The transformation of the French Right: Institutional imperatives and organizational changes

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The creation of the UMP after the 2002 presidential election began a new cycle for the French Right. It can be characterized as the refoundation of a party by merger. The reasoning behind the partial unification of the parties of the Right can be understood only in terms of the hybrid nature of the French institutional system. The merger proceeded from a long-established system of cooperation at the legislative level, but the main motivation was the restoration of Jacques Chirac's authority over both his political camp and the institution of the presidency. The real test that this new party will face is the selection of a single presidential candidate. Although the party is not yet fully institutionalized, it is possible to identify changes that are already in effect and others that the new organization may potentially introduce. The merger was achieved through financial centralization, an element that distinguishes the UMP from previous electoral coalitions; it entails distributing positions according to various principles of representation and raises the question of how to institute pluralism and possibly, accommodate ideological diversity within the party.
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Introduction

The presidential and legislative elections of 2002 began a new cycle for the French Right. Not only did the Right return to power — for the first time with a guaranteed minimum 5-year mandate — but with a new party, the UMP. Created on 23 April 2002, after the first round of the presidential election, as the *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle*, the new organization's first aim was to put forward a joint list of candidates, committed to supporting the president for the June legislative election. That election gave the UMP an overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, with 465 deputies (out of 577) either belonging to, or allied with, the party. At its

founding conference on 17 November 2002, the party renamed itself the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (Haegel, 2002; Ponceyri, 2002; Knapp, 2003). With so much still unsettled and since key questions remain unanswered, this article will not judge the record of the UMP or gauge how much it has changed the French political system, but it will address the significance of this change.

It is first necessary to define the change that occurred. It cannot be classified as a process of 'continual change' (Panebianco, 1988, 243) even though UMP's creation might be seen as illustrative of longer-term evolutions of the French party system, such as the disappearance of Gaullism, Europeanization (Cole, 2003) or the reinforcement of party cartelization. In particular, two characteristics of cartelization (Katz and Mair, 1995, 17) were central to the creation of the UMP: the 'interpenetration of party and state' (in accordance with the tradition on the French right, the UMP is the result of the presidential logic of the system) and the 'pattern of inter-party collusion' (the UMP was created in order to contain extreme right). All the same, the transformation was, strictly speaking, a 'fundamental change' which modified the 'organizational order' (Panebianco, 1988, 243) insofar as it encompassed both symbolic and organizational dimensions, including the party name, its constituent components, its statutes, and its 'dominant coalition' (Panebianco, 1988). In this context, the birth of the UMP will be characterized as the refoundation of a party by merger.

The main issue discussed in the literature on party change is the question of the incentives to change (Panebianco, 1988; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Rioux, 2001). To the extent that parties are conservative institutions, it is necessary to look closely at the conditions of any transformation. Here, it will be argued that the creation of the UMP cannot be understood without taking into account institutional imperatives and, more precisely, the need to connect the legislative and presidential aspects of the political system. That said, structural explanation of this sort needs to be placed in the appropriate situational context. In this regard, the creation of the UMP can only be understood against the background of the right's defeat at the 1997 legislative election (an external stimulus) which put Chirac's leadership under pressure (an internal stimulus) and the 2002 presidential election which made it easier for right-wing politicians to rally to the UMP.

The last part of this article will identify what is at work in this merger and what kind of 'innovations' (Appleton and Ward, 1997) it is likely to bring about. Although caution clearly must be exercised in this regard, we will pay attention to three types of internal organizational changes: what has already changed (financial centralization), what is in the process of changing (sharing of party posts) and what may change or could have changed (pluralism organized inside the party).

The Refoundation of a Party by Merger

To describe what is at stake in the creation of the UMP, two dimensions of the phenomenon must be distinguished analytically: the birth of the party represents both the refoundation of a party and a merger.

The refoundation of a party

In hindsight, the reaction to the shock generated by the success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of the 2002 presidential election took two forms. On the Left it led immediately to a series of demonstrations. By contrast, on the Right the first reaction was the creation of a new party. The formation of the UMP was announced immediately after the first round of the election. While the creation of the UMP was not a direct result of the first round of the 2002 presidential election, one should not be too quick to conclude that the two are completely unrelated. The creation of a party as a response to crisis is characteristic of the culture of the French Right. To put it simply, in a crisis the Left takes to the streets, while the Right creates a new party to defend political institutions or the political establishment. This cultural trait may appear paradoxical since the French Right — and particularly the Gaullist Right — generally adopts a critical stance towards political parties, yet it also has a marked propensity for creating new parties. In this aspect, the refoundation of an existing party is perfectly consistent with that tradition (Charlot, 1969; Donegani and Sadoun, 1992).

The history of the French Right is punctuated with examples of the refoundation of political parties (Lavau, 1988). The propensity for changing names and for making a great show of these changes is particularly strong among Gaullist organizations, but until recently these events have always been presented as a return to the roots of Gaullism (Haegel, 1990). In the case of the UMP, this time however, any such reference has virtually disappeared.[1] This time, several advertising agencies were consulted for a view to on choice of the name and logo of the new entity. After considering and discarding 'Union' and the Italian-inspired '*Maison bleue*', the party put two proposals to a vote by its members. The first involved keeping the initials UMP and simply changing the component words of the acronym; the second was to call the new organization '*Union Populaire*'. At the founding convention on 17 November 2002, members opted for the first of those proposals. The acronym UMP now stood for '*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*'. In addition, a charter of values, statutes and internal regulations were also approved by the party members.[2] Even though the UMP leadership rarely draws attention to the European echo contained in the word '*populaire*' (reference to the European parliamentary group is never explicit), Europe was at the centre of the founding conference. Guests included

José-Maria Aznar, the Spanish Prime Minister and leader of the Partido Popular, Angela Merkel, the leader of the German CDU, and the Portuguese Prime Minister, José Manuel Duraro Barroso.[3] In the restructuring of the French Right, Europeanization was thus, clearly emphasized, with reference to Europe even playing a central role in the symbolism surrounding the refoundation of the party. On the whole, the founders of the UMP saw it as a great conservative party along the lines of the German CDU/CSU or the *Partido Popular* of Spain; the British Conservative Party, given its difficulties, was not held up as a model nearly so often.

Merger

The UMP has incorporated the former *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), the Gaullist party founded in December 1976 by Jacques Chirac (Offerlé, 1984; Knapp, 1996), *Démocratie Libérale* (DL), a one-time component of the UDF (Hanley, 1999) but which left the confederation in 1998, the *Parti Radical*, also formerly of the UDF, and the *Centre National des Indépendants* (CNI), a group of small right-of-centre parties created under the Third and Fourth Republics and belonging to the UDF. The *Rassemblement pour la France* (RPF), a party created by Philippe de Villiers and Charles Pasqua and representing the nationalist or 'sovereignist' movement on the French Right, was not a founding member of the UMP, but individually and locally, most of its members supported the new party. The same was true of the members of the *Droite Libérale et Chrétienne* (DLC) created by Charles Millon.

Those elements of the UDF that, along with the party's leader, François Bayrou, refused to join the UMP embarked on a strategy of opposition inside the majority. Although officially part of the majority (one UDF minister, Gilles de Robien, served in the first government of Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin), the UDF rump increasingly manifested its opposition internally to the UMP, first by successfully running its own candidate against the UMP in the Yvelines by-election in December 2002, then by abstaining on the vote to pass the revenue element of the 2004 budget revenue vote in the National Assembly in October 2003 and also by choosing to run separate candidates in 16 of the 22 metropolitan regions at the 2004 regional elections. Here, the UDF won around 11 per cent of the votes, while UMP won 23 per cent.

Even though the process of unification was incomplete, it was still possible to talk of a new party cycle on the Right because the process of fragmentation that characterized the preceding period had been stopped. That process was particularly manifest in the 1990s and could be measured by two indicators. The first was the proliferation of 'other Right' candidates, that is, dissidents not officially included in the dominant coalition. The number of 'other Right' candidates grew from 414 in the legislative election of 1978 to 479 in 1993 and

to 945 — almost double — in 1997. The second indicator can be found in the number of divisions affecting parties of the Right. Since 1991 there have been a series of splits on the French Right (Evans, 2003), hitting the loosely bound UDF particularly hard (Sauger, 2003).[4] Indeed, the split in the UDF was a prerequisite for the subsequent merger of non-Gaullist parties into the UMP.

Incentives to Change: Institutional Imperatives

The chronology of events leading up to the creation of the UMP does not allow a causal link to be established between the result of the first round of the 2002 presidential election and the creation of the new party. In other words, the UMP may have existed without the shock of this particular result. This is because attempts to unite the parties on the Right have a long history and did not begin on 21 April 2002. In fact, the story began in 1988, after the defeat of Jacques Chirac in the presidential election of that year; since then, injunctions, incantations and attempts to forge a united Right have never ceased. To understand the restructuring of the French Right one must start from the familiar foundations, which are the institutions of the Fifth Republic. Given that the Fifth Republic is at once a multi-party and a semi-presidential system that imposes both presidential and parliamentary constraints, parties must have two objectives (Lawson, 1981). At least, two main 'structures of opportunity' (Schlesinger, 1991) exist and party change are determined by the necessity to be adapted to this environmental order (Appleton and Ward, 1993). They must adapt to both the presidential and parliamentary imperatives in the system and devise systems of cooperation at both levels. Obviously there is a structural hierarchy in place, and the presidential imperative predominates. But there is also a degree of autonomy and it would be wrong to understate the effects of the legislative imperative. Be that as it may, the two imperatives are not perfectly connected and it is essential to examine the gap between them, in order to understand the system of cooperation devised by the Right.

Legislative and presidential systems of cooperation

Before the creation of the UMP there were two systems of cooperation between the parties of the Right. For every legislative election since 1981, a coalition of the two main parties, the RPR and the UDF, was formed, even in 1986 when proportional representation was introduced (Duhamel, 1986). The aim was to select the maximum number of joint candidates. Pursuit of that aim led to increasing specialization and institutionalization. Gradually a small team devoted to this work took shape within each party. On the eve of every election the same people met to hand out endorsements and negotiate the number of

official primaries approved by the leadership of the two parties. Knowledge of election data and precedents had made them experts in this form of negotiation. At the same time, rules governing negotiation were established, chief among them being the principle of giving precedence to incumbents, known as *prime au sortant* (Ware, 1996): every incumbent could expect to be renominated without difficulty. However, two new criteria — age and gender — emerged in recent years. The oldest sitting deputies (those over 70) were asked to step aside. But new gender equity legislation (Mossuz-Lavau, 2002) changed old habits even more drastically by requiring parties to field an equal number of male and female candidates. In reality, old habits die hard, particularly within the parties of the Right. In the last parliamentary election, the UMP could not meet the parity objective set by law: only 20% of its candidates were women and the new party suffered a substantial cut (approximately one-third) in its public campaign funding. It is no wonder, then, that the search for potential women candidates for public office and the creation of training to help prepare those women, often with no election experience, to enter politics, became a priority within parties. Along with precedence for incumbents there was a second rule, less well known but also less frequently applied, known as *droit de suite*, or right of succession or continuation. In cases where an incumbent was not running for reelection, the idea was that the electoral district would remain reserved for the party holding it. Within the UDF, a confederative structure, the same principle of respecting the balance of power was followed as candidates were chosen according to the relative weight of each of the party's component parts. These rules reflected a system firmly anchored in a network of *notables* and marked by a desire to maintain the *status quo*. For voters, this type of cooperation served to blur voting choices, or more precisely party labels (the personal appeal of candidates was an element on which voters could base their choice). The electoral coalition generally implied agreement on a minimum joint platform, even if this did not mean across-the-board standardization (of campaign material in particular).

The system of cooperation in legislative elections was thus very old and relatively institutionalized (with its rules, its precedents, its professional negotiators, etc.). And it can be said that there was a system to regulate competition, even though the system was imperfect, as evidenced regularly by dissent, the proliferation of 'other Right' candidacies and the fact that until recently, despite provisions in party statutes, dissidents were rarely disciplined. In any case, the existence and severity of disciplinary measures were subject to widely varying interpretations, and dissidents were generally brought back into the fold once elected.

In the presidential arena the situation was radically different. Only the so-called normative rules (Bailey, 1969) were put in place. They were supposed to

ensure 'loyal' behaviour between partners/rivals. The contests between Jacques Chirac and Raymond Barre in 1988, and between Jacques Chirac and Edouard Balladur in 1995, were thus punctuated by calls for adherence to a code of conduct, which were of course violated regularly. Beyond those fragile normative rules, no real system of cooperation existed. Deals were clearly based on the alliances observed but those deals were most often the result of informal negotiations, flowing largely from personal relationships. In any case, the pattern of defections and alliances could not be viewed exclusively in party terms: in 1988 as in 1995, party divisions did not explain entirely how the contest was organized. In 1988, prominent UDF members supported Jacques Chirac as early as the first round, and some Gaullists formed an association backing Raymond Barre (Legavre, 1990). In 1995, the competition was even more opaque in that both candidates were from the RPR (Haegel, 1995). In 2002, the candidates were the clearest reflection yet of party divisions but analysis of their support revealed a much more complex picture in as much as a significant portion of UDF and DL parliamentarians had decided to back Jacques Chirac as early as the first round.[5] Considering the Right's inability to adapt its organization to the logic of the presidential contest, it can be argued that the French Right was not totally 'presidentialized'. The case of the RPR perfectly exemplifies this argument: the party has always been reluctant to implement rules relating to the selection of a presidential candidate on the grounds of its belief in the need for a direct and personal link between the President and the nation.

The two restructuring models

The defeat of Jacques Chirac in the presidential election of 1988 ushered in a period of internal challenges to his leadership. It also raised among the parties of the Right the question of how best to organize competition for the presidency in the context of the National Front's increasing success. Dysfunctions, or at least what were perceived as such, motivated change, in order to avoid division. In simple terms, two types of solution were considered: holding primaries in order to select a joint presidential candidate, or building a structure common to all parties of the Right. Each of those options was based on one of the two aforementioned systems of cooperation.

   The first solution consisted in reorganizing the presidential contest, in other words fixing what was not working. Debate over the candidate nomination process referred back to the institutional foundations of the presidency (Lagroye, 1992).[6] The primaries were presented as means of continuing the institutional legacy of General de Gaulle, who in 1962 had tried to broaden the popular base of the presidency. In fact, the idea of primaries was first raised in November 1989 by Charles Pasqua, then became a proposal drawn up in June

1990 by a group calling itself *L'Association des primaires à la française*, and then a charter adopted in June 1991 by the *Union Pour la France* (UPF), a structure set up to coordinate the UDF and the RPR. Enjoying a not inconsiderable lifespan — from 1988 to 1994, almost the length of a presidential term of office — even if it surfaced only sporadically, the issue of primaries raised three points of contention. The first concerned defining the population that would take part in the process of selecting a joint candidate. The original text called for parity between elected representatives and voters, that is, a single electoral college. This idea was contested by the UDF which, owing to its local power base, favoured limiting participation to elected representatives. The second point of contention was the appointment of officials who would monitor procedures and validate results. The third point concerned the procedure in the event of an early presidential election, and it was over this point that the main rift between the UDF and RPR occurred in November 1994.[7]

The second solution posited that the restructuring of the Right should be based on what worked, namely the legislative system of cooperation. It was on that foundation, and therefore principally with members of the National Assembly, that more solid joint structures (initially confederative (Balladur, 1988) then organic (Balladur, 1999)) were to be erected, of a less improvised nature than the electoral coalitions formed in the past. This approach had been advocated since 1988 by Edouard Balladur and been taken up in 1993 by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. After the defeat of the Right in the legislative election of 1997, a first attempt was launched, beginning with the creation of a joint parliamentary committee followed by the establishment of a confederative structure, *L'Alliance,* founded in May 1998. This was indeed a centralized[8] and confederative initiative based on a revolving chairmanship, and respecting the proportional representation of the founding parties in collective bodies.[9] Its failure soon became evident in the clear disenchantment resulting first, in October 1998, in the election of Christian Poncelet (RPR) over René Monory (UDF) as Speaker of the Senate, and then in the decision of the UDF to run candidates against the RPR/DL list in the European elections of 1999. A second attempt was made with the launch of *Alternance 2002*, rechristened *Union en Mouvement* (UEM). Contrary to the previous initiative, it did not present itself as a system of coordination at the top, instead it promoted the idea of a *rapprochement* 'from the bottom up' and a decentralized structure. Thus a call for unity in *Le Figaro* on 24 November 2000, signed by 364 of the 462 right-of-centre parliamentarians (including over half of the UDF caucus), extolled the 'grass-roots Republic' and the 'secret of unity' which had allowed 'the national opposition to be the local majority in many regions, departments and towns for the past twenty years', and pointed the finger at senior party officials, arguing that political wisdom was to be found 'beyond Paris ring road'.

The logic of UMP's birth

To understand the logic of UMP's birth, one must answer two questions: On what model was the UMP built? Why did a merger occur in 2002, whereas attempts to forge a united Right prior to this time failed, despite repeated efforts?

The creation of the UMP occurred at the intersection of the legislative and presidential imperatives (De Bujadoux and Gambotti, 2003). The main evidence for this argument is related to the role of agency in the creation of the UMP. The UMP was largely the work of Jérôme Monod. Chirac's friend and adviser, Monod was the former 'secrétaire général' of the RPR in 1976 and CEO of the 'Lyonnaise des Eaux' company. He joined Chirac's team at the Elysée in 2000 with the task of setting up or maintaining the President's networks. Monod was the key element behind the scenes, but on the stage two other groups were also instrumental. The association *Dialogue et Initiative* was founded in 1999 by four members of Alain Juppé's: Michel Barnier and Dominique Perben (RPR), Jacques Barrot (UDF) and Jean-Pierre Raffarin (DL). Their aim was to promote a common platform for Chirac's candidacy at the 2002 presidential election. Another association *Alternance 2002* was created by three rank-and-file deputies, Dominique Bussereau (DL), Renaud Dutreil (UDF) and Hervé Gaymard (RPR). This initiative was part of a bottom-up process. It was designed to encourage a new generation of political leaders and emphasized a local system of cooperation.

Against this background, why did a merger occur in 2002? The incentive to bring about change was closely linked to the Right's 1997 electoral defeat — and it might be remembered that defeat is a standard factor that brings about party change (Harmel and Janda, 1994). This defeat put Chirac's leadership under pressure. As a result, he had to widen his base of political support, not only because every president has to do so but because his authority over the Right had diminished more by the negative impact of the failed dissolution than by the charges of corruption that were levelled against him. Paradoxically, 1997 was such a rout in the legislative field that it offered the necessity and the opportunity for relevant changes. In short, the 1997 defeat was so bad that it brought about a demand for Chirac's authority to be restored and it made Chirac take the issue of reforming the Right more seriously. What is more, in order to do so, he could no longer rely, as before, solely on the RPR. Divisions between '*chiraquiens*' and '*balladuriens*', Juppé's failure as Prime Minister and the election of the '*non chiraquien*' Séguin at the head of the party meant that the RPR could only be part of Chirac's strategy.

The result of the first round of the 2002 presidential election needs to be placed in this wider context. What is clear is that from an electoral standpoint

(Chiche and Dupoirier, 2003) Chirac's poor performance in the first round of the presidential election was more a function of the success of the Extreme Right, rather than the proliferation of candidates on the mainstream Right. So, there is no doubt that Chirac's score in the first round of the 2002 election was mediocre: he received 5,386,000 votes, barely more than he received in his first try for the presidency in 1981, and less than he received in 1988 and 1995.[10] Moreover, at the first ballot of the 2002 presidential election, Jacques Chirac was running against four other right-wing candidates: Alain Madelin, the DL candidate, representing the free-market stream, François Bayrou, the UDF or centrist candidate, Christine Boutin, a UDF member of the National Assembly, representing the conservative Catholic stream and Corine Lepage, a former Minister of the Environment in the Juppé government, a right-of-centre environmentalist. Even so, despite his poor performance and the proliferation of candidates, Chirac was able to win a larger share of the total vote of the mainstream Right than in previous presidential elections. In other words, while the defeat of Lionel Jospin could be seen as an effect of the proliferation of candidates on the Left (Jaffré, 2003), the same phenomenon did not occur on the Right. In this context, the first round of the 2002 presidential election showed that Chirac was now the undisputed leader of the mainstream Right, which encouraged the formation of the UMP immediately after the first round of the election.

Organizational Changes

From an institutional standpoint, changes such as the '*quinquennat*' and the reversal of the electoral calendar whereby the presidential election precedes the legislative election, reinforce the connection between presidential and legislative imperatives of the system. All the same, the UMP has not yet succeeded in connecting these two imperatives insofar as it has yet to resolve the question of how the party's presidential candidate is to be selected. Until this issue is resolved, the UMP cannot be considered to be fully institutionalized. Moreover, not only has the issue yet to be resolved, it has not even been addressed. The party statutes make no mention of the procedure for selecting a presidential candidate. This omission is indicative of the importance and difficulty of the issue. In addition, the rivalry between Alain Juppé and Nicolas Sarkozy is so manifest that an exceptional measure was adopted concerning the election of the UMP chairman. In theory, the chairman and his team are to be elected for 4 years, but, at the demand of Sarkozy, the initial term was reduced to 2 years coinciding with the founding period. This means that another election must be held in 2004, making the leadership of the party a 'live' issue once again.

In view of the failure to resolve such questions, one could reasonably argue that nothing has really changed and that there is no significant difference between the UMP and the coalitions previously fashioned, under various labels, by the RPR and the UDF.[11] At this early stage of the UMP's existence, much remains uncertain and only the boldest would try to predict the future. All the same, it is not true that nothing has really changed: some elements have already changed and others may be in the process of changing. It is those actual and potential changes that we will examine now.

What has changed already

The coalitions formed by the RPR and the UDF were exclusively systems of cooperation aimed at achieving electoral objectives. The UMP is more than that because it is based on a joint parliamentary caucus. This point is crucial in that it has financial consequences. The law provides for public campaign funding to be distributed to organizations running candidates based on two criteria: the number of votes received by the party in the first round, and the number of sitting members in its parliamentary caucus.[12] Formerly candidates ran under two banners (the coalition's and their own party's) and, more importantly, formed separate parliamentary groups once elected; public funding was therefore allotted to each component of the coalition. Now that the UMP is the only publicly displayed banner, there is a single caucus and public funding goes to the UMP and not to its founding components (the former parties). In other words, the party merger was made possible by financial centralization. This aspect of the merger is essential if one recalls that, for instance, there was no financial centralization in the former UDF, a confederation, and each component had its own budget. To be convinced of the importance of this aspect, one need only measure the efforts made by UMP promoters to create a joint parliamentary caucus. After the first round of the presidential election a small team was set up to persuade each sitting member personally to adopt the UMP label. The team called candidates systematically to ask them to register with the prefecture under the UMP banner, and to send a duplicate of the registration to Party Headquarters so that real control could be exercised. At the same time, it offered candidates, if necessary, an advance of 10,000 towards their campaign expenses.

What is in the process of changing

While the merger was brought about through financial centralization, it became necessary to share party positions. Responsibilities within the

organization had to be distributed among representatives of the different components of the new party. The inherent difficulty of such a task is evident and manifested in the case of the UMP by the fact that it took over 1 year to complete. Only then was the list of the heads of the federations made public and officials at the constituency level elected.[13]

The balance of power within the UMP clearly favours the former RPR. The dominance of the RPR can be seen in several respects. Over half of the deputies are from the RPR, approximately 20 per cent from the UDF and 15 per cent from DL. In terms of party members the RPR's hegemony is even more pronounced since it was the only organization on the Right that, under the rather undemanding French criteria, could boast a substantial number of party members. Today the UMP claims some 130,000 members and acknowledges that roughly two-thirds are ex-RPR. Turning to the party bureaucracy, some 120 people are on the permanent staff at UMP headquarters. A sizeable number of them were members of Chirac's presidential campaign staff and over half had already worked for the RPR, but a good many, mainly young people, had been recruited specifically for the campaign and stayed on to staff the administrative structures of the new organization. And finally, the UMP leadership is composed of the triumvirate of Alain Juppé, former RPR party chairman, mayor of Bordeaux and former Prime Minister, Jean-Claude Gaudin (ex-DL), Mayor of Marseilles, and Douste-Blazy (ex-UDF), Mayor of Toulouse.

But although the supremacy of the former RPR is evident, the merger imperative made it necessary to share positions. Two principles were apparently applied. At the local level the existing balance of power was, on the whole, respected: an area where one of the former parties was dominant was represented within the UMP by someone originally from that same party. In other words, a territorial division according to the former component parties was applied, often causing considerable tension and inevitable frustration. At the national level, positions were distributed on a different principle, as evidenced by the composition of the new 'Bureau Politique', the party national executive (20 June, 2003). Thirty of the 80-odd members of that body were elected by the 1,500 members of the National Council. In that first election there was no actual contest: a carefully negotiated single list was put to a vote. That list applied the twin principles of parity and representation of the different ideological streams. The principle of gender parity required by law for the selection of candidates was adopted voluntarily within the party framework. The UMP Political Office was thus staffed by an equal number of men and women. But the principle of representing the various political leanings within the new party was also followed by drawing up the list and involved extensive bargaining. The political sympathies represented — or 'sensibilities', to use the official parlance — included not only those of the former component

parties (RPR, DL and UDF) but also those of the teams attached to individual leaders (the people around Nicolas Sarkozy, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, etc.) and the most clearly defined ideological streams (such as the sovereignist or free-market elements). This distribution of party positions at the national level immediately raises the question of the introduction of pluralism, a potential change connected with the establishment of the UMP.

What may change or could have changed

The idea of creating a single party was based on the realization that ideological differences on the Right were not reflected in party divisions. The ideological transformation of the political stream claiming to follow the Gaullist tradition had indeed largely blurred the lines between the two main components of the French Right (Rémond, 1981). The neoconservative shift of the RPR beginning in 1981 (Baudouin, 1990, 1983), followed by its more difficult acceptance of European integration, brought the UDF and the RPR closer together ideologically. But this does not mean that all differences on the Right had disappeared. It would be more accurate to say that differences still existed but were not perfectly reflected by party fragmentation (Chiche *et al.*, 2002). For example, there were political figures on the Right who had largely embraced economic liberalism, but not all belonged to the same party. Merging a set of components marked by different party histories, cultures and a certain ideological heterogeneity, necessitated UMP leaders to find a way to organize that diversity and to manufacture homogeneity. Two types of solutions were considered: the first was to organize the plurality along territorial — more specifically, regional — lines. Urging greater decentralization, a certain number of leaders of the Right, among them Jean-Pierre Raffarin, favoured regionalizing party structures and activities to the extent of developing different programs for each region. This idea, a departure from the RPR's very centralized way of operating, was inspired by the structure of parties such as the German CDU. The other solution involved finding a way to represent ideological pluralism within the various bodies of the new organization. This solution was enshrined in the party statutes, 'movements', in the terminology adopted, representing 'the diversity of political, historical, philosophical and social sensibilities that drive French politics and compose the UMP' (article 15). To be recognized, a 'movement' had to be endorsed by at least 10 parliamentarians from different departments (mirroring the conditions for presidential candidacy) and receive 10 per cent of votes cast at the party conference (article 16).

   Rightly characterized as a sea change in the party culture of the Right, an operating structure based on ideological streams is very unlikely to be

implemented even though it is contained in the UMP statutes. The conference held to institute these 'movements' was adjourned by Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who feared public exposure of divisions within the governing party, and Nicolas Sarkozy, who was opposed from the outset to an initiative inconsistent with his strategy of rallying support beyond the internal ideological divisions of the Right. This introduction in the party statutes of an operating principle incorporating the different ideological streams would have represented one of the primary innovations of this organization because it was, in many respects, foreign to the traditional organizational culture of the Right, as was the difficulty of performing the graft attests. But to what extent can one say that the French organizations of the Right were resistant to party pluralism? In the case of the UDF, managing pluralism was certainly a basic tenet of the organization. But its very status as a confederation meant that accommodating the different ideological components was a precondition of its existence (cf. *supra*) and, for the rest, party regulation functioned more by compromise and backroom arrangement than through public and institutionalized debate. As for the RPR, its attachment to a plebiscite mentality, celebration of party discipline and unanimity and personalization of authority characterize a party model (Panebianco, 1988) little inclined towards pluralism and debate. In recent years, it is true that there has been pressure within the RPR to institutionalize pluralism. At the party conference of February 1990, a motion was put to vote allowing the movement led by Charles Pasqua and Philippe Séguin to prove its support within the party. While this first manifestation of pluralism reflected a personal rivalry between party figures, it also demonstrated ideological differences.[14] But resistance to the institution of pluralism could be seen in the subsequent vote of confidence called by Jacques Chirac himself, and by the refusal of Alain Juppé to organize the party by ideological streams. The episode of February 1990 therefore looks more like an exception than a starting point. Indeed, the motions put forward at the next party conference were no longer structured horizontally around ideas, but according to a bottom/top opposition (the party base against the executive). It could be said that the absence of pluralism in the UDF resulted from the lack of publicity given to debate and negotiation, while at the RPR it was due to the promotion of unity and deference to authority. Today, although pluralism has yet to be institutionalized, the different ideological movements have nevertheless gained a certain visibility. Two streams are truly organized within the party framework: the 'sovereignist' movement led by Nicolas Dupont–Aignan, a former RPR member who followed Charles Pasqua to the RPF, has formed an association, *Debout la République*, aimed at 'promoting Gaullist values', while the free-market stream boasts several structures, including clubs and associations (*La Droite Libre*), as well as but also informal parliamentary groups. Both of these streams ran candidates in the election for the party

executive in November 2002 and are recognized as 'sensibilities' to be represented.[15]

Conclusion

In the first 2 years of its existence the UMP has been put to test. The initial project was to unify the right, and adapt to the presidential logic of the system. By April 2004, these objectives had yet to be reached.

At the level of the party system, the purpose was indeed to unify the right. This process is incomplete insofar as the UDF is still there and challenges the UMP's supremacy. From this viewpoint, the UDF's result at the 2004 regional election has to be analysed cautiously. On the one hand, UDF candidates failed to outpoll the UMP and, most importantly of all, François Bayrou himself did not do as well as he had hoped in Aquitaine. Consequently, this result would weaken its leadership. On the other, the UMP's claim to represent the totality of the right was seriously challenged, even though the real test would occur not at second-order election but at the next legislative election (Cole, 2003, 13). Furthermore, one must keep in mind the fact that in 2002 the overwhelming majority of UDF deputies were elected in constituencies where they did not face a UMP challenger (Ponceyri, 2002) and that UMP could be tempted not to do the same at the next legislative election.

At the intra-party level, the merger was justified by declining ideological differences. This trend is not specific to France, since it has occurred across Europe (Delwit, 2003), but in the French case it raises the question of the trivialization of Gaullism. The swing towards economic liberalism by a putative Gaullist party previously known for favouring greater state intervention in the economy, and the risky choice of Europe by the former RPR leaders, despite their party's marked wariness regarding the mechanisms of European integration, both served to accelerate the movement. In this context, the merger is causing tensions, but most of all it means that the party has to find a way to organize intra-party pluralism (institutionalization of different ideological streams, introduction of internal debate, etc.) in the face of the right-wing party culture that heretofore was unfamiliar with public expressions of diversity. The success of the dual task of allowing pluralism and forging unity must, in the end, be measured by the new party's ability to mould and accommodate its founding and now rallying ideological elements.

Notes

1 The last attempt to change the name of the RPR was made by Philippe Séguin when he was chairman of the party. In January 1998, he proposed reviving the name of the party founded in 1947 by de Gaulle, the RPF, but he gave up the idea in the face of party members' support for the name chosen by Jacques Chirac.

2 The name '*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*' was adopted by a vote of 83.73 per cent, against 11.48 per cent for '*Union populaire*'. The emblem adopted (82.34 per cent) was a white oak on a blue and red background.

3 One must remember that in the history of the French Right, the terms *populaire* and *peuple* were used on several occasions: by the Fascist Right with the creation in the 1930s of the *Parti Populaire Français* of Doriot, by the Christian Democratic stream with the post-war creation of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) and by the Gaullist movement with the creation in 1947 of the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF).

4 Under the banner ''*Combat pour les valeurs*'', an association led by Philippe de Villiers was created in 1991 within the UDF. In 1994 that association became a party, the *Mouvement Pour la France* (MPF). In 1998, Charles Million, elected president of the Rhône–Alpes region with the support of the National Front, created *La Droite*, which a year later became *La Droite Libérale et Chrétienne* (DLC). That same year, the conservative *Parti Républicain* (PR), led by Alain Madelin, renamed itself *Démocratie Libérale* (DL) and split with the UDF. In 1999, Charles Pasqua founded the RPF with Philippe de Villiers; in the European elections it supplanted the RPR/DL candidate list headed by Nicolas Sarkozy.

5 109 UDF and DL parliamentarians, according to press reports, called for voters to support Jacques Chirac in the first round (*Le Figaro*: 27 February, 2002).

6 This line of argument was very prominent in internal RPR documents, which stated that: 'in the institutions of the Fifth Republic, pride of place among the different ballots belongs to the presidential election. A united opposition can therefore become a reality only if significant progress is made immediately in preparing for that major election. That is why the RPR believes that devising a procedure allowing opposition parties to support a joint candidate, nominated directly by the voters themselves, is a priority'. The motion was adopted by the National Council on 5 May 1990.

7 The failing health of François Mitterrand made that a distinct possibility.

8 The Alliance was launched on 14 May 1998 by Philippe Séguin (RPR), François Léotard (UDF) and Alain Madelin (DL).

9 The only departure from the confederative rule, as in the UDF, is the recognition of direct memberships.

10 He had received 5,138,569 votes in 1981, 5, 884,000 votes in 1988, and 6,098,000 votes in 1995.

11 '*Union pour une Nouvelle Majorité*' in 1981, '*Union du Rassemblement et du centre*' (URC) in 1988, '*Union Pour la France*' (UPF) in 1993.

12 As provided by law, funding is based on the number of votes polled in the first round of the legislative election (at €1.66 per vote) and on the number of deputies elected (with each deputy bringing in €43,398 per year).

13 Each departmental federation has a Departmental Secretary, appointed by the Political Office at the suggestion of the party chairman, after consultation with all parliamentarians from the department, and a departmental committee composed of individuals elected by party members and ex officio members.

14 The ideological differences underlying internal divisions revolve around free-market liberalism, Europe and party organization. With regard to the party membership, the only data available are from the survey conducted in February 1990: of representatives who voted for the Pasqua–Séguin motion and those who supported the Juppé motion. The survey suggests that opposition between ideological streams is indeed rooted in political divisions over electoral alliance strategies, party identity and the direction of the RPR (Habert, 1991).

15 Against Alain Juppé, who received 79.42 per cent of votes cast (37,822), Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, leader of the Sovereignist' Movement within the UMP, polled 14.91 per cent and Rachid Kaci ex-DL, head of the association '*La Droite libre*', won 3.17 per cent; two other candidates had significantly lower scores.

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