair but hard.
Social policy	Consensus about fight against inequality, but not with what means.	Agreement that inequality cannot, or should not be completely eliminated, but the Danish People's Party is reluctant to support reforms that could increase inequality in Denmark.

Note: Red bloc's political positions on the five policy areas were inspired by "5 røde nøgleområder" by Cecilie L. Kristiansen and Emil A. Mosekjær, Politiken, May 12, 2017.

Redistribution policy  
Left wing

Source: The figure is inspired by

issues include immigration, globalisation and cr

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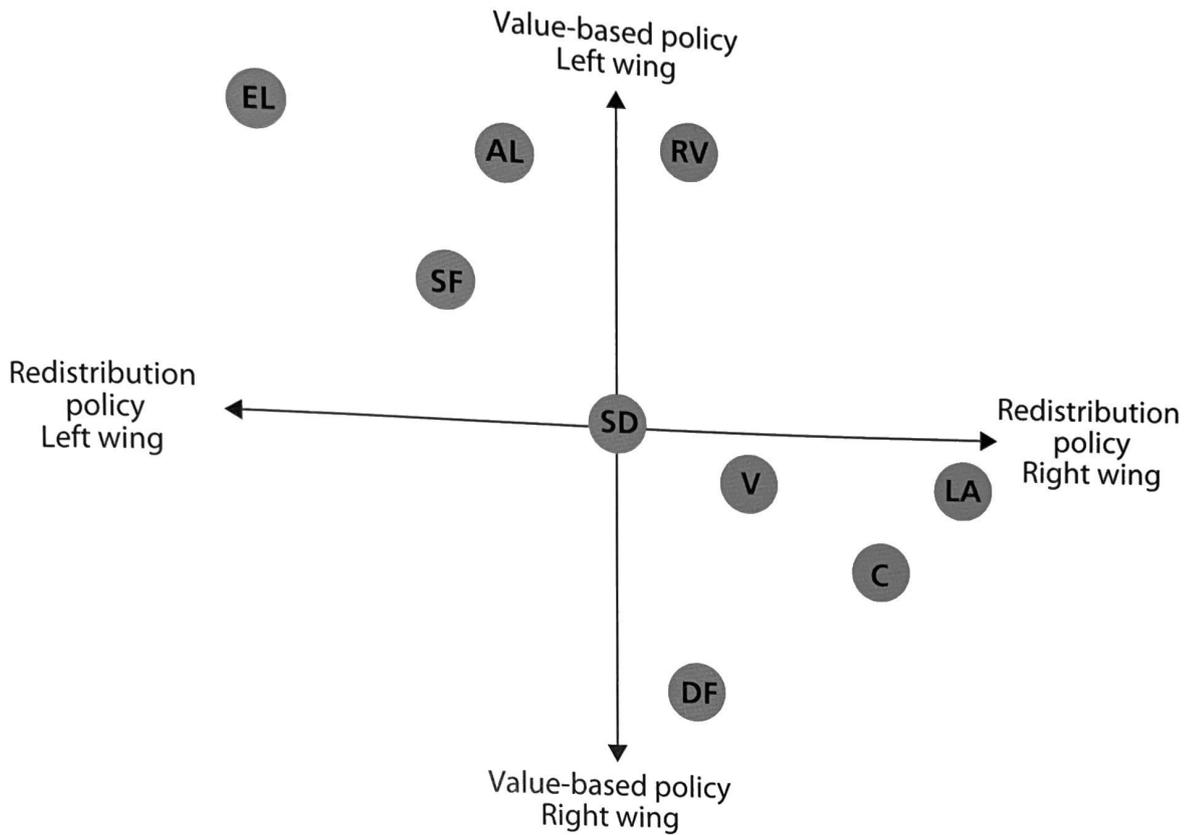
If we look at the value-b

in Figure 5.5, we find a

area that we call the value

area. We find attitudes that

Figure 5.5 Parties according to old and new politics



Source: The figure is inspired by Jørgen Goul Andersen's original model.

sues include immigration, new technology, globalisation and crime.

A recent trend is **issue-voting**. In issue-voting, people's votes are based on single issues. The voters consider the positions of the political parties on the issue that is crucial to them. Perhaps immigration, tax, crime or climate is at the top of their agenda, and they choose the party and policy that is closest to their attitude. The Danish People's Party's consistent and clear attitude towards immigrants could be a relevant explanation why the party's share of votes has increased through the 2000s and 2010s.

If we look at the value-based policy axis in Figure 5.5, we find at the top of the figure what we call the **value-based left**. Here we find attitudes such as a more le-

nient approach to crime and punishment, and more openness toward foreign cultures introduced by immigrants and refugees. At the bottom we find the **value-based right**. Attitudes here will be a tougher stance against criminals and distinct opposition to increased immigration and foreign cultures. There is much to indicate that both redistribution policies and value-based policies are important to politicians and the electorate.

In Text Box 5.2, we show you two models. They can be used to study and explain the views of the various political parties and predict their behaviour. Anthony **Downs' model** has been particularly relevant to the study of the behaviour of American parties, while it does not quite as precisely explain the Danish situation.

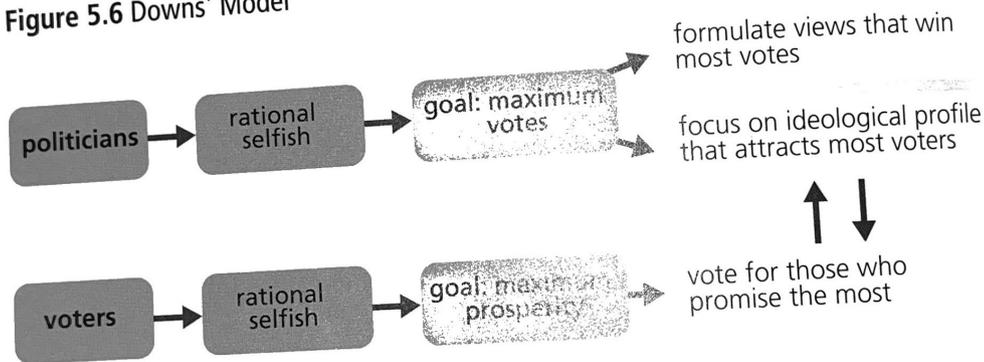
## Text Box 5.2 How do we explain the behaviour of the political parties?

Downs' Model in Figure 5.6 below is the classic model to explain the behaviour of the American political parties. Downs' starting point is that all people are rational and selfish, i.e. that everyone wants to promote their own political and economic interests. According to Downs, a party's main goal is to get as many votes as possible in elections so that the party can have maximum influence. That is why the parties design ideological profiles and positions that they expect the voters to welcome.

On the other hand, the voters are primarily interested in ensuring the maximum prosperity for themselves. On election day, they choose the party that they expect will fulfil this goal.

Downs' model implies that the parties do not care too much about ideology. They change their ideological profile and views depending on the direction they see the voters moving in. **Vote maximisation** is the key. Parties with such behaviour are often called populist.

Figure 5.6 Downs' Model



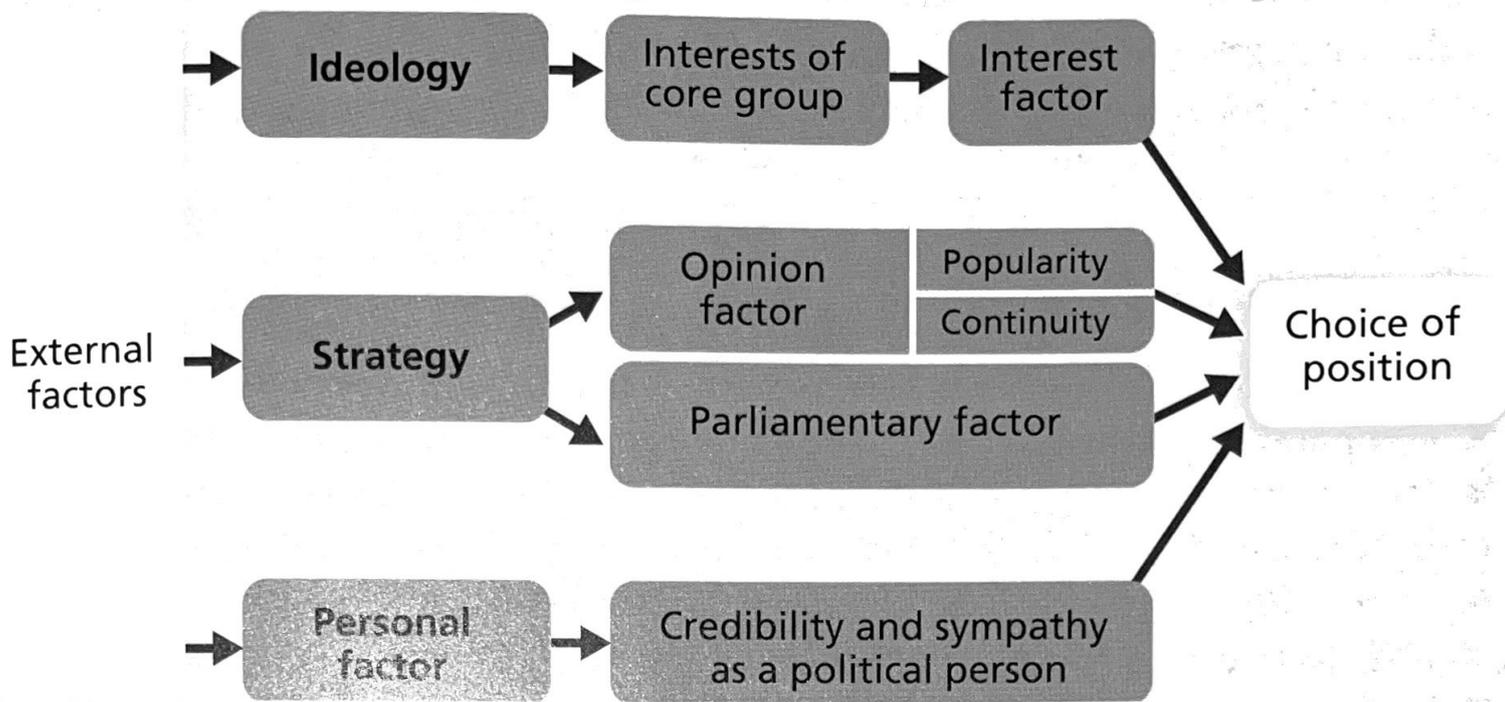
To analyse the behaviour of European political parties, many political scientists find Downs' model too simplistic. Instead, many have used the Swedish Molin's Model (Figure 5.7). According to Molin, a political party has two main goals: to contribute to certain decisions and to win government power.

Molin suggests that the parties' choice of views must be explained by an interest factor, a strategic factor and a personal factor. The interest factor implies that a party, through its political ideology, ex-

presses the interests that the party's core voters are supposed to have. Based on this factor, we can determine which decisions a party will seek to have made. The strategic factor contains several sub-factors that a party must take into account.

**First**, a party must consider the potential reactions of the voters, i.e. the opinion factor. The party must be aware of the short-term reactions of the voters (the popularity factor), but this factor must be balanced with the more long-term reactions. The party's positions should be

**Figure 5.7 Molin's Model**



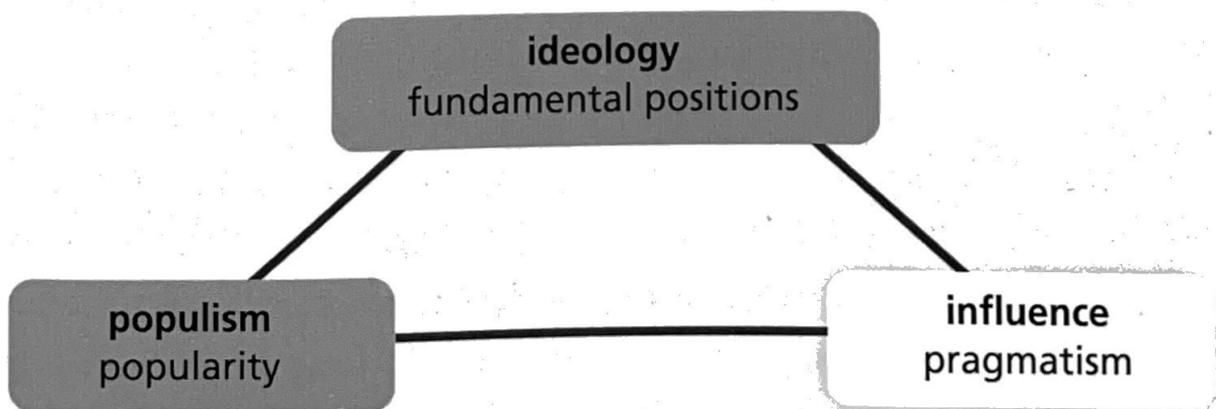
somewhat in extension of previously chosen positions (the continuity factor) to make the party reliable to the voters.

**Secondly**, the party must consider the partners it has – or can get – in parliament: the parliamentary factor. The personal factor is about the credibility and clout of the party leader and about his/her ability to communicate. Finally, external issues cover factors beyond the national political system, but factors that affect the system: decisions taken in the EU, demographic changes, etc. Based on Molin's model, political parties can be grouped according to

the factor of the model that the parties emphasise the most. Parties with high priority on the interest factor are called ideological parties, while parties that attach the greatest importance to the parliamentary factor are called pragmatic parties. Finally, for populist parties, the opinion factor or personal factor is the key factor. In Figure 5.8 below you can place political parties relative to each other based on the parties' weighting of the various factors.

Source: The text box has been prepared by Jacob Graves Sørensen.

**Figure 5.8 The behaviour triangle**



The slightly more complex **Molin's model** can be used to explain the views of Danish political parties. Based on Molin's model, we can group the political parties in relation to each other (see Figure 5.8)

based on the weighting of the model's factors. However, the positions of the parties change continually, and a general tendency over the past decade has been more populist views among the parties.

## Key concepts in Chapter 5

- Capitalism
- Comparative method
- Conservatism
- Downs' model
- Issue-voting
- Left-right axis
- Left-wing
- Liberalism
- Marxism
- Modern values
- Molin's model
- Neoliberalism
- New policy
- Political branching
- Political ideology
- Political rights
- Populism
- Progressive ideology
- Redistribution policy
- Reformist socialists
- Regressive ideology
- Revolutionary socialists
- Social conservatism
- Social democracy
- Social perception
- Social liberalism
- Socialism
- Traditional values
- Value-based politics
- View of human life
- View of the role of the state