The UDF in the 1990s: the break-up of a party confederation

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Introduction

The principal dynamic of the French party system under the Fifth Republic has been that of the so-called 'bipolar quadrille'. By the end of the 1970s, four parties of approximately equal strength were monopolising over 90 per cent of the vote in their respective left and right blocs (Parodi, 1989). Nevertheless, this end-state had taken twenty years to produce, concluding in 1978 with the formation of the UDF. The UDF managed to create an unprecedented alliance between liberal, Christian democrat and radical currents,¹ taking its place as the second right-wing pole next to the Gaullist RPR. The UDF represented the desire to institutionalise the centrist coalition formed around Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who had been elected president four years earlier. At the same time, however, none of the constituent parties of the new confederation had ever agreed to merge themselves into a single organisational entity.² It was only on 16 May 1998, by a single motion passed by its national congress, that DL ended twenty years of the 'moderate alliance' by withdrawing from the confederation.³ DL represented the largest component of the UDF, accounting for around one-third of its members and elected representatives. Its separation allowed the creation of a significant new party, even if some of its members did not defect from the UDF. With a parliamentary group of 44 deputies in the National Assembly, together with 46 senators,⁴ DL immediately asserted itself as an indispensable partner.

These events by no means marked the end of the UDF, but the secession did significantly alter its format. Lacking one-third of its former activists and a large chunk of its liberal wing, the balance of power noticeably shifted within the UDF. In particular, the descendants of the Christian democrat *courant* have become the dominant force. From this, a fusion of the remaining components into the New

UDF – although only partial – was announced at the Lille Congress in December 1998. At the same time, François Léotard, the former President of the Parti Républicain (PR) who was elected to the head of the UDF in 1996, resigned, to be replaced by the leader of Force Démocrate (FD), François Bayrou. In simultaneously giving birth to a new party actor and significantly weakening one of the main existing parties, the UDF split would seem to signal major changes within the party system. However, the bipolar quadrille had already been shattered by the emergence of the FN, a new actor excluded from coalition, and by the shifting equilibrium between the two partners in both blocs.

Since the initial pendulum swing of 1981, the RPR had established itself as the dominant partner on the right (Schonfeld, 1986). However, the results of the 2002 elections introduced a novelty, namely the appointment of Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a member of DL, as Prime Minister. This is the first time since 1981 that one of the two heads of the executive has been filled by a member of a party other than the RPR while the right is in government. But this novelty should not be exaggerated, reflecting less a new development in the right bloc and more a reward for loyalty to Chirac's 'clan'.

Indeed, the split in the UDF seems even less significant for the French party system when one realises that its direct consequences, beyond the formation of the new parliamentary group in 1998, are difficult to identify. Two reasons can be given for this. First, the split of the UDF was not accompanied by a challenge to the existing governmental coalitions, unlike cases where a split in one party leads to the collapse of an alliance or a change in the systemic status of such an alliance.⁵ The new UDF, DL and the RPR still constitute the moderate-right coalition and all participate in the new governing coalition since the 2002 electoral victory. DL was not excluded, by dint of being a close partner of the RPR, a role from which it did not try to distance itself. Second, the organisation of the UDF itself has tempered the consequences of the split. For twenty years, the UDF had been considered a party living on borrowed time, such were the internal divisions within its ranks. The threat of defection had been one of the basic negotiating tools within the confederation. In this respect, the difference between a heavily factionalised party and a coalition is minimal.

However, the very presence of the threat of defection throughout the old UDF's twenty-year existence shows that its stability was at issue, and that its disappearance should therefore have some consequences. Within a weakly institutionalised organisation such as the UDF, it is difficult to argue routine behaviour as the source of stability. Such consequences can be seen in the shifting of these parties in political space, as well as in the modification of intra-bloc dynamics on the right.

The split and the modification of parties in political space

The logics of electoral coalition on the one hand and of demarcation between the different moderate-right parties on the other are obviously mirrored in the definition of ideologies within each organisation. The split occurred around reactivated latent cleavages and has broadly led to a relocation of the party positions in political space, consequently potentially affecting the general balance of the party system (Lane and Ersson, 1987).

Two main cleavages were key to the split. The first, social in nature, opposed two spiritual families, one descended from a liberal heritage, the other from a Christian democrat background. The second, more strategic, concerned the issue of relations with the extreme right. The split fundamentally separated the descendants of liberalism, regrouped in the DL splinter, from the Christian democrat successors, who now form the majority of New UDF. Each representing their specific spiritual family, despite the weakened contemporary nature of the cleavages, liberals and Christian democrats took different lines, especially on religious matters. Despite a lack of data on the subject, certain characteristics of this divide can be discerned through a survey of delegates to the PR (liberal) and CDS (Christian democrat) national party congresses (Ysmal, 1992).⁶ All of the delegates were in agreement on most items pertaining to economic liberalism, but inheritance tax divided them – only 39 per cent of CDS delegates wanted its removal, as opposed to 65 per cent of the PR. In cultural-attitudinal terms, PR and CDS delegates shared some liberal positions (for instance, 21 per cent of CDS delegates and 20 per cent of PR delegates condemned homosexuality) but there was no consensus on the death penalty (almost 65 per cent of the PR wanted its re-establishment, as opposed to less than 40 per cent in the CDS) or abortion (45 per cent of CDS delegates against 34 per cent of PR delegates wanted to make it more difficult to obtain). The different components of the UDF were thus sensitive to different social issues. Finally, immigration preoccupied the PR more than it did the CDS.

In withdrawing from the UDF, DL finally confirmed its liberal identity,⁷ starting with its change of name. Moreover, Alain Madelin announced the split in the name of liberalism:

There are many French men and women who expect us to provide a future for their country and for their children which is different to the one the Socialists are proposing. This future can only be a liberal one. Throughout the world, people are rallying to those values and ideas which are our own. And so, my friends, we are not now going to fold up our flag, and dilute let alone dissolve our liberal heritage.⁸

For DL, the split was also the chance to present a manifesto inspired by liberalism. Beyond classic state reforms, the lowering of taxes and the simplification of legislation, DL's programme emphasised the promotion of intermediary associations and the value of autonomy for individuals, local organisations and public services, starting with the education sector.⁹

Even so, it is difficult to maintain that the UDF split has re-established a fundamental cleavage in French society. Christian democracy and liberalism are not bitterly opposed, after all, particularly since religion is no longer a central concern today. These two families are not to be found on opposing sides of a single cleavage (Seiler, 1984). Moreover, conflicts between Christian democracy and liberalism may be rooted in unarguable historical fact in France (Kalyvas, 1996), but today these conflicts have been superseded by fights between right and left. Third, New UDF does not play upon its Christian democrat heritage – indeed any such reference is completely absent – except in its belonging to the European Popular Party.¹⁰ This absence of explicit ideological benchmarking is hardly surprising, given the extent to which the UDF is still a highly composite structure. Whether radical, liberal or even social democrat, the non-Christian democrat minority is still significant nonetheless. More broadly, the collection of moderate-right formations plays host to a heterogeneous bunch within their organisations, despite their own fragmentation. The position of CDS and PR leaders mentioned above shows not only the differences between the different constituents of the UDF, but also no less significant internal oppositions between each constituent. On subjects as sensitive as abortion, the death penalty or the fortune tax, they tend to divide into one-third versus two-thirds, or sometimes 50–50. Similarly, the liberal credo vaunted by Madelin has caused difficulties within his own party in those areas touching upon society. His abstention in favour of the PACS, or his position on the decriminalisation of soft drugs on the one hand have not been followed, and on the other form part of his presidential campaign.

In sum, despite the apparent link to ideological streams which support the UDF split, no social cleavage has truly emerged or even re-emerged. Obviously, differences exist between New UDF and DL, but these are more a matter of nuance than of fundamental opposition, and revolve increasingly around the salience of certain issues such as European construction, in New UDF's case, or the defence of small traders and business owners, in the case of DL. Both find themselves in a politically conservative space, associated with economic liberalism. Despite the fragmentation in organisational terms, the moderate right are undergoing a certain ideological homogenisation, questions about Europe, decentralisation or the role of the state no longer dividing them (Ysmal, 2000). This homogenisation has no doubt resulted from the general dissemination of liberal ideas, which DL has helped to spread despite not reaping

any significant reward from doing so. More fundamentally, however, it is the rise of the FN which has obliged this ideological tightening, providing as it has a point of negative identification for the moderate right. Furthermore, the FN has not only posed an ideological conundrum to the moderate right, but also a strategic one.

The split in the UDF resulted in part from an internal debate over the attitude to adopt towards the FN after the 1998 regional elections. In five French regions, these elections had led to a relative majority of the left where previously the right had dominated. The right, however, had the possibility of retaining control were it to have the support of the extreme-right councillors. Five former regional council presidents opted for this possibility in order to keep their title, against the advice of the national party headquarters. François Bayrou, then vice-president of the UDF, condemned anything which resembled an agreement with the extreme right, be it collusion or collaboration. Conversely, Alain Madelin asserted that the question of the FN could not be allowed to get in the way of the political programme, that to fight it one should fight its ideas. Without explicitly condemning the regional council presidents in question, and even supporting some of them, Madelin believed that to ask whether FN support was viable or not was to play the left's game. Many of his colleagues even drew parallels with the PS and PCF alliance in the 1970s.

This difference deeply divided the moderate-right camp. Its birth had direct consequences for party locations and thus for their coalition potential. In a position more to the right, DL was notably one of the groups where Millon's network in the shape of *La Droite* had more success.¹¹ Conversely, New UDF found itself in a centrist position, which allowed it to win the Rhône-Alpes regional presidency, thanks to Socialist support. Nevertheless, the FN split in 1999, which destroyed most of its coalition potential,¹² and Jacques Chirac's continued opposition to any alliance, prevented this new cleavage from becoming entrenched. On the other hand, New UDF itself became more entrenched in the centre in broadening its catchment area, while DL located itself more closely to its RPR partner.

The interplay between party demarcation and coalition integration should prevent the appearance of polemical debate on ideology between the different parties of the moderate right. Only strategic questions, such as the attitude towards the FN or the 2002 electoral calendar, cause real opposition. In the end, it is the articulation of different interests and party locations more generally which differentiate New UDF from DL. The UDF split did not engender polarisation, even within the moderate right. Certain cleavages may have appeared, but today they have dissipated. This evident proximity in ideological terms on the right betrays the clear divergence in organisational terms that has supported continued

fragmentation within this bloc. Such differences have proved very bit as divisive as programmatic considerations.

The split and subsequent dynamics on the moderate right

The modification of the number of relevant parties in a system will modify the mechanics of inter-party relations therein (Sjöblom, 1968, Laver, 1989).¹³ The formation of the UDF embodied this logic by reducing the number of independent actors in the game. In 1978, the UDF was initially created as a common electoral banner for the PR, CDS and Radical Party. The legislative elections of that year presented two dangers to Giscard d'Estaing. First, a left-wing victory could provide an electoral surge sufficient to secure François Mitterrand's election three years later in the presidential race; second, the Gaullists, under Jacques Chirac's leadership, had been engaged since 1976 in an internecine fight with the president from their position in the governing coalition. The re-grouping of the parties under the UDF banner was primarily designed to field common candidates at the first round of the two-ballot legislative elections. Without this, separate candidatures against the Gaullists risked seeing the latter reach the second round on their own, leading to the disappearance of the moderate camp from the legislature.¹⁴ Since 1958, the moderate bloc had undergone a steady erosion in its parliamentary representation, from almost 200 deputies in 1958 to fewer than 100 in the 1970s. The 1978 elections in fact finished with the moderates victorious, achieving parity with the RPR.

This success ensured the permanence of the UDF by providing it with an organisational dimension above and beyond its cartel status. First and foremost, the UDF provided a stable arena for negotiation between its constituent parts, reinforcing the cohesion of a deeply divided coalition. In providing voters with a pole with which to identify, the UDF's existence strongly discouraged any strategy of defection to the left or right. Threats of secession may have been numerous, but none came to fruition until 1998 because their role was limited to that of a simple bargaining tool. The UDF can therefore be considered as a unitary actor throughout its twenty-year existence, even if the total was little more than the sum of its parts (Hanley, 1999b). Presidential and European elections are the important exceptions to this rule. For these elections, candidatures have rarely corresponded to narrow party delineations anyway, whether under a united right (such as the European elections of 1984 and 1994) or a divided UDF (European election of 1989 and the presidential elections of 1988 and 1995). Between 1981 and the split, the UDF had never presented itself as a united party at these elections.

Conversely, at the 1999 European elections, a single UDF list opposed

a joint RPR-DL list.¹⁵ Similarly, each of these three parties has fielded a candidate for the 2002 presidential elections – Jacques Chirac for the RPR, Alain Madelin for DL, and François Bayrou for New UDF. DL's return to independence, despite the component being formed before the formation of the UDF itself, can be considered the appearance of a new party. The split forced it to change arena, reintegrating directly into the party system, and no longer limiting its room for manoeuvre to the UDF's internal space.

The reappearance of DL on the right should not be seen as a preface to any major change. The third and dominated partner on the right, DL no longer seems to be an actor able to use the threat of coalition break-up. The political survival of DL relies from now on upon its continued participation in a moderate-right electoral alliance. Its own electoral pool, estimated at less than 5 per cent of the electorate,¹⁶ is insufficient for a party which presents itself as 'office-seeking'. Its position on the right prevents it from any strategy involving overtures to the left. Its possible role as a pivot between the moderate and extreme right seems unlikely given the fragmentation of the extreme-right bloc¹⁷ and Chirac's own opposition to it. Furthermore, Jean-Marie Le Pen's second place in the presidential race has definitively excluded him from future alliances. Conversely, New UDF's position is more flexible, due to its centrist location. A rejection of the current alliance in favour of the left at the moment seems unlikely, as much from the status of the PS, PCF and Green Alliance as much as from the internal opposition which such a strategy might provoke. However, this pivotal position can be used by the UDF under certain conditions, much in the same way as the CDS tried, albeit somewhat unsuccessfully, in 1988.¹⁸ For instance, part of the UDF and the PS has already formed an alliance in the Rhône-Alpes region, to elect Anne-Marie Comparini (UDF) to the regional council presidency. This game played out between part of the right under Charles Millon's command, allied with the extreme right,¹⁹ and a centrist pole, combining part of the UDF and the PS.

Nevertheless, these alliances are unstable and circumstantial. The split is thus unlikely to rearrange the structure of coalitions within the party system. Indeed, it seemed more likely to strengthen the RPR's domination. Paradoxically, if anyone seemed likely to derive benefit, it was the New UDF, and until the spring of 2002, this seemed to be the case. RPR, New UDF and DL fielded their own presidential candidates and simultaneously negotiated candidacies for the legislative elections. For twenty years, the single first-round candidate has become the rule for at least local and legislative elections.

Legislative and presidential elections nevertheless follow two separate logics. For the former, alliance is favoured inasmuch as the goal is the maximisation of elected candidates. For the latter, differentiation is key

where only one position is at stake. The UDF may be an ineffective presidential machine,²⁰ but the post-split parties have included this election at the heart of their agenda. The presidential ambitions of François Bayrou and Alain Madelin were, moreover, considered to be key to the split. It should be noted that DL and the UDF obtain their best scores in opinion polls for the presidential election, their respective candidates receiving about twice as many voting intentions as their party in the legislative polls.²¹ For the parties, the logic of differentiation and support of the leader is predominant. This has resulted in a frank discussion of the hegemony of the president over his own camp. The emergence of 'affairs' concerning Jacques Chirac or his entourage are subtly played upon, for instance. Cohabitation also reinforces this competition as far as the president is more or less directly involved in governmental business.

Conversely, because the French president and the RPR have a say in the selection of candidates for the next legislative elections, the majority of DL and New UDF deputies are in favour of a strategy based upon a single presidential candidate in the first round. A strategy too dependent upon differentiation could in the end threaten the legislative election alliance and therefore in turn threaten many deputies' re-election. Consequently, there is a growing dissociation within each organisation between their different manifestations. Notably, New UDF and DL are witnessing growing conflict between their party headquarters and parliamentary groups. In 2002, the legally fixed deadlines for the renewal of assembly and presidential mandates would have meant that the deputies had put themselves before the polls in advance of the President, a departure from Fifth Republic tradition. A bill put forward by Lionel Jospin's government proposed prolonging Parliament for a couple of weeks in order to return to the traditional order. The Communists and Greens, however, refused to support it, depriving the government of its majority – it was only thanks to one third of the UDF parliamentary group that the bill was finally passed. However, in the meantime, the Conseil National of the UDF had already unanimously adopted a proposal to support this bill strongly. The majority of the UDF parliamentary group, in disagreement with this, could thus have opposed a direct order from party HQ. The novelty of this situation is not so much the autonomy of the parliamentary group, but that it could take a clear line at all. The split in the UDF has thus served to fog the source of power, the parties seemingly more and more uncohesive.

This schism between DL and New UDF's parliamentary and party organisations gradually increased, peaking in the aftermath of the first-round presidential elections. Initially, the split of DL from the UDF produced a multiplication of apparatuses at the local and national level. The split of the party leadership into New UDF and DL was accompanied

by similar splits among members and grass-roots organisations, but these latter were less problematic due to their already being largely separated out. However, these changes, particularly among groups of representatives, seem somewhat artificial. They may have come off at the national levels, with the National Assembly group separating into two – the *Démocratie Libérale et Indépendants* and the remaining UDF – but at the local level, such developments were far more limited: the old UDF partners continue to sit mostly in the a single group. Moreover, Jean-Pierre Raffarin created the Chiraquian club *Dialogue et Initiative* in 1998 with Jacques Barrot, Dominique Perben and Michel Barnier, in order to try to structure coordination and programmes on the moderate right. However, the main initiative in this respect was the creation in spring 2002 of *Alternance 2002*, an association formed in April 2000 by a group of RPR, DL and UDF deputies. Since its creation, two of its guiding principles make it a possible alternative to existing parties: individual membership, regardless of party status; and the creation of a common electoral banner for its members, effectively designed as a presidential majority banner. Nevertheless, this association did not emerge as a political party until its transformation after the second round of the 2002 presidential elections into the UMP.²² At this point, the UMP stated four conditions for its supporting candidates. The UMP candidates had to provide a written undertaking to support the new government for the entirety of the first legislature; their candidacy must only be registered under the symbol of the UMP, and no other;²³ they must become a member of the UMP parliamentary grouping; and they must take part in the founding congress of the UMP. Thus, the UMP placed itself squarely in competition with the other political parties.

New UDF and DL's respective reactions to this challenge were different. François Bayrou opposed it utterly. Three-quarters of the UDF parliamentary group requested UMP candidacies, but the remainder of New UDF decided to present its own candidates.²⁴ Conversely, Alain Madelin supported the UMP (given that his parliamentary group joined the new party directly), dissolving DL in September 2002.²⁵ In general, however, the situation remains confused, given that none of the parties has excluded any of its members, with many members of the UMP remaining in executive positions within New UDF and DL.

The 2002 elections have resulted in a novel party sub-system on the right, characterised by two main changes from its recent past: the hegemony of the UMP, which holds 365 deputies in the National Assembly against only 29 for the New UDF; and the end of unique right-wing candidacies in the first round of legislative elections. In this sense, the moderate right has returned to its state in the 1960s or 1970s, but with a hegemonic Chiraquian party rather than a dominant Gaullist party. Furthermore, the similarities with the 1970s extend to the restrained level

of competition between the moderate-right partners. The UDF only stood under its own symbol in 151 constituencies, in which the UMP only failed to field its own candidate in 19 cases. Thus, competition between the UMP and UDF only occurred in less than one-quarter of constituencies. However, even in these cases, true competition was rare, with one or other of the candidates having no chance of winning, either due to the strength of the incumbent or due to a failure to engage in a productive campaign.²⁶ To this extent, the 2002 legislative elections perpetuated the principal of 'fair share' put forward by Hanley (1999b) if we ignore the UMP umbrella label. Even today, the RPR receives around one-half of the candidatures, the DL one-fifth, and the CDS one-seventh,²⁷ with the rest distributed among the other coalition members.

Nevertheless, between 1978 and 2002, a clear tendency towards a shift in balance between the two main components of the UDF occurred (see Tables 7.1 and 7.2). In 1997, FD managed to get more of its candidates elected as deputies than the PR. The 2002 elections also confirmed this tendency inasmuch as DL lost some more common candidacies to New UDF, despite the latter only being partially integrated into the UMP. This sheds a new light on DL's fortunes after the schism. The double logic of the UDF alliance within a right-wing alliance lost it the status of second principal component of the French right,²⁸ without any equivalent shift in electoral support. This development in the relative positions of the different components within the UDF can mainly be explained by the mechanism of candidate selection.²⁹ The management of these compromises were carried out almost systematically against the interests of the dominant partner, leading to an overrepresentation of the second-placed party. Moreover, the figures concerning RPR-UDF shares give similar results, with the RPR losing out despite its own electorate growing relative to that of the UDF.³⁰ However, the split did not allow DL to become the second-placed partner of the right. In the end, the split did not allow it to cancel out this unfavourable dynamic.

The party landscape on the right appears uncertain subsequent to the 2002 elections. On the one hand, political supply has not been fundamentally changed by the UDF splinter by the creation of the UMP. The principal of incumbent support has not changed, and the few occasions where this has not pertained means that change is slow. Changes in party name have been apparent, but their effects are also uncertain. The creation of a UMP group in the National Assembly seems only to confirm the general unity of moderate-right deputies which has been implicit for a long time. Conversely, it will not present certain problems linked to parties where group discipline is not the rule. The main change has been the nomination of Jean-Pierre Raffarin as Prime Minister, albeit under the close scrutiny of the Elysée.

On the other hand, if the UMP turns out to be a long-term stable

TABLE 7.1 Party affiliation of single candidates fielded by the moderate right (per cent)

	1978	1981	1986	1988	1993	1997	2002
RPR	55	53	51	51	50	52	51
DL/PR	18	22	18	19	20	17	15
New UDF/FD	8	12	13	13	11	14	23

TABLE 7.2 Party affiliation of moderate-right deputies (per cent)

	1978	1981	1986	1988	1993	1997	2002
RPR	53	59	55	50	54	55	52
DL/PR	24	21	21	22	23	15	15
New UDF/CDS	12	13	14	19	13	19	25

organisation, presenting an alternative to New UDF, the change will be significant in that it will confirm the implantation of an essentially biparty system, substituting bipolarised multipartism. Deprived of their parliamentary presence, New UDF can no longer rely upon strong organisational or popular support to ensure their survival against the UMP. The UDF split may not have had direct consequences, but it did provide the first stage in French party system change due to the weakening of one of the poles of the bipolar quadrille. Without the split, the UDF might have been able to oppose the formation of a Chiraquian movement not only because of its electoral strength but also because the UDF appears *a posteriori* more coherent than its other manifestations.

Conclusion

The UDF split may seem to have had little impact on the French party system, but it nevertheless represents the beginning of changes which might represent a substantial change in the French party system, creating a single dominant moderate-right party in the shape of the UMP or one of its successor. In essence, the split has opened up more possibilities rather than exercised direct effects. One of its unwanted and paradoxical effects would be the initiation of a period of unification via a fragmenting dynamic. The dilemma between differentiation and integration would thus have been resolved in favour of the latter as a result of the legislative elections' dynamic, rather than the presidentials. The French political system thus still conforms to its semi-presidential model where winning a coherent parliamentary majority is indispensable to the president.

Although voters on the right have largely supported a single right-wing organisation since the 1990s, the parties themselves have gone in the opposite direction until 2002. The parties of the right have thus contributed to their own delegitimation, giving the appearance of private clubs run according to individual whims. New UDF and DL are consequently skeletal in their corpus, with less than 50,000 member, putting themselves at risk of being overtaken by some new initiative, such as Millon's which managed to garner 30,000 members in the space of a few months. Can the creation of the UMP thus be interpreted as a reconciliation of the right and French society? So far, the organisation has not gone down this road. Above all a parliamentary body with no real membership, the UMP elite appears to have little legitimacy given their lack of democratic mandate to their hegemony. The birth of the UMP has thus only been the first stage in a more generalised refoundation which should follow. The success of this will determine the long-term chances of the UMP. Too much prevarication might otherwise give New UDF a chance to rise from its ashes. With a parliamentary group and an electoral label, François Bayrou has not yet given up hope.

Notes

- 1 The three founding parties of the UDF in 1978 were the PR, from the liberal stream; the CDS, successor to the Christian democratic movements; and the Radical Party.
- 2 There were five components to the UDF on the eve of its break-up: DL, the new label for the PR since the election of Alain Madelin as its president in 1997; FD, the fusion of the CDS and the Parti Social Démocrate (which included Socialists who had rejected the Communist alliance in the 1970s); the Radical Party; the Parti Populaire pour la Démocratie Française, a splinter from the PR; and lastly direct UDF members.
- 3 The 'moderate' label is a practical label for UDF members in the tradition of the 'independent' *notables*. Political moderation is a negative definition, more defined by its opposition to the left, the extremes and Gaullism than by its own content. Above all, it evokes a political culture more than a position, being closer to centrism than to the centre (Hazan, 1997).
- 4 The *Républicain et Indépendants* group in the Senate is part of the liberal family along with DL. Despite DL's numerical domination, the *Républicains Indépendants* (RI) group includes a broader spectrum of parties, including several members of the UDF. It contains 46 senators and is thus the fourth largest group in the Senate.
- 5 The UDF had already undergone a split in 1994, when Philippe de Villiers' MPF was created for the European elections. The MPF diverged sufficiently to be excluded by the moderate right, and failed to make any alliances at the local level.
- 6 DL is directly descended from the PR, and New UDF mainly from members

of the former CDS. Unfortunately, no data exist since the SOFRES-*Le Monde* survey of 1990.

- 7 DL corresponds closely to the 'challenger' party identified by Lucardie (2000).
- 8 Alain Madelin, speech to the DL party conference (16 May 1998).
- 9 See the DL programme (*Dix Choix Forts* – Ten Strong Choices) at www.dem-lib.com
- 10 Since 1999, however, it should be noted that both RPR and DL MEPs sit in the European Popular Party.
- 11 La Droite is a political organisation started by Charles Millon in 1998 to garner support no matter what its party affiliation. In 2000, La Droite was transformed into a party, and renamed La Droite Libérale et Chrétienne.
- 12 The FN split may not have significantly damaged its electoral potential, but Bruno Mégret's failure to win away part of the FN's support has hampered any possibility of allying with the moderate right.
- 13 The crux of the argument lies in the fact that, as the number of parties increases, so the number of possible coalitions rises exponentially. If we take the UDF split as indicating a rise in the French party system from six to seven relevant parties, the number of possible coalitions rises from 63 to 127.
- 14 Schlesinger and Schlesinger (2000) have shown that if the UDF managed to improve its performance over the RPR at the second round, it would have much the better performance at the first round. Coordinating candidacies was thus indispensable for the moderate right to ensure qualification for the second round.
- 15 The situation in 1999 is thus similar to that of 1989 when the PR joined the RPR in a single list led by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing while the CDS ran its own list under Simone Veil.
- 16 Vote intentions for DL candidates vary between 3 and 5 per cent, according to the polling institute. The indicator has its weaknesses, not least because of the electoral coalition, but shows DL's tight margins. The party proximity indicator gives similar results, with 2 to 4 per cent of the sample naming DL.
- 17 The political space between the moderate and extreme right has been heavily contested by such actors as the MPF, the CNI and the Droite Libérale et Chrétienne. DL, at the moment of the break-up, could also have been situated among these, given that its position on the regional presidency affair was more tolerant.
- 18 In 1998, a parliamentary group – the Union du Centre – had been created by members of the CDS positioning themselves as a pivot to negotiate with Michel Rocard's minority Socialist government. However, these attempts failed, particularly because of the left, and support was limited to yes votes on a number of pieces of legislation.
- 19 The possibility of an overt alliance between Charles Millon and the extreme right was much debated. Relations between Millon and the FN are hazy, but there has certainly been an agreement between Mégret's FN splinter, the MNR and Millon.
- 20 Since 1981 and until 2002, the UDF has not managed to field its own candidate. It more or less endorsed Raymond Barre and Edouard Balladur in 1995, but both were beaten.

- 21 The results of the 2002 presidential elections gave François Bayrou 6.94 per cent and 3.96 per cent Alain Madelin. In the first round of the legislative elections, separate UDF candidates won 4.19 per cent with DL winning no significant share of the vote.
- 22 Alternance 2002 had already changed its name once before, becoming a *mouvement* rather than a *union*. The UMP will adopt a new symbol after its founding congress in the autumn of 2002.
- 23 See www.u-m-p.org; this condition is crucial, given the terms of state financing of political parties.
- 24 In some cases, separate UDF candidates stood against former UDF candidates who had decamped to the UMP.
- 25 Around twenty candidates stood under the DL symbol.
- 26 The decision to present separate candidates was only taken one month before the elections, and so a number of candidates were only fielded at the eleventh hour. Indeed, in some cases UDF candidates were in fact members of DL.
- 27 The growth of New UDF in 2002 (Tables 7.1 and 7.2) derive principally from other components of the UDF which remained within New UDF.
- 28 In 1958, during the first legislative elections of the Fifth Republic, the Independents of the CNI – the precursors to the PR – won 118 seats and became the second largest group in the National Assembly. General de Gaulle's UNR nevertheless won more than 200 seats.
- 29 Three key principles govern the selection of candidates within the confederation: automatic reselection of incumbents and most previous candidates who wish to stand again; a nationally negotiated distribution of constituencies among the member parties; and the individual choice of candidates according to their chances of victory (Sauger, 1998).
- 30 The electoral potential of the UDF and RPR is difficult to estimate precisely because of their alliance. Using party proximity as an indicator, 19 per cent of voters declared themselves close to the UDF in 1978 but only 10 per cent did so in 1997. For the RPR, the proportions move from 17 per cent to 18.5 per cent during the same period (CEVIPOF national surveys, 1978 and 1997). During this time, the RPR group in the National Assembly lost 14 deputies, whereas the UDF only lost 10.