

The Politics of Coalition

Professor Robert Hazell and Dr Ben Yong
Constitution Unit, Dept of Political Science, UCL

LSE
3 December 2012

Constitution Unit Project on the Coalition

- 12 month project, funded by Nuffield Foundation.
- 5 person team
- 150 interviews
- Whitehall interviews in Cabinet Office, No 10, and three departments: DECC, DCLG, DEFRA
- 50 Westminster interviews, of Conservatives and Lib Dems in Commons and Lords

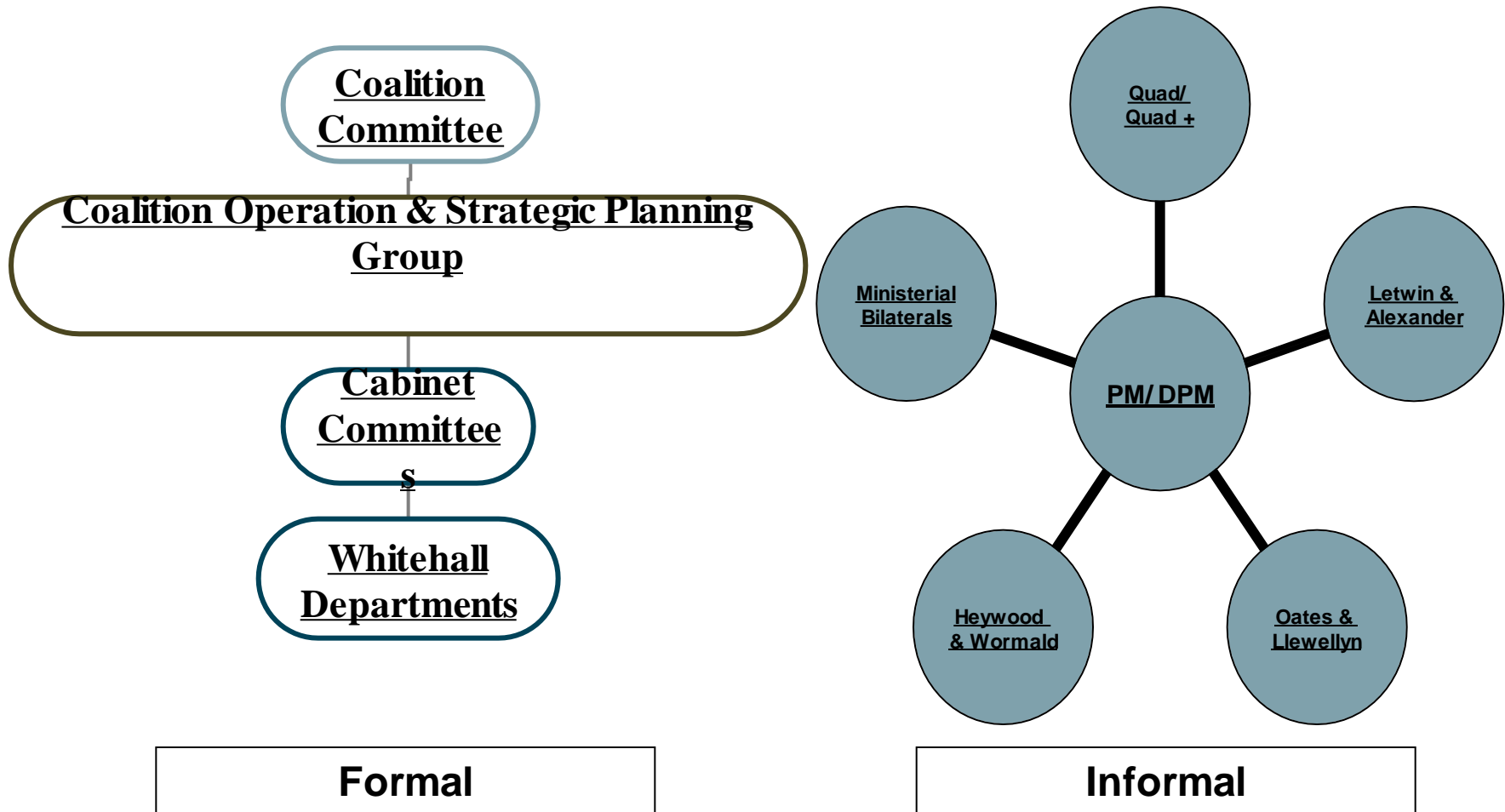
The Politics of Coalition: chapters 1 to 6

- Introduction: Why study this Coalition?
- The Experience of Coalition in the UK and Abroad
- Formation of the Coalition
- **How the Coalition works in the Centre**
- **How the Coalition works in Whitehall departments**
- **The Coalition in Parliament**

The Politics of Coalition: chapters 7 to 11

- The Coalition and the Political Parties
- The Coalition and the Media
- Case Study 1: Constitutional Reform
- Case Studies 2: Tuition Fees, NHS Reforms, Nuclear Policy
- **Lessons for the Future**

COALITION DISPUTE MACHINERY



The Coalition in Whitehall departments

- 5 departments with Lib Dem Cabinet minister; 11 line depts have jnr LD ministers; 4 have none (MOD, FCO, DCMS, NIO)
- DPMO monitors depts with no Lib Dem minister
- Lib Dem junior ministers struggle to monitor whole of their department. Isolated, small Private Office
- No spads for jnr ministers until 2012: now share 6
- Success stories in DfE, DH. HO, DCLG problems

The Coalition at Westminster

- ‘We have a coalition government, but not a coalition Parliament’
- Majority in the Commons of 83
- Greater strength in the Lords (310: 243)
- Coalition has behaved in majoritarian way
- More rebellions than in any Parliament in postwar era; but partners rebel on different issues.
- Defeats in HL on one in five divisions

Backbench committees

- Problem is mostly dissent within the parties, not between parties
- Modification of parliamentary party backbench committees
- LDs established 12 party parliamentary committees, covering all Whitehall departments: link to broader party. But resource issues
- Conservatives slower, more ad hoc
- Proliferation of associations: 'the 301 group' etc

How will it end?

- Coalition will govern through to election day
- Lib Dems will not go down to a supply and confidence agreement
- Thin legislative programme in 2014-15
- Informal electoral pacts to save Lib Dems?
- Parties prepare for another hung Parliament?

Lessons for the Future: the Political Parties need to prepare before the next election

- Write manifesto with an eye to negotiations
- Maintain good relations with other party leaders
- Select party's negotiating team in advance
- Decide process for consulting the parliamentary and wider party
- Allow more than five days for negotiation

Lessons for the parties in negotiations and in government

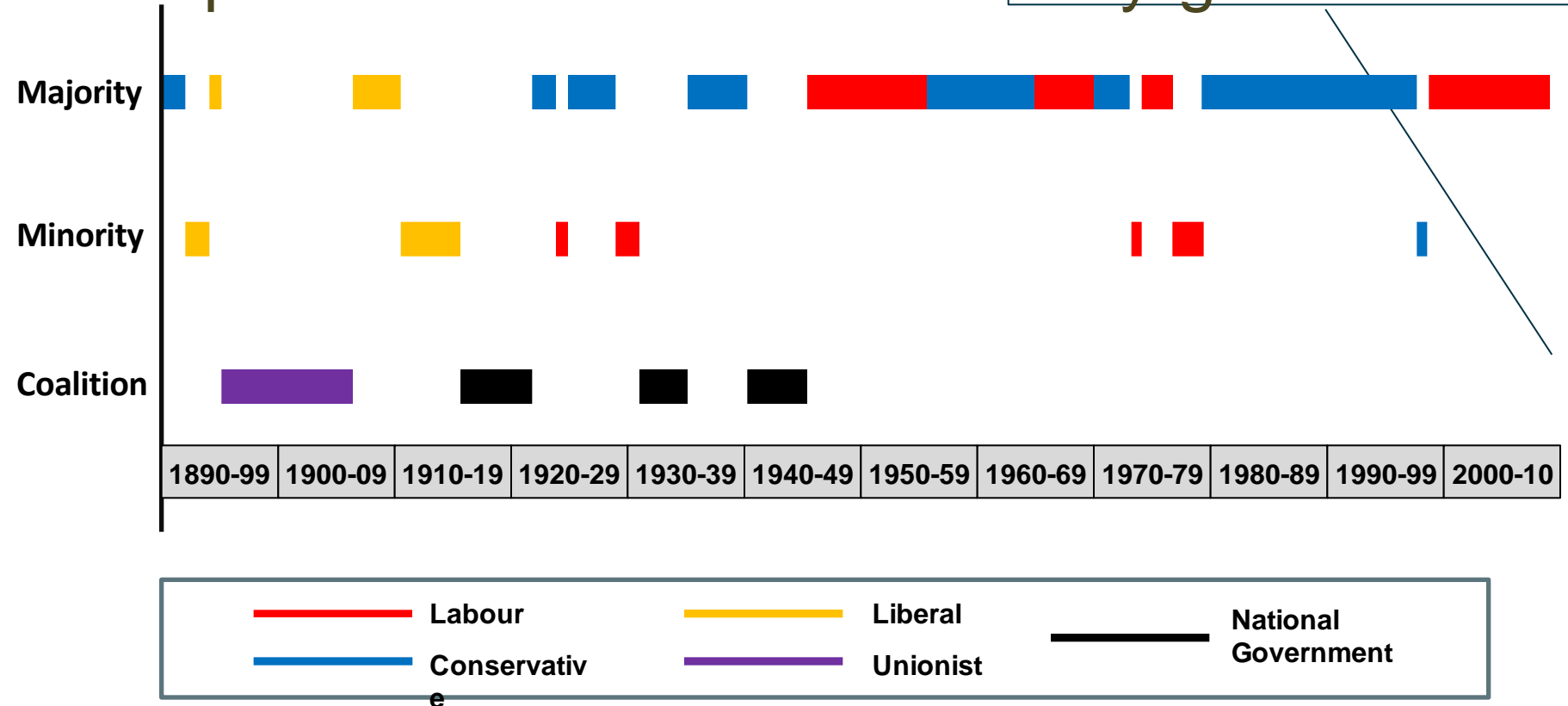
- LDs still most likely pivotal party. Or UKIP?
- Plan division of office: breadth or depth
- Maintain party's visibility via distinctive policies & portfolios
- Greater support?
- Cabinet Committees for formal decision making, informal forums for coalition brokering beforehand
- Be generous to the smaller party
- Allocate them in more integrated units

Lessons for the Civil Service

- Brief media before next election about procedures in event of a hung Parliament
- Explain to political parties different roles Civil Service can play in support of negotiations
- Factor in minor parties as possible participants
- Consider additional support for junior coalition partner, or support parties in Parliament

The pattern of coalition and minority government in C20

The Conservative-LibDem government is the first coalition government at Westminster since 1945



Source: Akash Paun and Robert Hazell (eds.) (2009), *Making Minority Government Work*, p. 18