

The UK Party System and Party Politics

Part II: Governance, Ideology and Policy

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Gv 311: British Politics course,
Lecture 14 Lent Term

In governance terms a 'party system' is constituted by

- a. How voters behave
- b. Electoral institution effects favouring one or more parties over others
 - considered in Lecture 13
- a. **Party ideologies and cleavages**
- b. **Governance institutions favouring some parties**
- c. **How parties recruit elites and how they behave in office and opposition**
- d. **How much parties shape public policies**

Six key propositions for this week

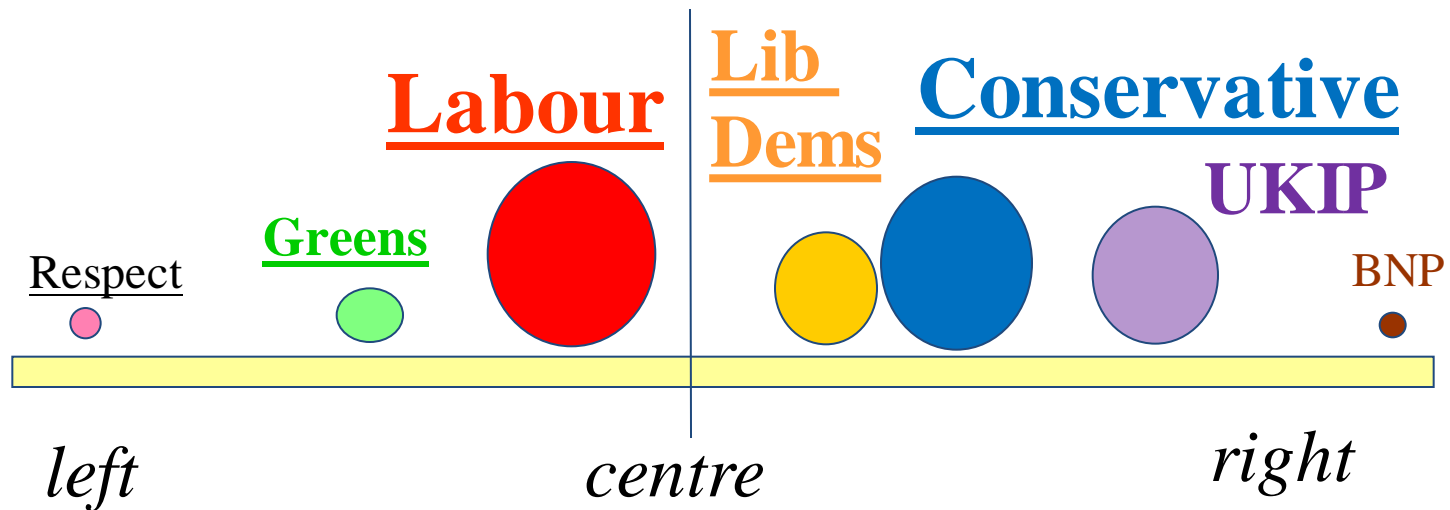
1. Party ideologies in Great Britain are fragmenting
2. Nationalized two-party competition has historically been sustained by three now dwindling factors:
 - the British Empire and 'schizophrenic' governance
 - Parliamentarianism, based on plurality rule in single member districts
 - UK centralization and Fabian statism
3. Parties remain key to elite recruitment, but are now chiefly cartel parties, representing only activists

Six key propositions for this week

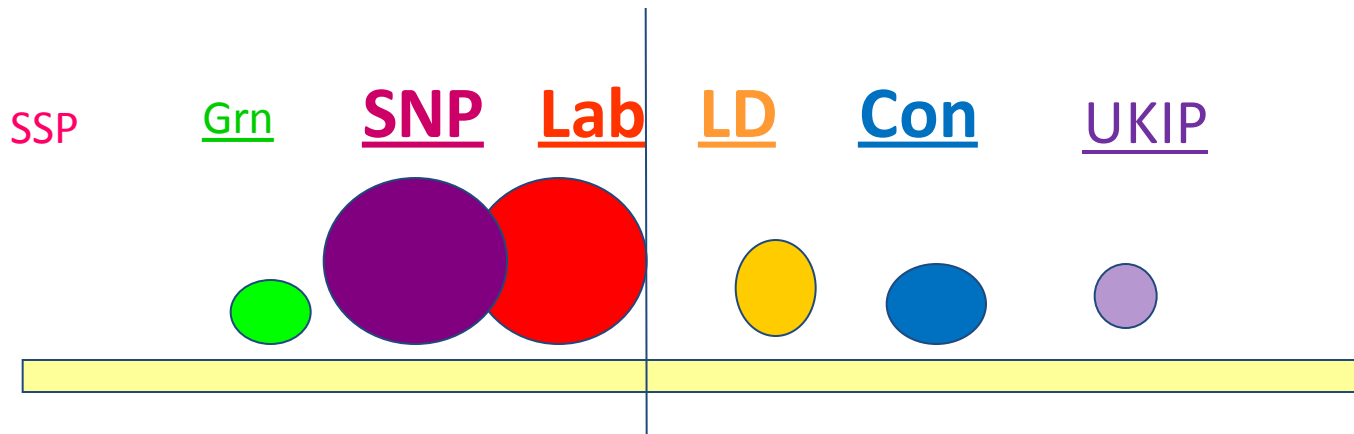
4. A 'club ethos' circumscribing competition remains powerful, constraining UK elite behaviours
5. Parties' policy roles have increasingly been reduced by autopoiesis; 'advocacy coalitions' cognitive competition; and media and social media roles
6. The 2010 coalition government marks a significant break but also strong continuities in the party system's operations

1. The fragmentation of party ideological differentiation

- Parties increasingly managerialist in their focus
- Policy ideas are eclectic and without much coherence in established parties (see next 6 slides)



The Scottish party system



Labour

- Freeze energy prices for 20 months
- Support for 'Living Wage' via public contracts
- Childcare for working parents with under fives (25 hours a week free, paid for by levying an extra £800m a year from banks)
- Scrap 'Bedroom Tax' on extra rooms in social housing
- "Strengthen" Minimum wage; encourage Living Wage
- House building (over 200k annually by 2020)
- Freeze or cut business rates rise for small businesses, paid for by
- Scrapping UK corporation tax decrease (keep it at 21% rather than 20%)
- HS2 rail link (some indication by Ed Balls that it might be scrapped)
- Accept Coalition planned fiscal limits

Conservatives

- Steady as she goes on existing economic strategy (the end of recession/ above UK trend growth is high)
- Maintaining tight public spending discipline until 2020 – reduce state share of GDP below 40% long term
- Help to Buy, phase II
- EU in/out referendum in 2017 on renegotiated terms

Liberal Democrats

- Free school meals (affecting all children in reception, year one and year two. Estimated to cost about £600m a year.)
- Tuition fees reductions (but amended policy accepts £9,000 charges in the 'short term')
- Restrict the proliferation of betting shops on high streets
- 'Mansion tax' on properties worth over £2m
- Build new generation of nuclear power plants

Tory attempted policies since 2010

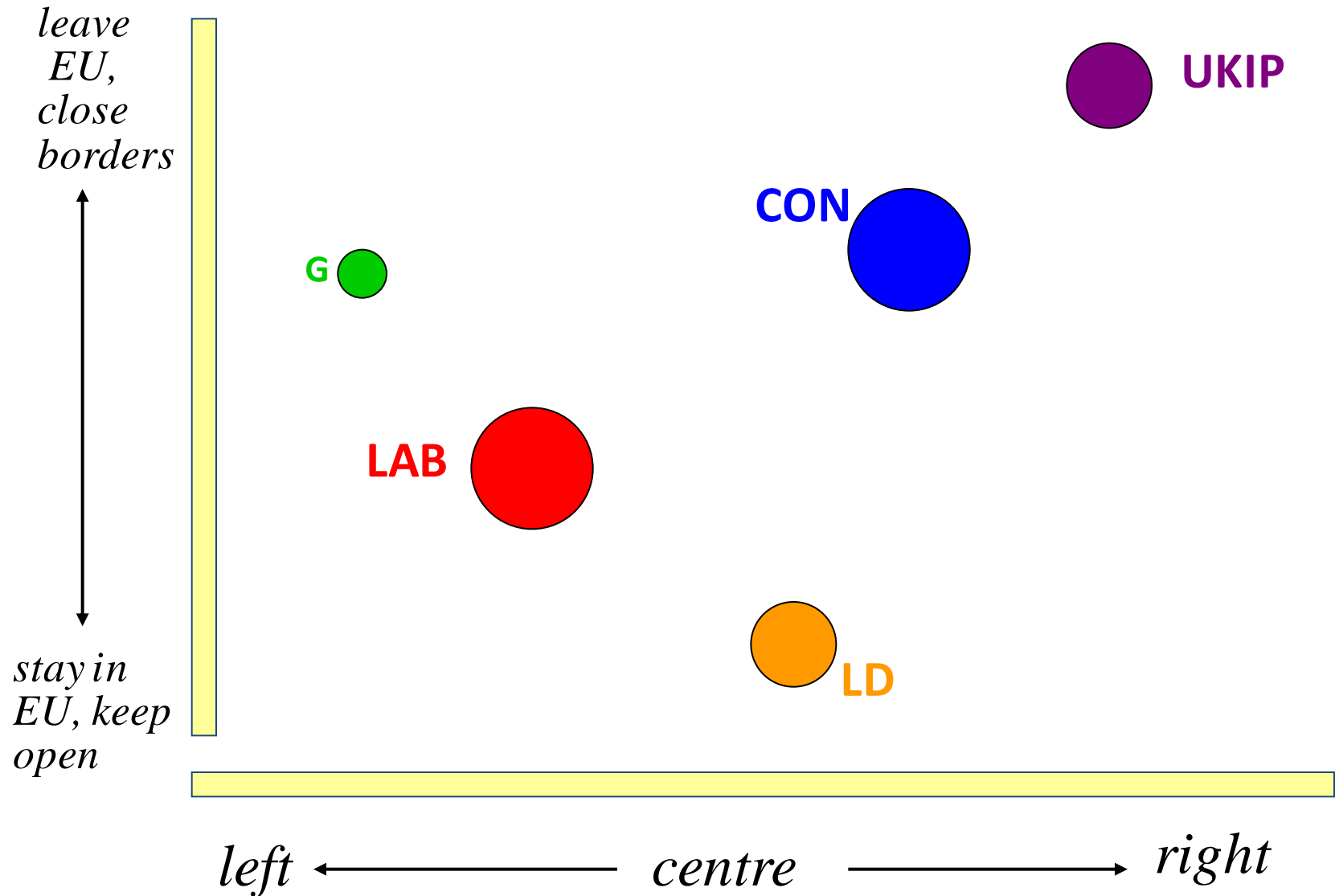
that Nick Clegg says the Liberal Democrats vetoed

- The proposed “snooper’s charter” to allow the security services to monitor e-mails and phone calls
- Profit-making state schools
- Weakening the Equalities Act
- Scrapping Natural England, the body that safeguards the environment
- Inheritance tax cuts for millionaires
- Allowing companies to fire workers at will
- Regional pay for public sector workers
- Ending housing benefit for young people
- Ditching the Human Rights Act
- Holding back the growth of “green energy”
- New childcare ratios
- Bringing back O levels in a two-tier education system
- Banning geography teachers from teaching climate change

UKIP (post 2010 'drivel' manifesto)

- Leave European Union wholly
- Freeze permanent immigration for 5 years. Immigrants must be fluent in English, have minimum education levels and show that they can financially support themselves
- Make real and rigorous cuts in foreign aid and replace with free trade
- End target that 50% of school leavers go to university, scrap tuition fees and reintroduce student grants
- Double prison places to enforce zero tolerance on crime.
- End the ban on smoking in allocated rooms in public houses, clubs and hotels.
- Spend more on defence, but cut public spending

ENGLISH POLITICS, IN TWO DIMENSIONS

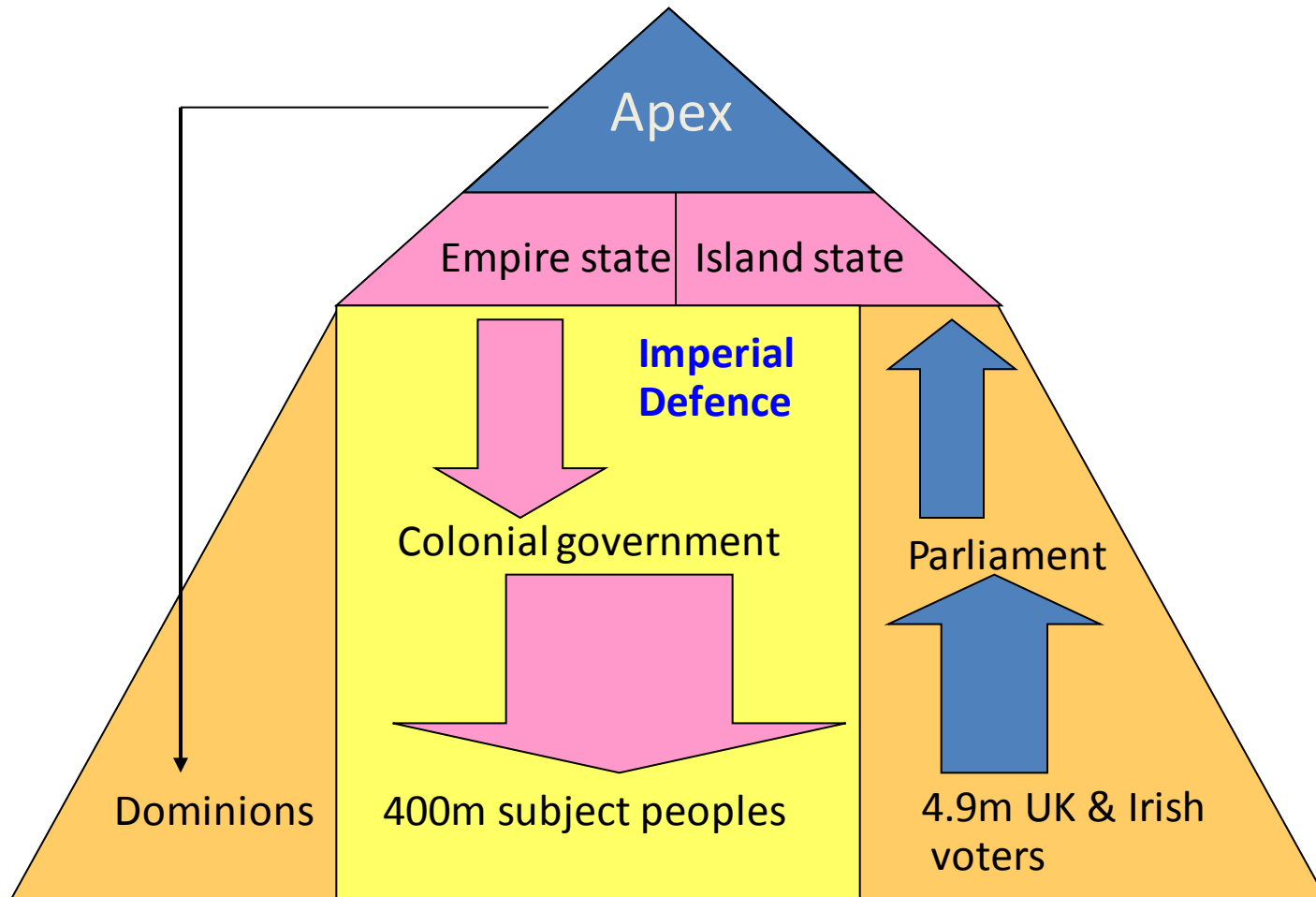


2a. Nationalized two-party competition - impact of Empire

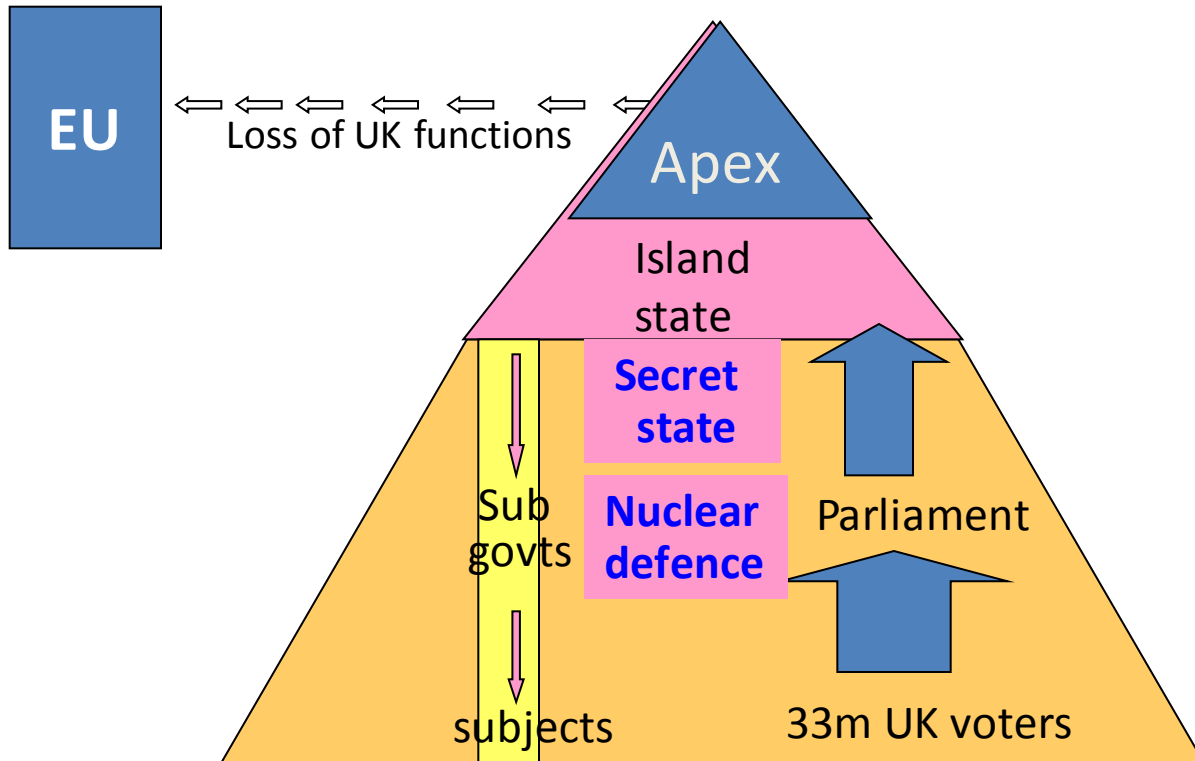
By late 19C two top (governing) parties repeatedly had to manage

- a democratizing 'island state'; and**
- an essentially despotic island state**
- tension survived transition from CON/Lib duopoly to Con/Lab**

The UK's imperial system in 1910



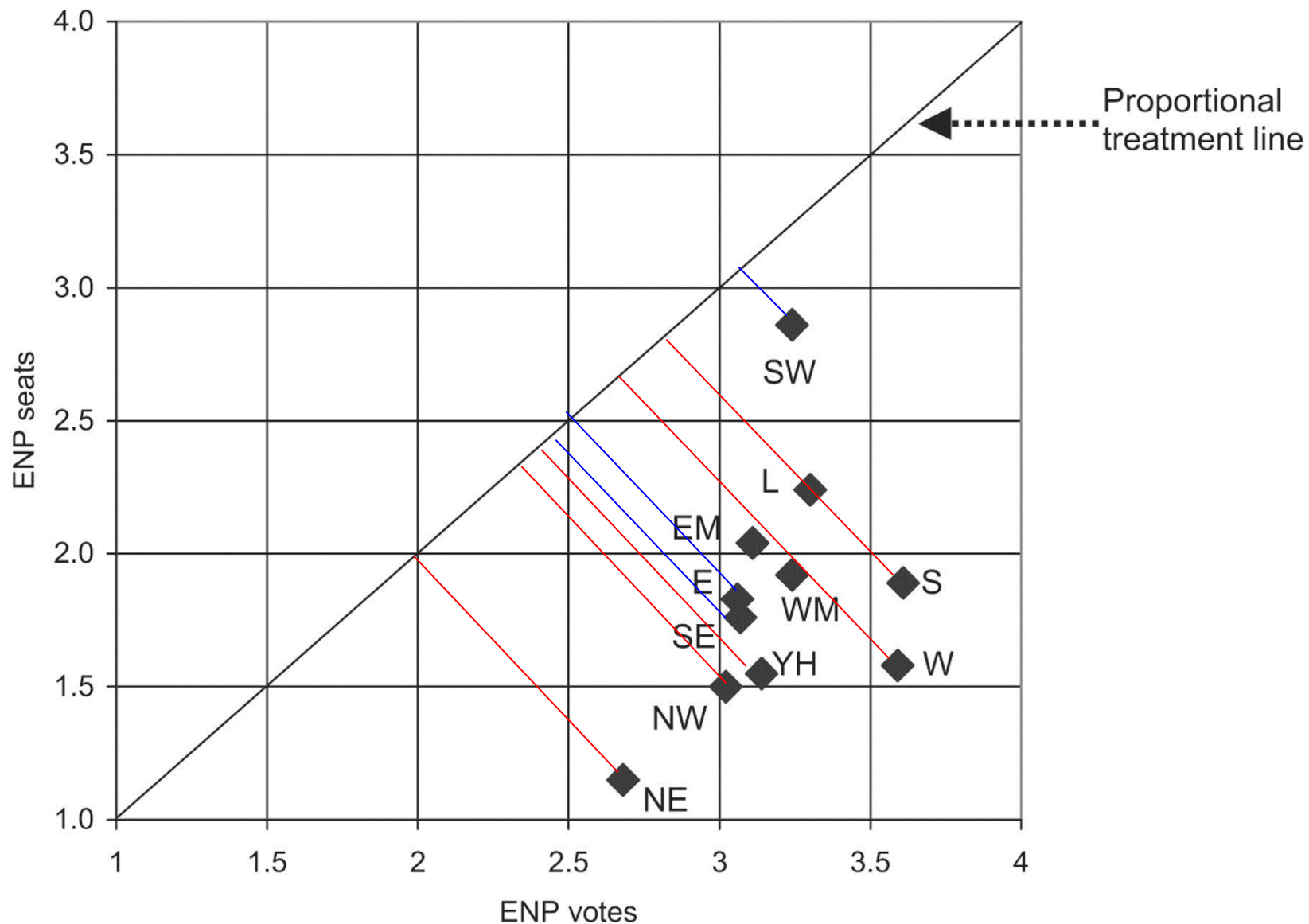
The UK's 1980 system



2b. Nationalized two-party competition - 'Parliamentarianism'

- An ideology formally vesting all power in House of Commons
- Even though Parliament is completely executive-dominated under normal conditions
- Top two parties maintain executive dominance in expectation of 'their turn' in offices
- Parliamentary two-partism is wholly artificial, a product of ENP seats being only a fraction of ENP votes
- And Government vs (loyal) Opposition fictions built on that

Regional disparities in the effective number of parties (in seats) and (in votes), Great Britain 2005



2c. Nationalized two-party competition

- UK centralization

- UK is one of the most centralized liberal democracies in the world, with 55m people in integrated England unit**
- Strong Whitehall predominance**
- Partial devolution to Scotland/Wales/London/Northern Ireland reflects party systems there all have changed radically from England norm**

3. 'Cartel' parties and elite recruitment

Four phases in the evolution of political parties in liberal democracies

- Cadre party: nested national, regional and local notables, mobilizing electors sporadically
- Mass party: organized expression of labour movement, ethnic identities, or large social groups e.g. class-based or ethnic politics
- Catch-all party: broadened social appeal, de-emphasized social basis, increasing issues basis, leader salience etc
- Cartel party: party organizations are primarily included within, and funded/regulated by, the state, and serve as modern outreach and values-assessing linkage systems. Only aspirants for political careers or office join parties now, so activist numbers are & must remain very small

4. The 'club ethos' and elite behaviours

- Conservative and Labour elites (especially) collude to maintain a joint defence of their common interests (eg voting system, artificial Parliamentary hegemony)
- Liberal Democrats joined club in 2010 (at huge electoral and policy costs)
- UK at least has non-rancorous politics mostly (except under Thatcher)

5. Parties' diminishing importance for policy making

because of

- autopoiesis (other spheres of social life are essentially self-governing and so they repel inexpert, partisan incursions)
- shifting 'advocacy coalitions' dominate policy-making on an issue-by-issue basis, with most policy competition being cognitive, not interest-based
- media and social media roles inherently play far larger roles (in an era of 'open book' governance)

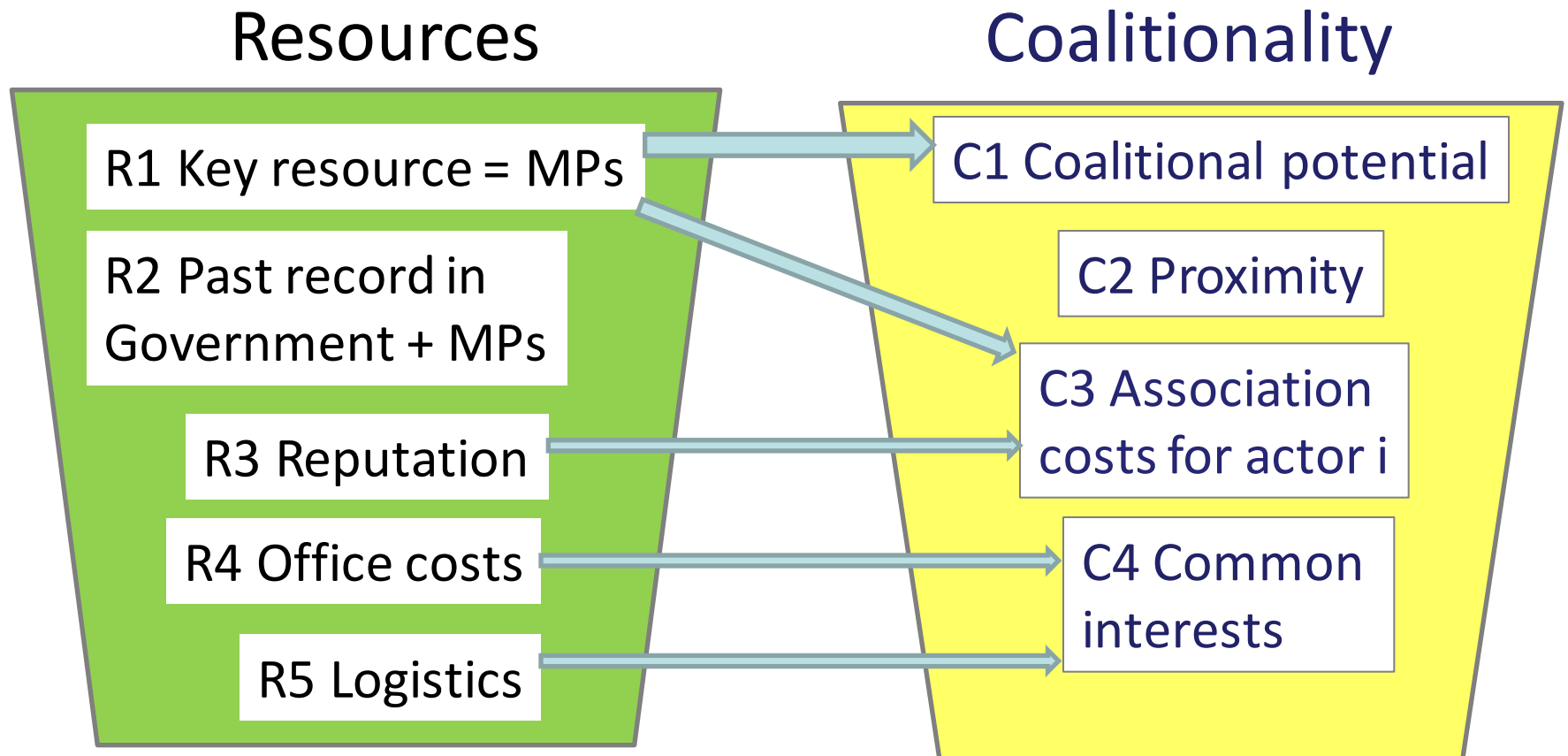
**The 2010 formation of the
Coalition government shows
changes and continuities**

Figure 1: The vote share results for the 2010 general election in Great Britain

Great Britain share of the votes	% votes	Change in support (% points) since 2005	Compare 2005 % vote share	MPs in 2010
Conservative	36.9	+ 4	33	306
Labour	29.6	- 6	36	258
Liberal Democrats	23.5	+ 0.4	23	57
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	3.2	+ 0.9	2.3	0
British National Party (BNP)	1.9	+ 1.2	0.7	0
Scottish National Party (SNP)	1.7	+ 0.1	1.6	6
Greens	1.0	- 0.1	1.0	1
Plaid Cymru (Wales only)	0.6	- 0.1	0.7	3
Other parties/candidates	1.6	-0.1	1.7	0
Total	100%			

Notes: EP European Parliament; GLA Greater London Assembly; LG local government councillors; SP Scottish Parliament; WNA Welsh National Assembly

Political power is always some weighted average of Resources and Coalitionality (or 'overall coalitional appeal')



2010 election: The leading possible coalitions

Possible government	Parties involved (number of MPs)	Overall seats (majority)
1. Two-way coalition government with a majority	Conservatives (306) + Liberal Democrats (57)	363 Majority: + 85
2. Two-way coalition government, no majority	Labour (258) + Liberal Democrats (57)	315 Majority: - 6
3. Single-party minority government	Conservatives only (306)	306 Majority: - 17
3. Multi-way coalition government with bare majority	Labour (258) + Liberal Democrats (57) + SNP (6) + Plaid Cymru (3) + SDLP (3)	327 Majority: + 13
5. Two-way minority government	Conservatives (306) + Democratic Unionists (8)	314 Majority: - 9

Party	MPs	Resource weight: % of all (voting) MPs
Conservative	307	47.6
Labour	258	40.0
Liberal Democrat	57	8.8
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2
Scottish National Party	6	0.9
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5
Green	1	0.2
Alliance Party (NI)	1	0.2
Others	1	0.2
Total	645	100%

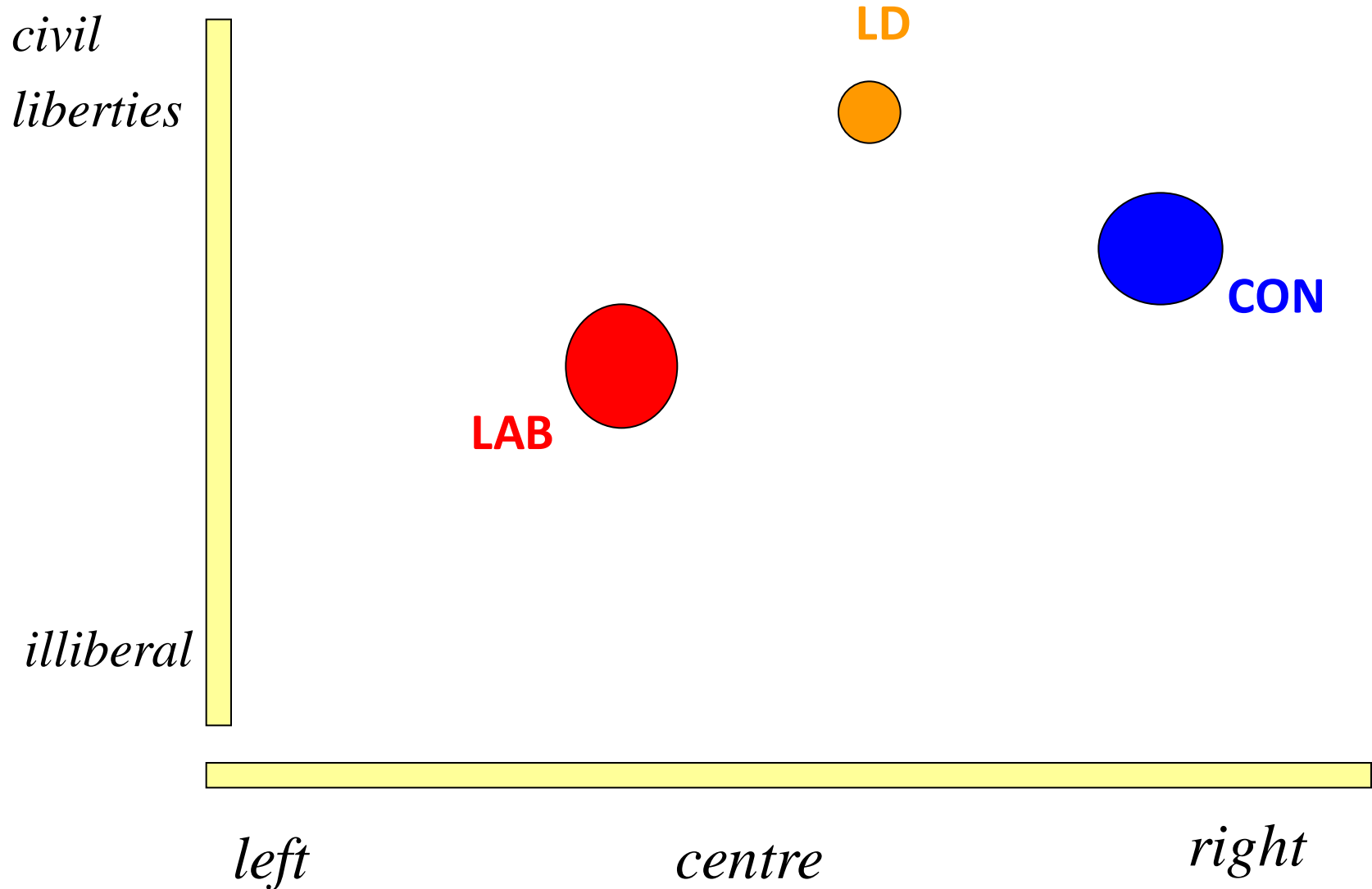
The ‘power’ of parties before the formation of Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition

Party	MPs	Resource weight: % of all (voting) MPs	C-score: % share of coalitional potential score (normalized Banzhaf index)	C-score per MP ratio
Conservative	307	47.6	36.7	0.77
Labour	258	40.0	22.0	0.55
Liberal Democrat	57	8.8	22.0	2.49
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2	7.3	5.92
Scottish National Party	6	0.9	5.5	5.92
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5	1.8	3.95
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5	1.8	3.95
Green	1	0.2	0.9	5.92
Alliance Party (NI)	1	0.2	0.9	5.92
Others	1	0.2	0.9	5.92
Total	645	100%	100 %	

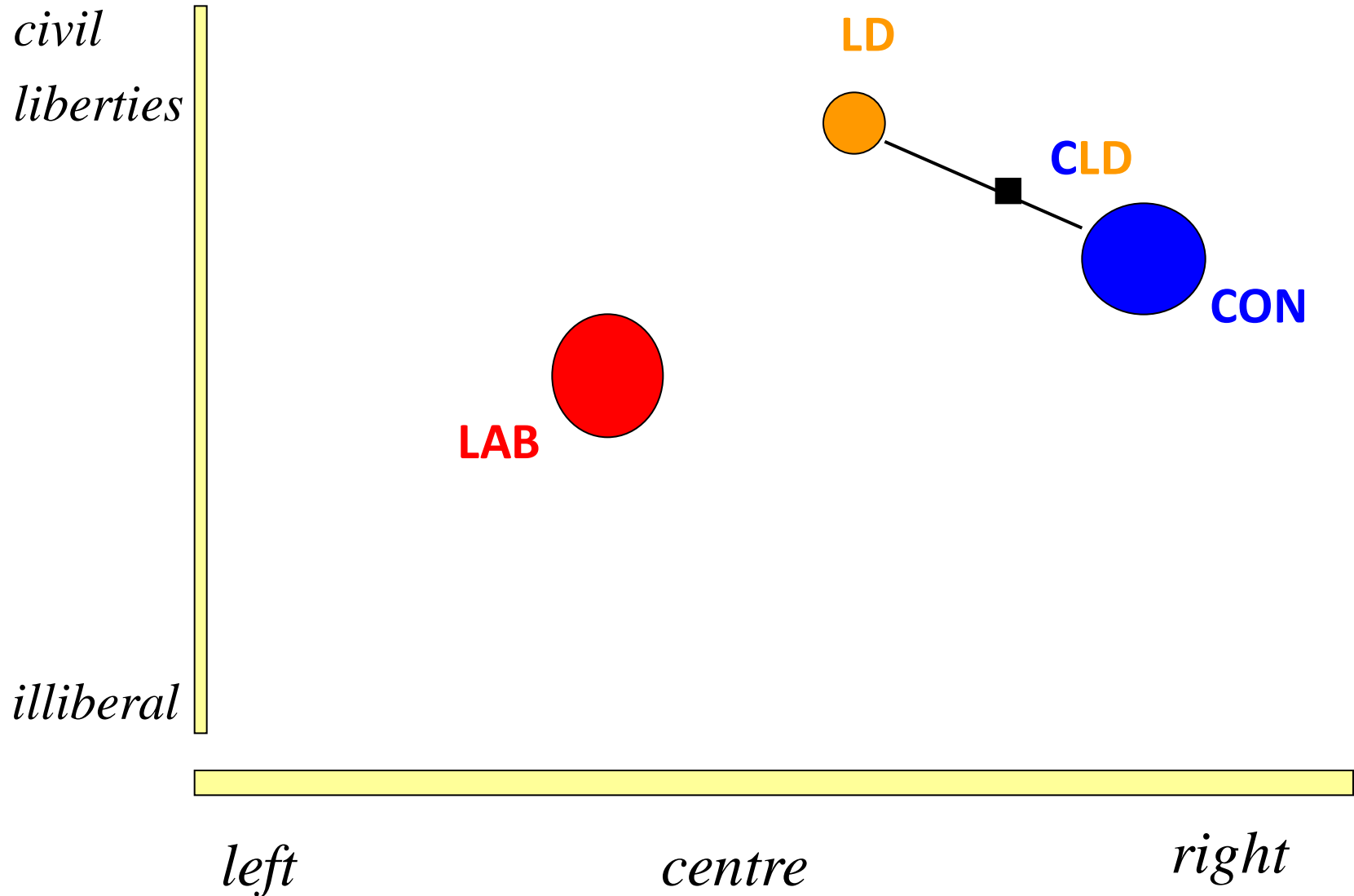
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Party	MPs	Resource weight: % of all (voting) MPs	C-score: % share of coalitional potential score (normalized Banzhaf index)	C-score per MP ratio	P-score: % share of power	P-score per MP ratio
Conservative	307	47.6	36.7	0.77	42.1	0.89
Labour	258	40.0	22.0	0.55	31.0	0.78
Liberal Democrat	57	8.8	22.0	2.49	15.4	1.75
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2	7.3	5.92	4.3	3.46
Scottish National Party	6	0.9	5.5	5.92	3.2	3.46
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5	1.8	3.95	1.2	2.47
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5	1.8	3.95	1.2	2.47
Green	1	0.2	0.9	5.92	0.5	3.46
Alliance Party (NI)	1	0.2	0.9	5.92	0.5	3.46
Others	1	0.2	0.9	5.92	0.5	3.46
Total	645	100%	100 %		100%	

Basic ideological positions of parties in 2010



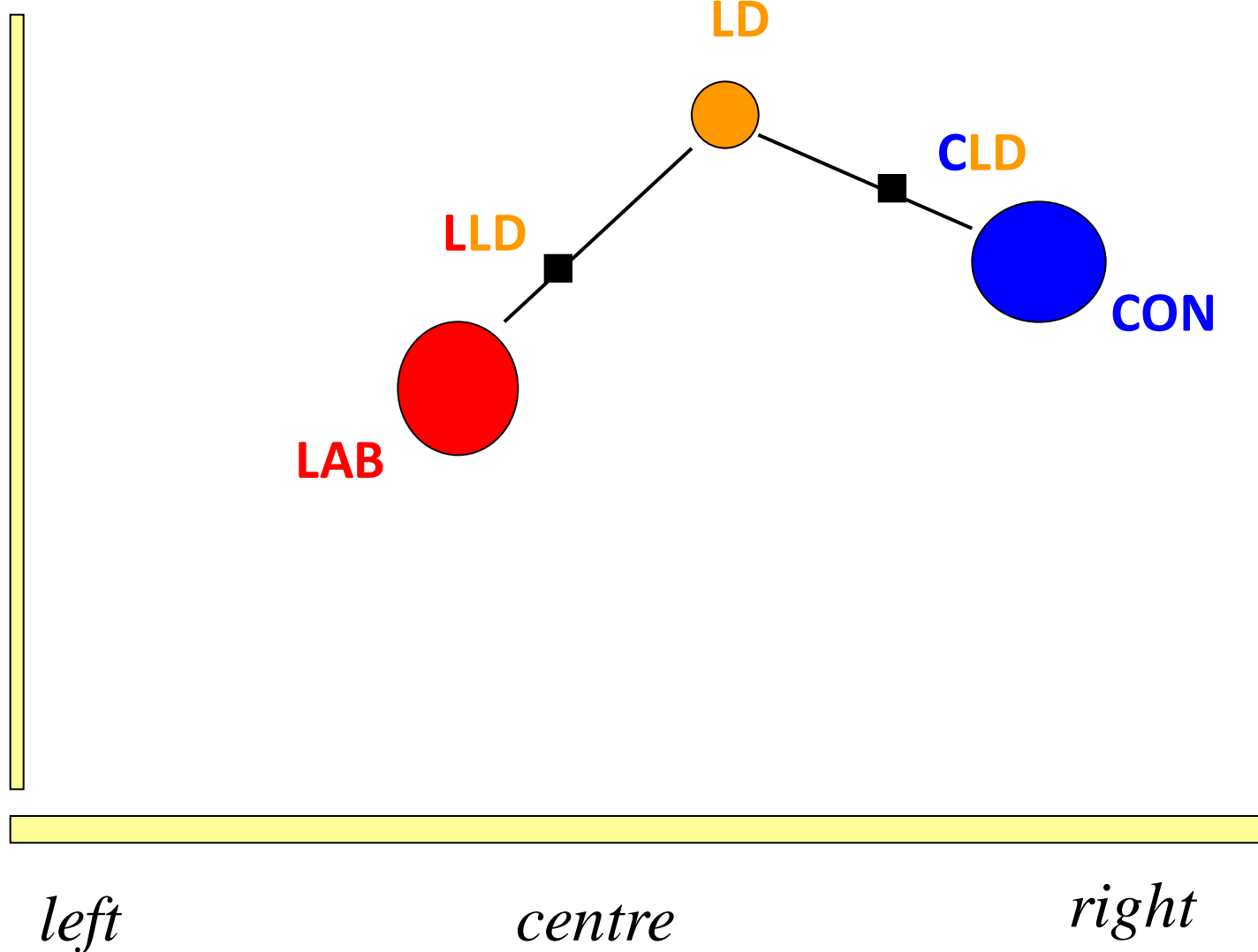
Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition



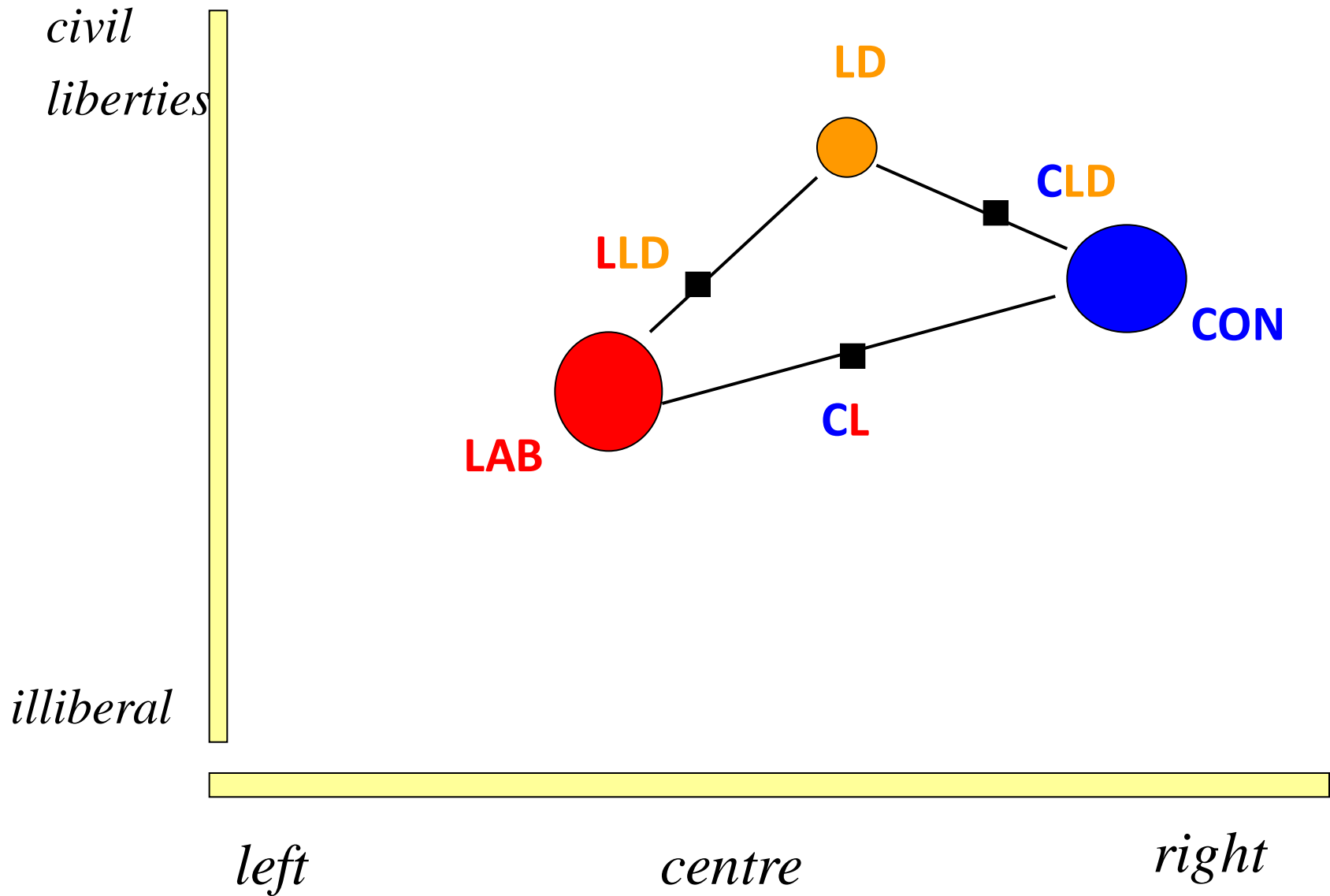
Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition

*civil
liberties*

illiberal



Conservative-Labour coalition



How the top two parties (possible coalition formateurs) view the Prospects of doing a deal with other parties to secure a majority

		Proximity of possible partner party	
		Close	Far away
Size of possible partner party	Small	Best option <i>Distance costs = low</i> <i>Office costs = low</i>	3rd Best option <i>Distance costs = medium</i> <i>Office costs = low</i>
	Large	2nd Best option <i>Distance costs = low</i> <i>Office costs = high</i>	Worst option <i>Distance costs = high</i> <i>Office costs = high</i>

If a party has low policy/ideology interests, and primarily focuses on the office costs of coalition then the 2nd and 3rd best options *might* switch places.

Party	MPs	Resource weight: % of all (voting) MPs
Conservative-Liberal Democrat government	364	56.4
Labour	258	40.0
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2
Scottish National Party	6	0.9
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5
Green	1	0.2
Alliance Party (NI)	1	0.2
Others	1	0.2
Total	645	100%

The ‘power’ of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition once was formed

See Dunleavy Chapter on 2010 coalition in Reading List)

Party	MPs	Resource weight: % of all (voting) MPs	C-score: % share of coalitional potential score (normalized Banzhaf index)	C-score per MP ratio
Conservative-Liberal Democrat government	364	56.4	100	1.77
Labour	258	40.0	0	0
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2	0	0
Scottish National Party	6	0.9	0	0
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5	0	0
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5	0	0
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The ‘power’ of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition

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Conservative-Liberal Democrat government	364	56.4	100	1.77	78.2	1.39
Labour	258	40.0	0	0	20.0	0.50
Democratic Unionist Party (NI)	8	1.2	0	0	0.6	0.50
Scottish National Party	6	0.9	0	0	0.5	0.50
Plaid Cymru	3	0.5	0	0	0.2	0.50
Social Democratic & Labour Party (NI)	3	0.5	0	0	0.2	0.50
Green	1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.50
Alliance Party (NI)	1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.50
Others	1	0.2	0	0	0.1	0.50
Total	645	100%	100%		100%	

The distribution of resources, offices and power in the Coalition Cabinet system

	N	Conservative share (%)	Liberal Democrat (%)
Total government MPs	363	84	16
Departmental ministers	93	82	18
All government posts	119	81	19
Cabinet positions	23	78	22
Total places in Cabinet Committee system	180	71	29
Sum of weighted positional power scores for Cabinet ministers	890	69	31
Total popular vote for Government	60.4%	61	39

Source: Allen et al, 2012