



**The UK Party System and Party Politics**  
**Part II: Governance, Ideology**  
**and Policy**

**Patrick Dunleavy**

**Gv 311: British Politics course, Lecture 10**  
**Michaelmas Term**

# In governance terms a 'party system' is constituted by

- How voters behave
- Electoral institution effects favouring one or more parties over others – both considered in Lecture 9

This week

- a. **Governance institutions favouring some parties**
- b. **Party ideologies and cleavages**
- c. **How parties recruit elites and how they behave in office and opposition**
- d. **How much parties shape public policies**

# Six key propositions

1. 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
2. Party ideologies in Great Britain are fragmenting somewhat, but also 'pivoting'
3. Parties remain key to elite recruitment, but are now chiefly cartel parties, representing only activists

# Six key propositions for this week

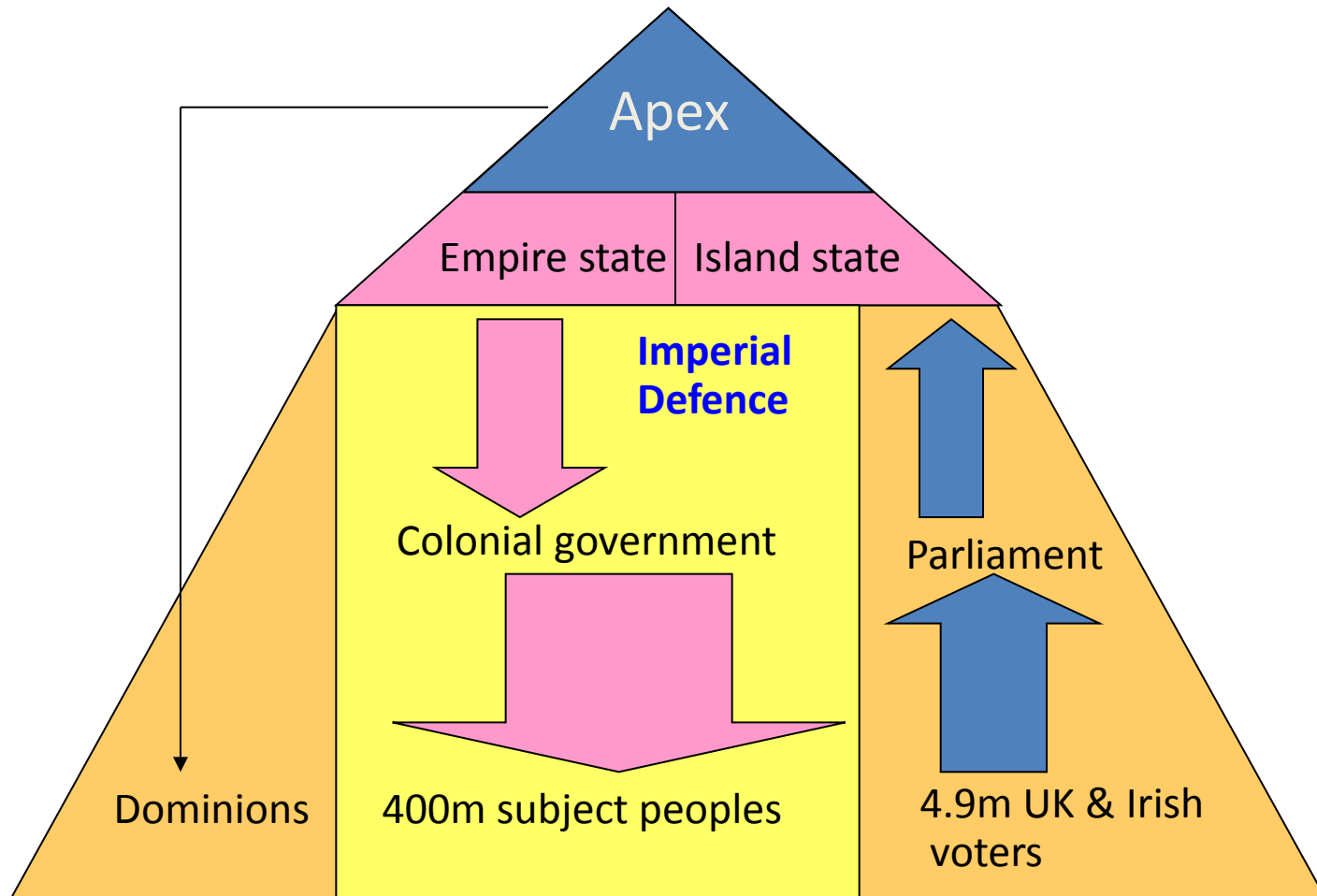
4. A 'club ethos' circumscribing competition remains powerful, constraining UK elite behaviours
5. Parties' policy roles have increasingly been reduced by
  - autopoiesis, i.e. specialization of social life;
  - 'advocacy coalitions' cognitive competition; and
  - media and social media roles
6. The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

# **1a. Nationalized two-party competition - impact of Empire**

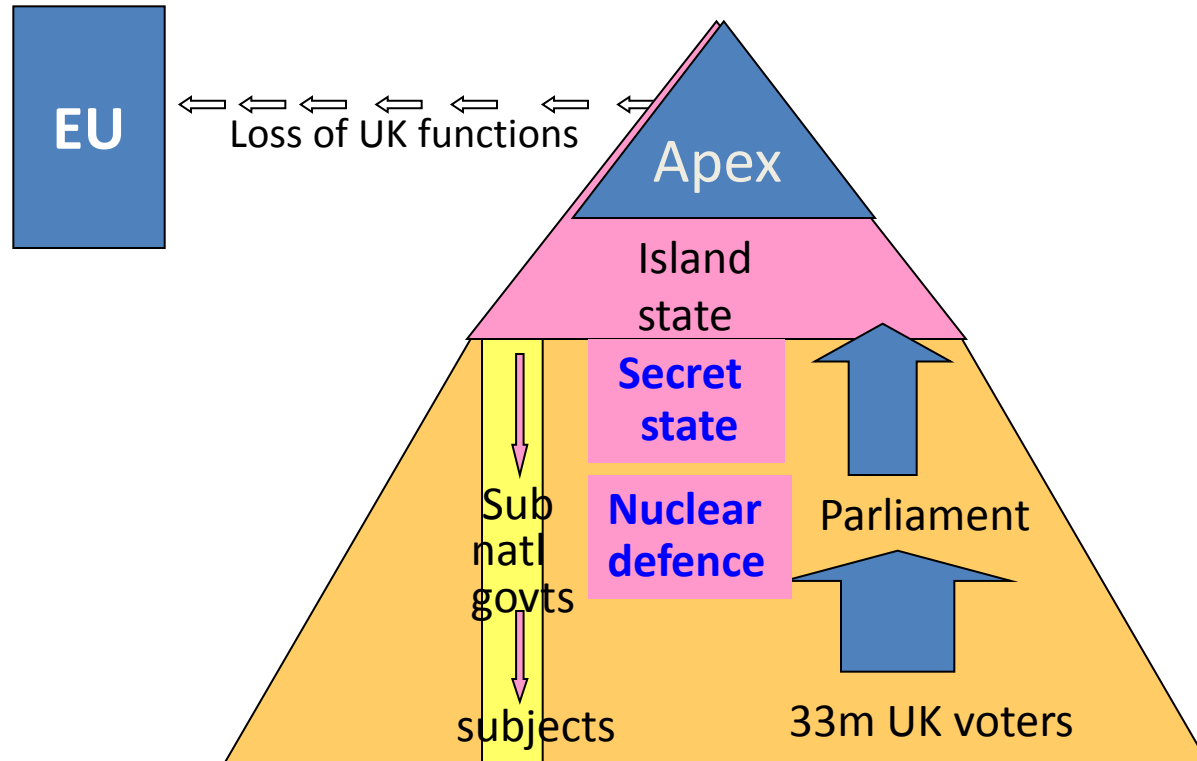
**By late 19C two top (governing) parties repeatedly had to manage**

- a democratizing 'island state'; and**
- an essentially despotic Empire state**
- this tension survived the transition from Con/Lib  
duopoly to Con/Lab**
- UK's nuclear weapons and Cold War extended the tension**
- main survival now in UK intelligence service linkages**

# The UK's imperial system in 1910



# By the 1980s, the UK's apex system has shrunk



# **1b. 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



# **1c. Nationalized two-party competition**

## **- UK centralization**

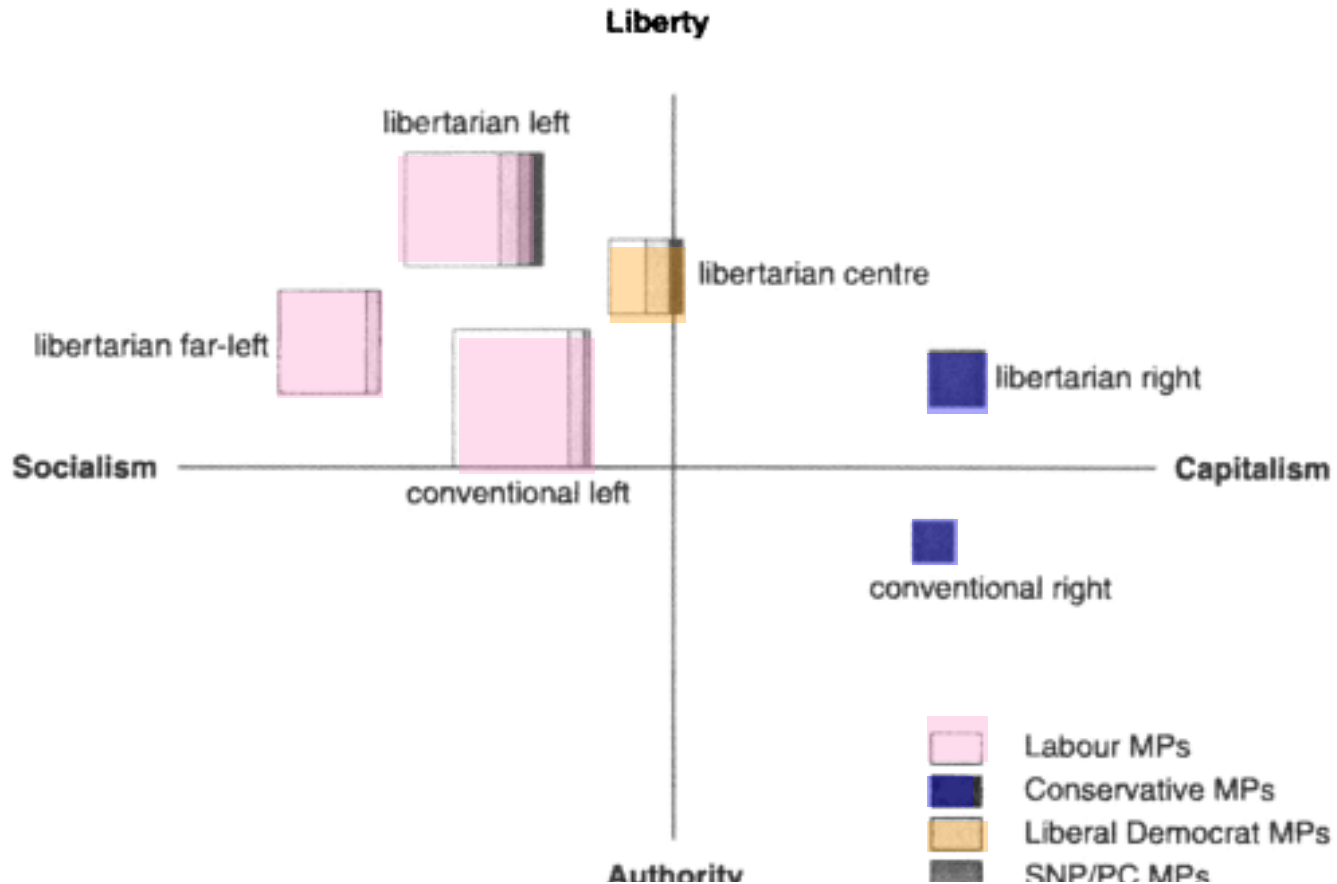
- **UK is one of the most centralized liberal democracies in the world, with 55m people in integrated England unit**
- **Strong Whitehall predominance**
- **Partial devolution to Scotland/Wales/London/Northern Ireland reflects party systems there all have changed radically from England norm**

## **2. The fragmentation/pivoting of party ideologies**

- Parties are increasingly managerialist in their focus
- Policy ideas are eclectic and without much coherence in established parties
- Underlying left-right cleavage still strong

# Paul Webb, *The Modern British Party System*, p. 181

A left/right dimensions, supplemented by  
a social liberalism/authoritarianism dimension

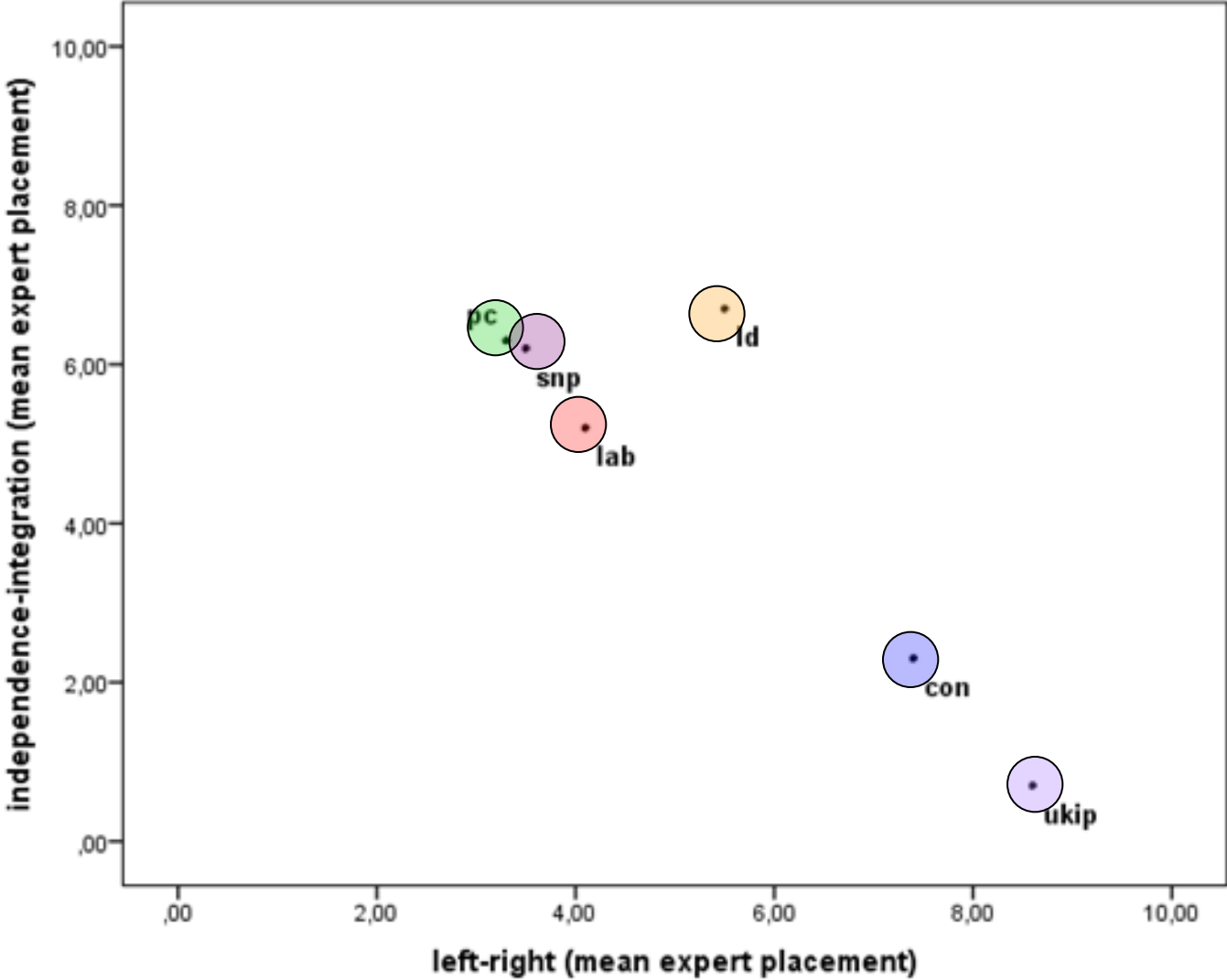


# ENGLISH POLITICS, TWO KEY DIMENSIONS, BRITISH ELECTION STUDY, experts assessment

European  
integration



National  
independence



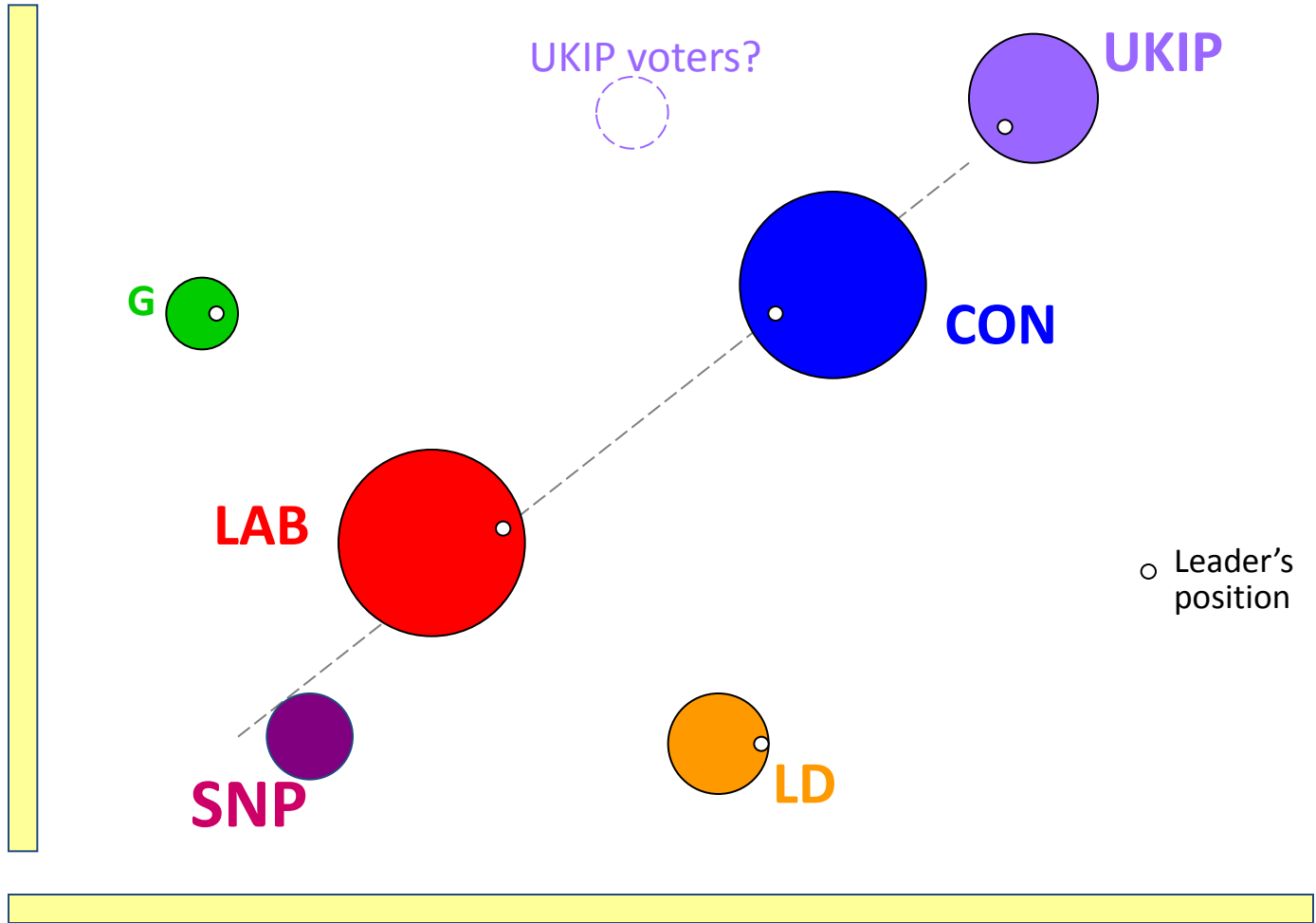
Source: <http://bit.ly/1BtREF0>

# WESTMINSTER POLITICS, IN TWO DIMENSIONS

*Leave EU,  
cut immig-  
-ration*



*stay in  
EU, keep  
open  
borders*

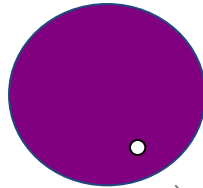


*left* ← ————— *centre* ————— → *right*

# SCOTTISH POLITICS, IN TWO DIMENSIONS

*Independent  
Scotland*

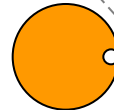
SG



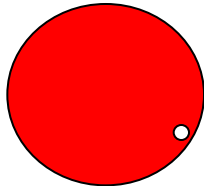
SNP

○ Leader's  
position

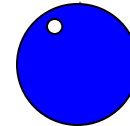
LD



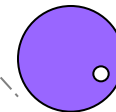
LAB



CON



UKIP

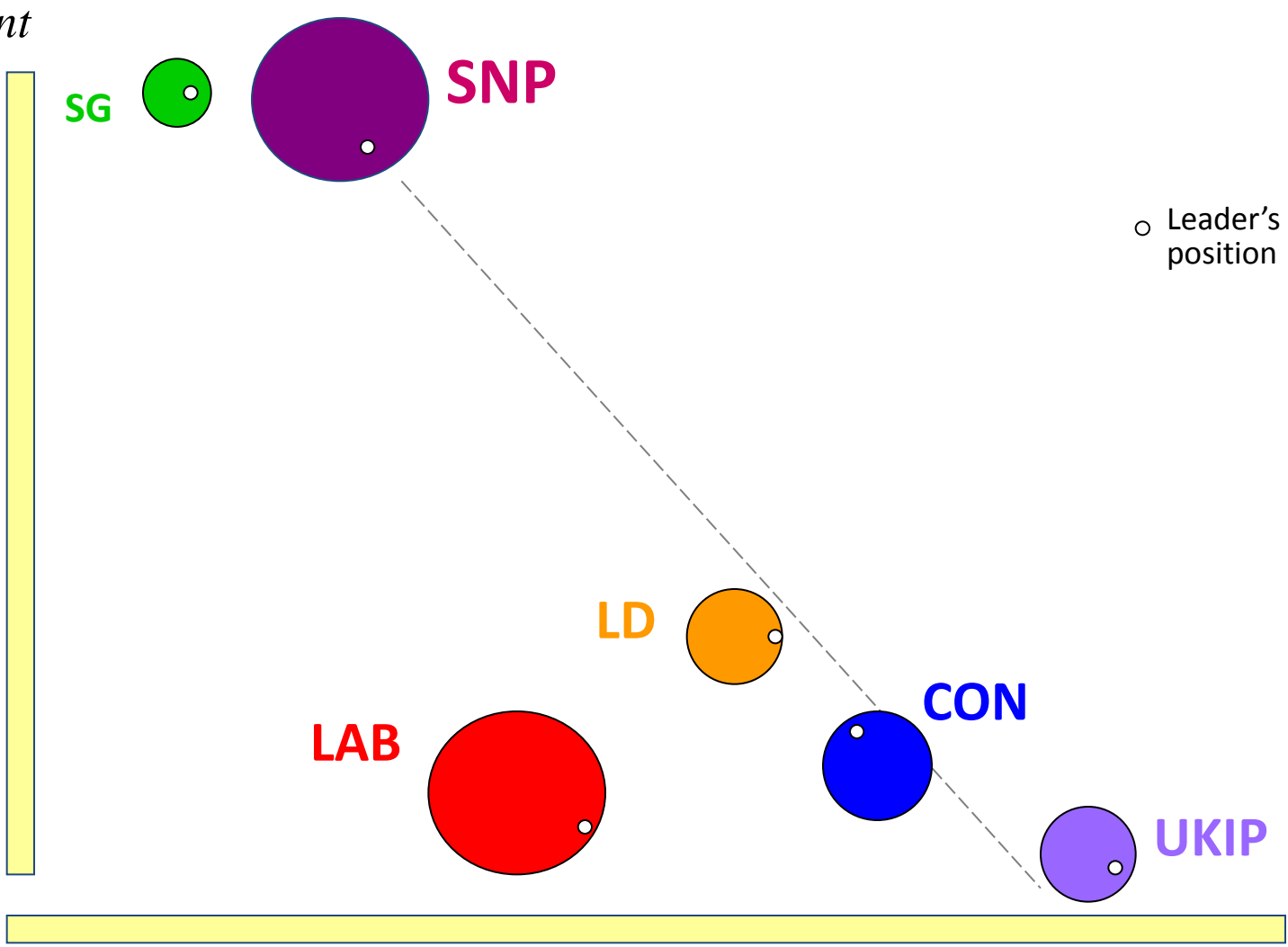


*Stay in  
UK*

*left*

*centre*

*right*



### **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

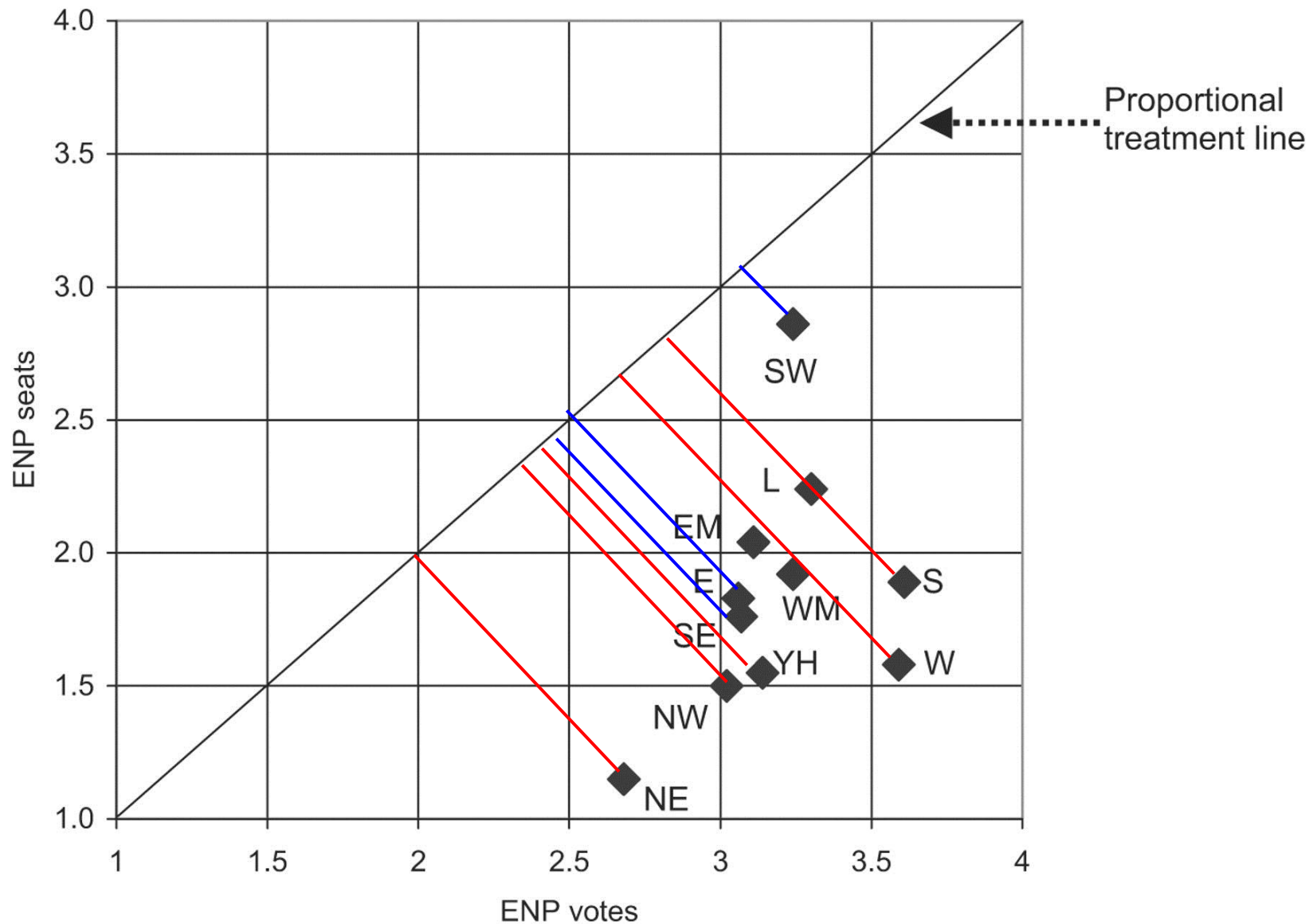
See Katz and Mair, 2009



## 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)

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



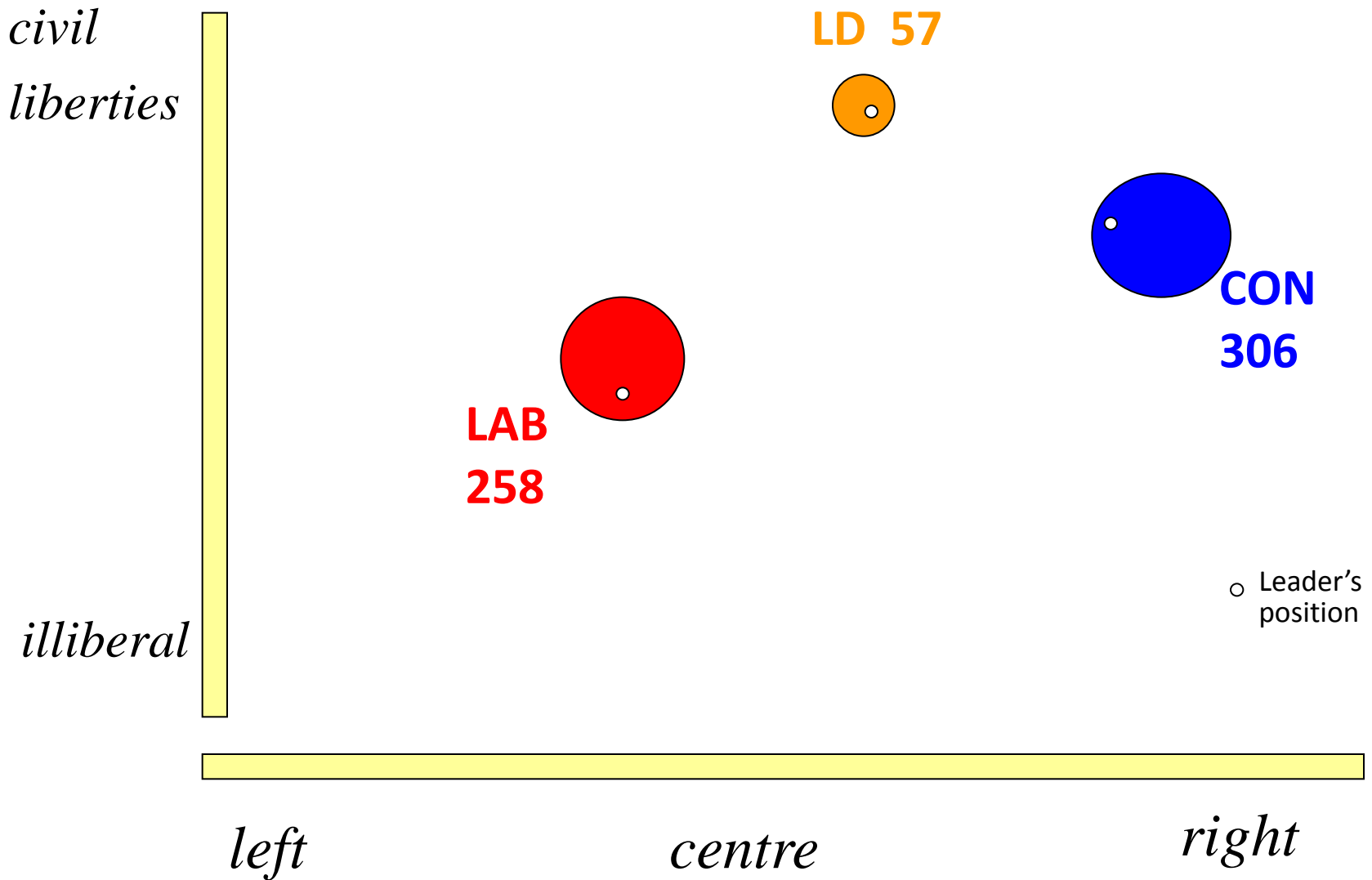
# 5. Parties' diminishing importance for policy making

because of

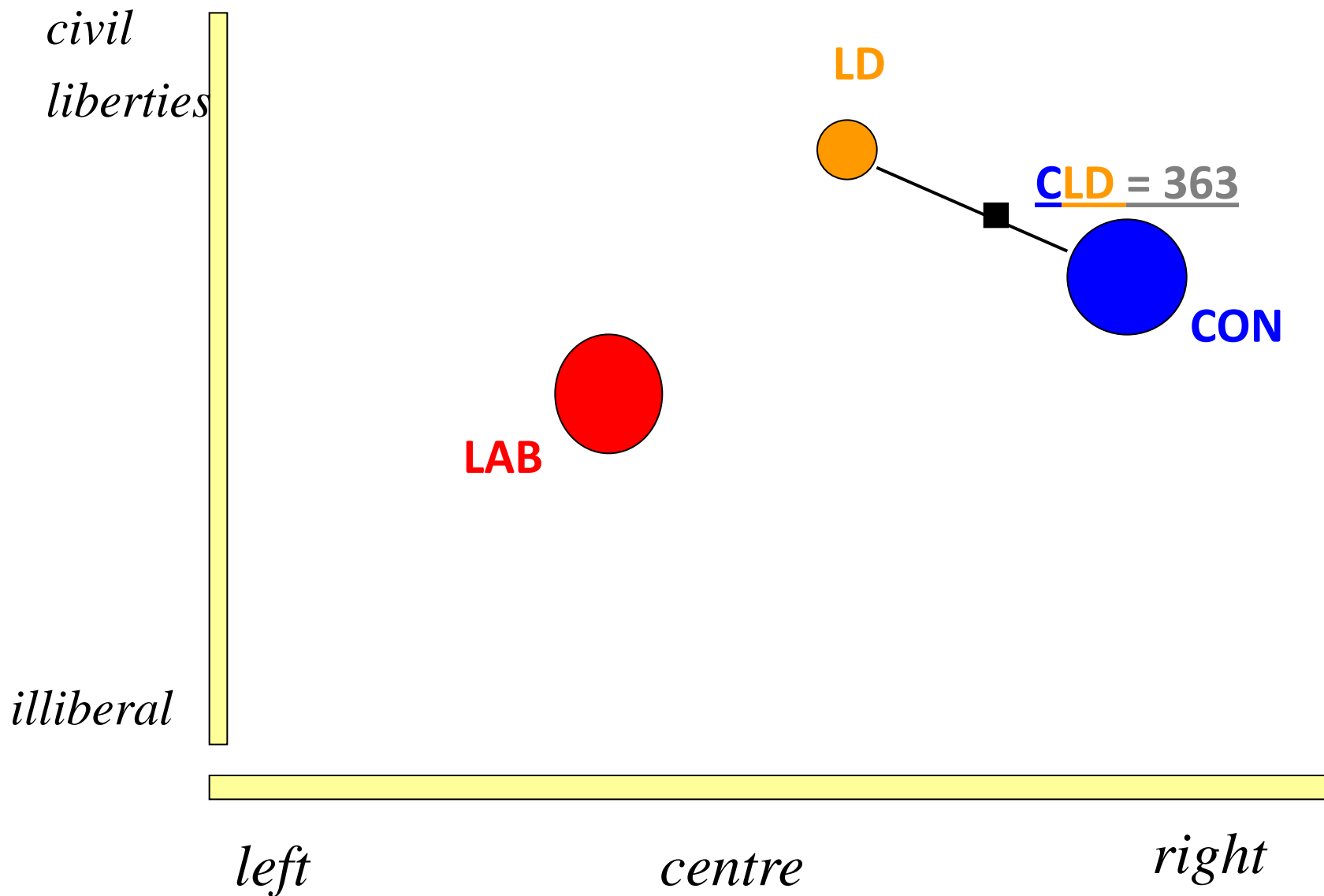
- **autopoiesis (other spheres of social life are essentially self-governing and so they repel inexperienced, partisan incursions)**
- **shifting 'advocacy coalitions' dominate policy-making on an issue-by-issue basis, with most policy competition being cognitive, not interest-based**
- **media and social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

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

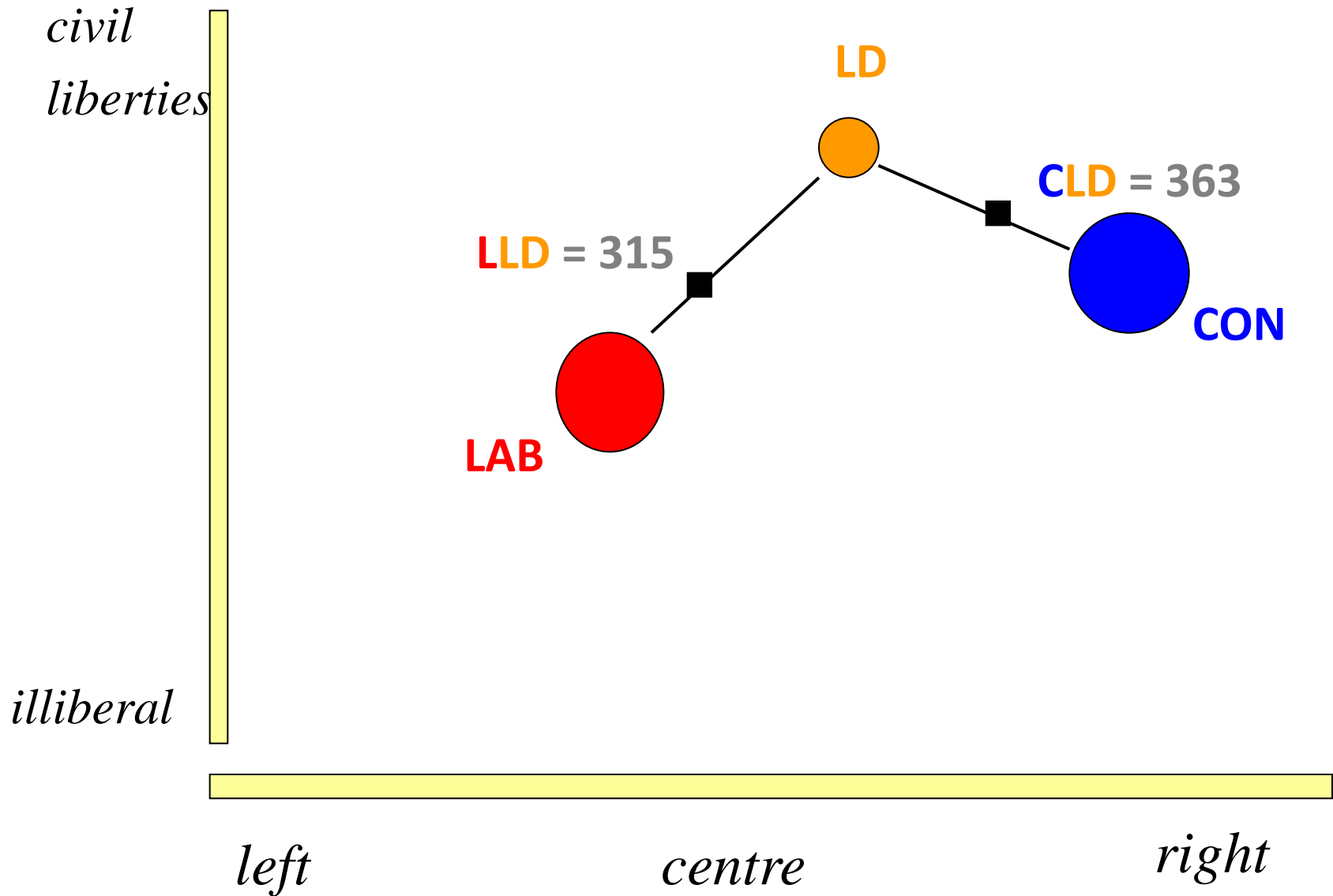
# Basic ideological positions of parties in 2010



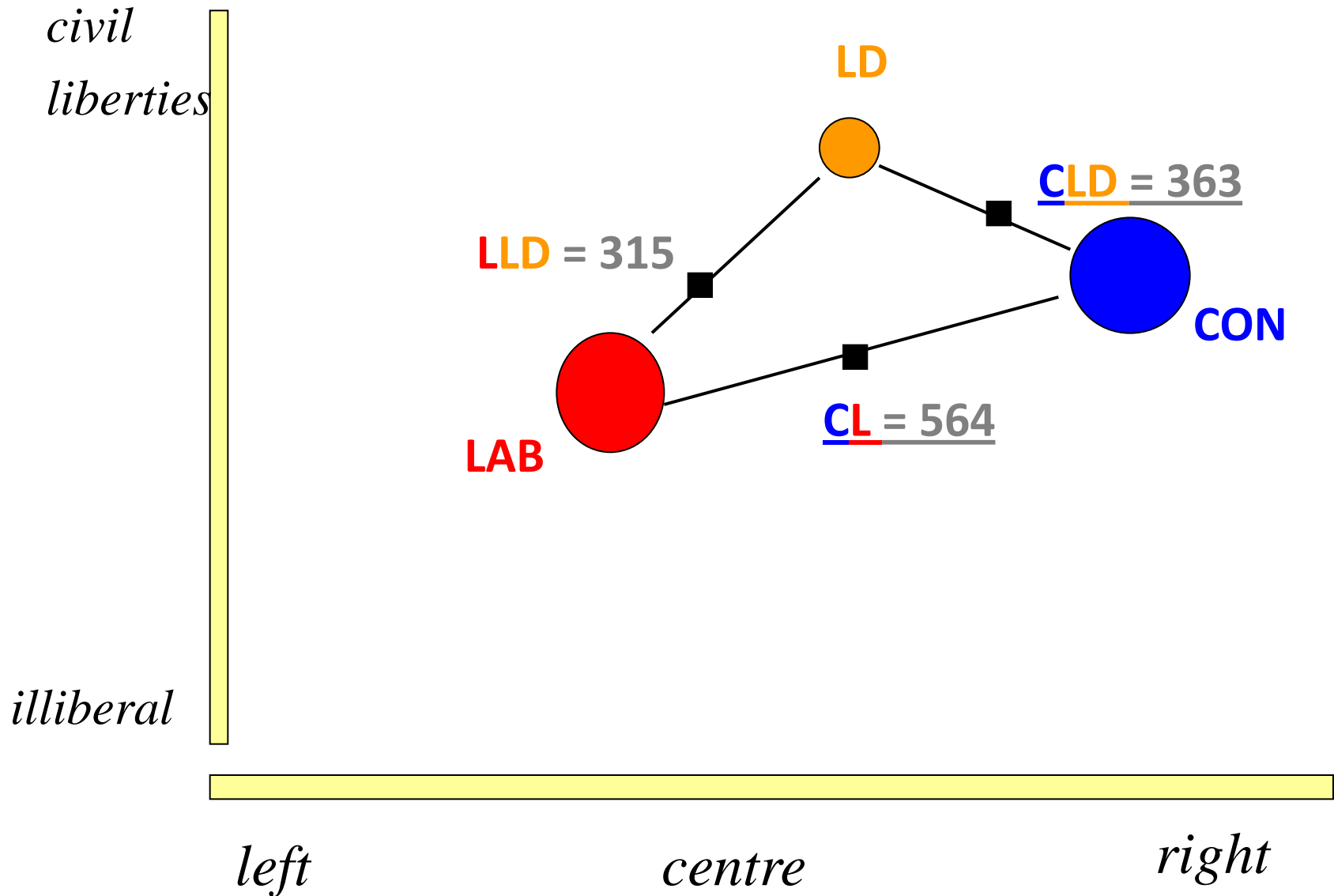
# Conservative-Labour coalition



# Conservative-Labour coalition



# Conservative-Labour coalition





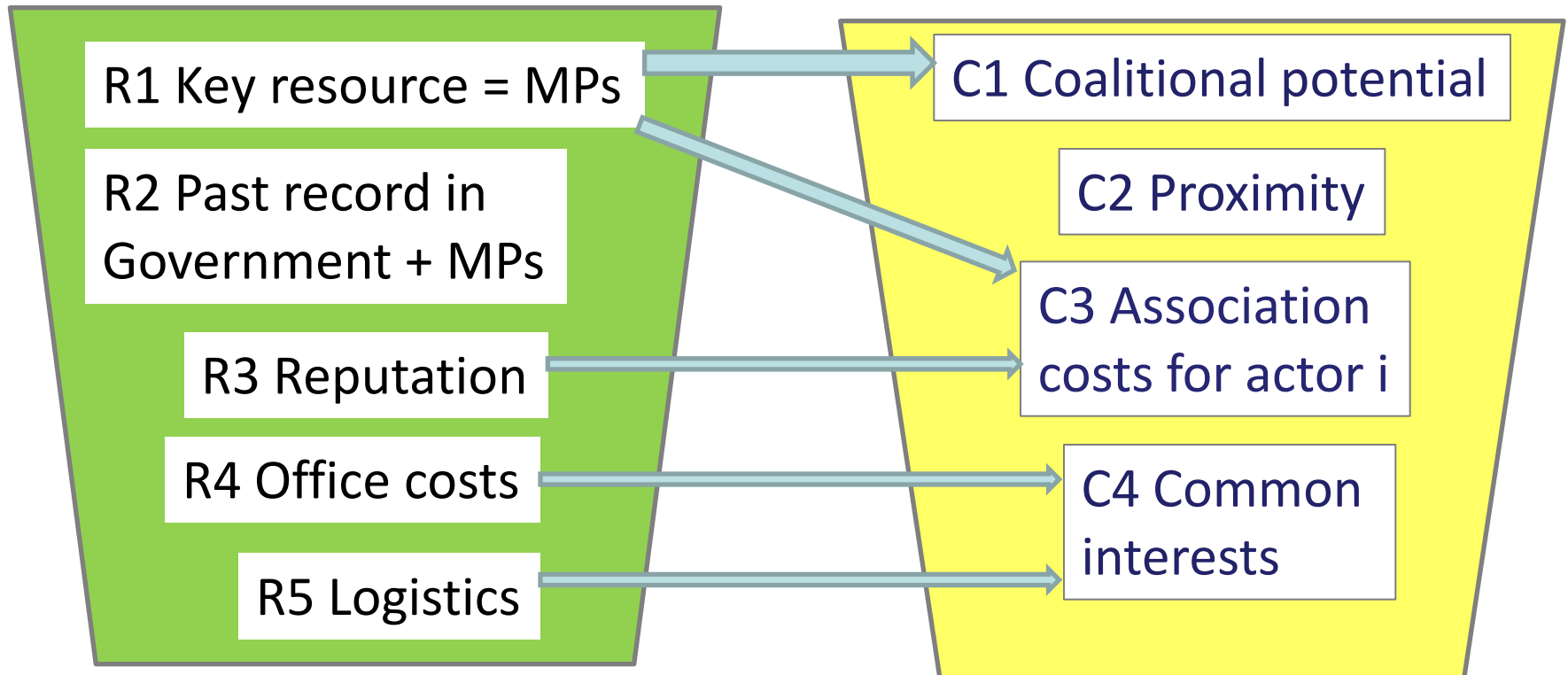
## 2010 election: The leading possible coalitions

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

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

**Resources**

**Coalitionality**



## The UK general election of 2010 and the coalition outcome

Party	Another resource % Votes	<u>Key resource</u> % of all MPs
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>47.6</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>40.0</b>
<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>
Democratic Unionists	0.6	1.2
Scottish National Party	1.7	0.9
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.5
Social Dem & Lab P (NI)	0.4	0.5
Green	1.0	0.2
Alliance Party (NI)	0.1	0.2
Others (no seats)	7.5	0.2
Total	100%	100 %

## The UK general election of 2010 and the coalition outcome

Party	Another resource % Votes	<u>Key resource</u> % of all MPs	% coalitional potential score (normalized Banzahf index)
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>36.7</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>
<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>22.0</b>
Democratic Unionists	0.6	1.2	7.3
Scottish National Party	1.7	0.9	5.5
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.5	1.8
Social Dem & Lab P (NI)	0.4	0.5	1.8
Green	1.0	0.2	0.9
Alliance Party (NI)	0.1	0.2	0.9
Others (no seats)	7.5	0.2	0.9
Total	100%	100 %	100 %

Con share of  
Con + Lib Dem  
C score = 56%

## The UK general election of 2010 and the coalition outcome

Party	Another resource % Votes	<u>Key resource</u> % of all MPs	% coalitional potential score (normalized Banzhaf index)	PJD suggested power (C + R) score %
<b>Conservative</b>	<b>36.1</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>42.1</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Liberal Democrat</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>15.4</b>
Democratic Unionists	0.6	1.2	7.3	4.3
Scottish National Party	1.7	0.9	5.5	3.2
Plaid Cymru	0.6	0.5	1.8	1.2
Social Dem & Lab P (NI)	0.4	0.5	1.8	1.2
Green	1.0	0.2	0.9	0.5
Alliance Party (NI)	0.1	0.2	0.9	0.5
Others (no seats)	7.5	0.2	0.9	0.5
Total	100%	100 %	100 %	100 %

Con share of Con + Lib Dem P score = 73%

## 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

C score ● 56

# DIMENSIONS OF THE CONSERVATIVE and LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GOVERNMENT

Coalition government	Relative sizes	CON/ LIB DEM ratio
Votes (% GB)	<b>36.9</b> 23.5	1.6
C scores ('power' indices)	<b>36.7</b> 22	1.7
PJD's 'Power' = 1/2R + 1/2C	<b>42.1</b> 15.4	2.7
Initial Cabinet ministers	<b>18</b> 5	3.6
Key resource weights (MPs)	<b>306</b> 57	5.4
Cabinet Ministers with big departments	<b>15</b> 2	7.5

CON share  
Liberal Democrat  
share



Thanks for listening