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2, bd Gabriel - BP 26611 - F-21066 Dijon cedex - Tél. 03 80 39 54 30 - Fax 03 80 39 54 43
Courrier électronique : secretariat.latec@u-bourgogne.fr

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Extremism and monomania

Pierre SALMON*

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**LATEC*
e-mail : pierresalmon@compuserve.com

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Résumé

Le papier définit un extrémiste comme un individu dont le point idéal dans l'espace des questions politiques est extrême le long d'une des dimensions et un "monomaniaque" (sans connotation péjorative) comme un individu aux yeux duquel une dimension a plus de poids, est plus "saillante", que les autres. Cette différence de saillance s'exprime dans la théorie spatiale du vote par des courbes d'indifférence en forme d'ellipse. En raisonnant dans le cadre de cette théorie, il est montré que les monomaniaques, alors même qu'ils ne sont pas nécessairement aussi des extrémistes, peuvent facilement être incités par des politiciens extrémistes à former ou à soutenir des coalitions extrémistes. Ce phénomène permet de rendre compte de certaines des caractéristiques observables des mouvements extrémistes. Il a aussi des implications quant à l'interprétation à donner aux résultats d'enquêtes, quant au mécanisme permettant aux partisans de coalitions extrémistes de sincèrement ne pas se sentir responsables de tout ce que font ces coalitions, enfin quant à l'évolution des jugements sur la culpabilité et l'innocence quand la saillance attribuée rétrospectivement aux différentes dimensions change au cours du temps, comme cela a été le cas en France depuis la guerre pour certains aspects du régime de Vichy.

Abstract

The paper defines an extremist as an individual whose ideal point in the issue space is extreme in some dimension, and a "monomaniac" (no derogatory connotation) as an individual for whom one issue is given more weight, has greater "salience", than the others. This difference in salience is reflected in the spatial theory of voting by indifference curves taking the form of ellipses. Using this theoretical framework, it is showed that monomaniacs, even though they are not necessarily also extremists, can easily be induced by extremist politicians to form or support extremist coalitions. This phenomenon can account for a number of the observed characteristics of extremist movements. It also has implications on the questions of how the results of surveys should be interpreted, of why members or supporters of extremist coalitions can sincerely not feel responsible for some of the deeds of these coalitions, and of what may happen to social judgments of guilt and innocence when the salience of issues, as perceived in retrospect by society, changes in the course of time - as has been the case in postwar France with regard to some aspects of the Vichy regime.

Mots-clefs: théorie spatiale du vote, extrémisme, coalitions, saillance
Keywords: spatial theory of voting, extremism, coalitions, salience

JEL: D72

1. Introduction

Although the literature on political extremism tends to be structured around monographical descriptions of national experiences, a number of interesting regularities do emerge. I will treat as established facts the following ones. First, successful extremist movements and politicians (as well, of course, as extremist governments) generally stress several issues that are only loosely connected.[1] Second, these movements or politicians often - but by no means always - adopt extremist positions on most or all of these issues. Third, when polled, supporters of extremist movements or politicians typically express *moderate views* on many issues.[2] Fourth, many supporters of *moderate parties* hold views or adopt positions that are extremist with regard to some issues. This is especially true in countries, such as the United States or Britain, in which there is no successful extremist party, but it can also be observed in countries in which one such party exists and defends these views.[3] Fifth, it is often the case that people who support an extremist movement sincerely do not feel responsible for most of the positions adopted by this movement. This extends to the retrospective sentiments of many people with regard to their or others' past support of extremist movements, governments or regimes. Sixth, assessments of extremism vary over time. This applies in particular to retrospective assessments.[4]

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1 The heterogeneity of many large-scale extremist movements not in power as well as of support for extremist regimes such as Mussolini's, Hitler's or Vichy, has been observed by many authors. In the case of France, this applies to the fascist or quasi-fascist impressive Croix de Feu league in the thirties (Passmore, 1997), to the Vichy regime in 1940-44 (see the excellent commented bibliography at the end of the new, 1997, French edition of Paxton, 1972), and to Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National more recently (see Mayer and Perrineau, 1989; Mayer, 1996, 1999). Thus, according to Alain de Benoist, one of the founders of the "Nouvelle Droite", the Front National is "a national-populist party which, on a deep level, presents itself as a true ideological patchwork" (cf. Chebel d'Appollonia, 1988, p. 392 of the 1996 edition). On the Liberal Party of Austria under Jörg Haider, see Moreau (1998, pp. 63, 67). On nazism in Germany, see Kershaw (1992), Ayçoberry (1998). On the radical right in Israel, see Sprinzak (1993).

2 An illustration of an extremist position adopted by a party but not by most of its members is provided by the Flemish Bloc, in respect both of the self-location at the extreme right and of the question of Flemish nationalism (De Witte and Scheepers, 1998, pp. 106-107). For a comparison of the positions of supporters of the Front national and of supporters of other parties on a number of issues, see Mayer (1996), Mayer and Perrineau (1989), Safran (1993).

3 In addition the references given in the last sentence of footnote 2, see, e.g., Messina (1989), Falter and Schumann (1988), and Zimmermann and Saafeld (1993, pp. 72-73).

4 Points 4, 5 and 6 are discussed in Section 4.

This paper is an attempt to account for these "facts" and a few others. They clearly suggest, it seems to me, that we should be careful to distinguish extremist *views*, extremist *politicians* and extremist *supporters*. Extremist views are widespread and definitely not the privilege of extremist politicians or of their supporters. Extremist politicians can be assumed here as elsewhere to express views or advocate policies for the purpose of getting support rather than because they share themselves all the views that they defend or believe in all the policies that they recommend. To be precise, my assumption with regard to extremist politicians is that they maximize support (electoral or other) in a short run perspective, not necessarily at the same time the long-run probability of getting into power.[5] The major assumption made in the paper, however, concerns neither extremist views, nor extremist politicians but the extremist individuals who support (not necessarily electorally) extremist politicians. I will assume that most of these individuals are "monomaniac extremists" (no derogatory intention). In Section 2, I will elaborate on this characterization, using for that purpose concepts borrowed from the spatial theory of voting, in particular the concept of salience. The section will also include a discussion of types that cannot be characterized as monomaniac extremists but who play a role in the story that follows.

What is interesting in monomaniac extremists is the way they can be aggregated into coalitions.[6] I read the descriptive evidence as consistent with the view that, inasmuch as they have a minimum of success (the case of what is called in French "groupuscules" is another matter), extremist movements and politicians are typically supported, at least in a first phase, by coalitions of individuals who deserve to be called (non-derogatorily) monomaniac extremists. Section 3 is devoted to the study of these coalitions and others that are similar in some respects. The fact that many extremist movements, governments or regimes are based on coalitions of monomaniac extremists

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5 The assumption is a bit ackward. It is ill-suited to conventional theoretical settings. But it fares better if some room is left for genuine uncertainty. The extremist politicians I have in mind are motivated by the hope that some unforeseen circumstances, generating a political collapse or earthquake, will offer them an occasion to get into power.

6 For a previous analysis of how "single-issue" voters can be aggregated into coalitions whose positions are far from the center, see Congleton (1991). His Figure 2 is close to Figure 3 below. A somewhat similar diagram can be found in Tullock (1970).

has noteworthy consequences, some of which I will consider in Section 4. Section 5 is a brief conclusion.

Section 2. Monomaniac extremists and their brethrens

I do not really need a justification for the assumption that extremists are often monomaniacs (no pejorative intention in the term). First, I could point to historical examples and widespread opinion. Second, "often" is not "always", and the analysis presented in this paper can very well be asserted to be relevant only when extremists are monomaniacs.

I will however provide an interpretation of monomaniac extremism, which is the following. Extremist *policies* are generally unreasonable because there is so much uncertainty about the indirect effects of policies that the reasonable way to act at the level of society is in the form of what Popper (1945) called piecemeal social engineering: a little step forward in one direction, based on a little conjecture, the step maintained if the conjecture is corroborated, cancelled if it (the conjecture) is refuted. But there are exceptions to the unreasonableness of extremist policies. Uncertainty about the effects of policies may be mitigated by the knowledge of what has obtained in the past or is currently obtaining in other countries. When this is so, radical or revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary) policies may become quite reasonable. Such policies may also be reasonable when the status quo is vanishing or becoming unbearable anyway, when all the alternatives, including the status quo, are equally radical and risky, or when deontological (i.e., non-consequential) considerations dominate.

Even in the case of extremist policies that are unreasonable, this does not extend to the acts of advocating or supporting them. These acts can merely express protest, suggest the direction of action, or aim at putting unheeded issues on the political agenda. All of this can be quite reasonable. In the remainder of this paper, however, I assume "sincere" extremism - "sincere" meaning here both "non-strategic" and "non-merely expressive".[7]

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7 Congleton (1991) discusses *strategic* single-issue voting, that is when "a single-interest voter casts his vote *as if* he were a zealot whose objective function contains only a single argument" (p. 40). Even though I agree with Congleton that such behavior plays a role in all elections, I assume it away nonetheless.

Under that assumption, it seems to me that the main mechanisms which may transform otherwise sensible persons into sincere extremists is those that involve a drastic narrowing of these persons' vision or concerns. Sometimes this narrowing verges on the pathological, implying a distorted and generally ominous perception of one dimension of the world's state, evolution, or future (like when everything is ascribed to a conspiracy). Often, though, and more importantly, the narrowing itself is *perfectly rational*. People are concerned with one issue only because that issue is truly essential to their life, or so they think - perhaps unwisely but not irrationally.[8] Now, the singleness of dimension or concern allows one to overcome the sobering effects of uncertainty: only the consequences of action along the dimension concerned are perceived as relevant and their prediction may be straightforward. This, then, makes extremism rational. If the other consequences of the action were equally relevant, then the fact that they are necessarily uncertain would dissuade one to favor an extremist policy, or at least would induce one to favor an extremist policy only *tentatively*. In my terminology, one would not be a monomaniac extremist, and most likely not an extremist at all.

A monomaniac extremist in a two-issue space is represented in Figure 1. To define extremism, I must first characterize moderation. Point R is the ideal position of a (supposedly homogeneous) moderate party, coalition or government - say, the "moderate right".[9] Assuming that the two issues are independent or separable and perceived as such, units along the two dimensions are chosen so that, first, the position of the moderate right appears close to the center of the political spectrum (represented by the origin) and, second, any departure from R has the same effect on utility whatever its direction - that is, indifference or iso-preference curves are circles centered on R (the

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8 Nozick (1997, p. 297) also stresses "non-compromising" as a feature of extremism but he presents it as "flowing quite naturally" from another feature - "the view of opponents as evil". This pulls the interpretation of extremism toward individually pathological behavior, which seems to me less interesting than centering it on individual behavior of a more or less rational or normal type. In any case, I do without Nozick's assumption.

9 The figures and the reasoning apply in principle both to left-wing and right-wing extremisms. However, Gordon Tullock seems to be right when he observes (private conversation) that people who refer to political extremism almost always think of right-wing extremism. All the factual literature cited here refers to right-wing extremism and I have found some difficulty in thinking of left-wing extremist coalitions as equally plausible as right-wing ones. This certainly suggests the existence of some structural, permanent, differences between the two extremisms but I will not try to analyze them here.

units being such that indifference or iso-preference between two points depends only on the "euclidian distance" between these points and the ideal point R).

Now that moderation has been defined, we can see why, in Figure 1, both point A and the curve drawn around it reflect monomaniac extremism. First, A is an extreme position with regard to issue 2 but not to issue 1. Second, and more importantly, monomaniac extremism is reflected in the form of the indifference or iso-preference curves centered on A (only one is drawn). These curves are ellipses rather circles because the distance between any of their points and A is a "weighted euclidian distance" rather than an euclidian distance *tout court* (see Enelow and Hinich, 1984; Hinich and Munger, 1997). The difference in the weights assigned to issue 1 and to issue 2 reflects a difference in what is called in the literature the *salience* of the two issues. The units in which the two issues are measured have been chosen so that these issues have the same salience for the moderates whose ideal point is R. Then, the shape of the ellipses centered on A expresses the fact that, for our individual, issue 2 is more salient than issue 1. Because the two issues are assumed to be separable, the curves' main axes are horizontal and vertical rather than inclined in one direction of the other.

[Figure 1 about here]

Salience, or, more generally, the set of weights used in the weighted euclidian distance formula, is often considered in the literature to be homogeneous across all individuals. For example, if at a point in time, issue 2 is more salient than issue 1, the indifference curves of all individuals are ellipses whose major axes are horizontal. In contrast to this homogeneity assumption, I assume that salience varies from one individual (or group of individuals) to the other, that is, I assume it to be heterogeneous or *idiosyncratic*.[10]

The individual whose ideal point is A in Figure 1 is a monomaniac extremist because the position of this ideal point is extreme in terms of one issue *and* because the individual considers that issue as the more salient and attaches relatively little importance

10 An assumption also made by Tullock (1970) and Congleton (1991).

to the other one.[11] These two characteristics - of position and of salience - are necessary conditions for one to be a monomaniac extremist. Let me consider now the case of individuals who happen to have only one of the two characteristics. In Figure 1 also, point A' and the ellipse centered on it are meant to represent one such individual. In terms of position (with reference to the moderate position R), the individual concerned is certainly not an extremist. However, in terms of salience this individual, being concerned almost exclusively with issue 2, has something of a monomaniac, at least potentially. Again without pejorative intention, I will call him or her a centrist monomaniac - not so inoffensive a breed, as we shall see.

[Figure 2 about here]

When only the other of the two characteristics is present, we have the case represented in Figure 2. The individual whose ideal point is A (or B) and whose indifference curves have the shape depicted in Figure 2 is an extremist in terms of position (being, say, a fan of Hitler, or an anarcho-syndicalist) but he or she does not attach much importance to that characteristic.[12] What counts in our individual's eyes is the other issue, with regard to which he or she is a moderate. I will call him or her an inconsequential extremist - a sometimes repulsive but generally harmless breed, again as we shall see.

Section 3. Extremist coalitions

Extremist coalitions need not include only extremists, and coalitions of extremists are not always extremist coalitions. The most typical case, however, is when extremist coalitions do include exclusively extremists. I start with this first case and turn briefly to the others afterwards.

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11 In the oral discussion of a previous version of the paper, it was suggested that people could be blind to some dimensions (human rights, say) rather than "monomaniacally" concerned with others (their economic survival, for instance). In a two-issue setting such as the one explored here, there is no difference between the two possibilities but the suggestion is certainly very worth pursuing in a more general setting.

Extremist coalitions of extremists

In Figure 3, I assume two groups of monomaniac extremists, each of them perfectly homogeneous but the two groups different from one another. In one group all individuals have point A as their ideal position and the ellipse centered on A as one of their indifference curves. Members of that group are monomaniac extremists because they favor a combination of policies which is extremist in terms of issue 2 and they assign to that issue a high degree of priority, compared to the one they give to issue 1. In the other group, the situation is the same, except that the ideal point is B instead of A and the most salient issue is issue 1 rather than issue 2.

The two groups can hardly be more different. But this is exactly what makes so easy their inclusion in an extremist coalition. Suppose that a political entrepreneur, interested in maximizing his or her support, comes in and advocates a policy-mix corresponding to point C. At this point an indifference curve of the first group is tangent to one of the second group. From the perspective of a coalition of the two groups, C is a Pareto optimum (i.e., no other point of the issue space exists that could give more utility to one group without giving less utility to the other). Let us assume that the two groups can either support the extremist political entrepreneur placed in C or join a much more moderate coalition whose position is R ("R" standing, say, for "moderate right").[13] In Figure 3, it is clear that they prefer C to R. In other words, although each group is extremist in only one dimension (i.e., with regard to one issue), both groups turn out to support an extremist movement or platform which is extremist in the two dimensions.

[Figure 3 about here]

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12 In *La Recherche*, Proust refers to these higher officials, like Monsieur de Norpois, who, privately, are royalists, but are legitimately trusted by the government as loyal servants of the Republic.

13 To explain why there is not a number of political entrepreneurs offering ideal combinations over the issue space to each homogeneous group of voters, or why only some of these entrepreneurs are considered seriously by voters, one must assume some kind of economies of scale or of scope. In fact the analysis in the text is incomplete in particular in the fact that it does not explain why sometimes extremism is highly fragmented and why in other periods a leader manages to create a relatively encompassing coalition of extremists. I am grateful to Annick Lavelle for stressing this point.

Now, C is not the only point corresponding to an optimum from the perspective of the two groups. Each point of tangency between an indifference curve of the first group and an indifference curve of the second group is an optimum. The locus of these points, which, following the tradition, we can call the contract curve, is the line which in Figure 3 goes from A to B through C. All the points on that line are Pareto optima from the perspective of a coalition between the two groups but not all of them dominate point R. If S, on the contract curve, is also on the indifference curve of group "B" (the group whose ideal point is B) that passes through R, and if similarly T is on the indifference curve of group "A" that also passes through R, only the points of the contract curve which lie between S and T dominate R for both groups (for example, a point situated between A and S would be dominated by R, which means that if the extremist entrepreneur were to chose one such point, group B would prefer to rally the mainstream position R).

Before turning to extremist coalitions that include non extremists, let me stress two features of the model that are apparent from the geometry itself. First, assume that the larger the portion of the contract curve which dominates R, the easier the constitution of a coalition between the two groups of monomaniac extremists. Then, if the moderates whose position is R want to make the coalition of extremists more difficult, they can just move this position R to the North-East in such a way that the distance along the contract curve between S and T gets reduced. In other words, the moderates can move a bit to a position which is less moderate. Of course, this result is fairly obvious. As showed in detail in Kitschelt (1995), the main obstacle to such strategy is its electoral cost in terms of the competition with the other side of the electorate. In all democracies, as showed by Kitschelt, the moderate left and the moderate right both oscillate between platforms that are relatively far from the center, thus leaving little space to their extremist competitors but reducing the probability of winning the election against the other side, and policies that have the inverse characteristics. As Sternhell (1978) notes, in France, except once - in 1940, under particular circumstances - the moderate right has always managed to contain, absorb or disband the waves of "revolutionary right" extremism which have followed one another since 1870.

Second, if the indifference curves were circles, that is, if the two issues were equally salient (both between one another and across individuals and groups), then the contract curve would be the straight broken line drawn, in Figure 3, between A and B. In that case the extremist entrepreneur would have to adopt a platform much less extreme than the one corresponding to C. In other words, a coalition of extremists who have the same positions as the monomaniacs but are not monomaniac extremists would be less extreme than the coalition of monomaniacs depicted in Figure 3. As things are, however, given the shape of the indifference curves as drawn in Figure 3, our extremist entrepreneur has no incentive to move towards R.

I must also stress again that support should not be seen as exclusively electoral. For instance, one of the two groups of Figure 3 could consist of a subset of activists or party members and the other group of a subset of voters. This could explain for instance that the leaders of the contemporary extreme right in France (Jean-Marie Le Pen in particular) indulge from time to time in coded anti-semitic allusions that are probably counter-productive in electoral terms. Rather than ascribing to the leaders particular anti-semitic preferences (perhaps plausible but besides the point), I interpret this behavior as reflecting the need to please not only voters but also party activists coming originally from particularly extreme segments of the extreme right. Generally speaking, we can give the "groups" or "individuals" of our model whatever content we like (the army, the church, industrialists, the bureaucracy, or even foreign interests if they can provide significant support). A corollary of this versatility is that the model may be used both in democratic and non-democratic settings.

[Figure 4 about here]

Non-extremist membership of extremist coalitions

As alluded to in Section 2, it is a feature of the model that people or groups whose position is moderate along all dimensions can become quite dangerous in some circumstances. What makes them dangerous is the incentive that they may have to join extremist coalitions. For this to happen, our moderates must be somewhat monomaniac in the sense that they consider one issue as much more salient than the others and are

willing to defend even at a high cost their position with regard to that issue. In Figure 4, I assume that an homogeneous group of individuals have A as an ideal point and an infinitely large family of ellipses centered on A, similar to the one drawn, as their indifference curves. They treat issue 2 as the most salient. Another group of individuals are monomaniac extremists, treating issue 1 as the most salient. Their ideal point is B and the form of their indifference curves is as drawn. As long as the policy-mix adopted or advocated by the moderate government or coalition corresponds, say, to point R, our first group has no reason to form a coalition with the monomaniac extremists whose ideal point is B. But let me assume that, for some reason, the moderate policy-mix moves to R'. Then a political entrepreneur can offer a platform situated in C (on the contract curve AB) and this will be preferred by our monomaniac centrists to the moderate position R'. As a consequence, monomaniac centrists turn out to support policies that are extremist in terms of issue 1.[14]

Many illustrations of this mechanism come to mind. One is the fact that Hitler found electoral support among voters who normally voted for parties of the center, and more generally the fact that fascism can be interpreted with some degree of plausibility as "an extremism of the center" (see, e.g., Kershaw, Sternhell). In that case, what could motivate the middle classes is their fear of the consequences of the adoption of some economic policies reflected in the move of the mainstream position from R to R'.[15] Another case could be the behavior of the French settlers in Algeria and elsewhere when they felt endangered by independence movements. Lastly, if issue 2 is collectivization, socialization, etc., the "A" group in Figure 4 could well be industrialists of the kind of those who were convinced by Von Papen to support Hitler (one reason for the fact that

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14 Why is the platform proposed by the entrepreneur located at C rather than at another point nearer A on the contract curve AB? One reason might be that the flexibility of the monomaniac extremist group is lower than that of the monomaniac centrist group, and that this pulls the outcome of any implicit and indirect bargaining between the two groups towards the position of the monomaniac extremists (this applies also to the location of equilibrium on the contract curve in Figure 3). One reason for this lack of flexibility, in turn, may be that the entrepreneur deals separately with many groups, the one constraining him or her most being always the "core" group, so to say, whose ideal point is B. If there are more than two groups it is quite likely that delicate problems of equilibrium arise, however.

15 In fact, in the case of pre-war Germany, a violent (and not completely unfounded) fear of communism was probably the most important factor, as argued by Nolte (1987) and many other historians.

Hitler is cited here several times is that he was typically at the head of an extremist coalition in which there were many non-extremists).

[Figure 5 about here]

Extremist membership of non-extremist coalitions

We already saw, in Section 2 and Figure 2, the case of people who have an extreme position on some issue but assign much more weight to another issue with regard to which they are moderates. Within our framework, these people cannot enter extremist coalitions. However, they may form, together with other non-monomaniac extremists, non-extremist coalitions as shown in Figure 5. The result (point C in Figure 5) may be so moderate a combination of policies that it is more moderate than the position R, which we attribute to the moderate coalition. The case confirms that we should be careful not to confuse an individual's position and the position of the movement or coalition that he or she supports. But any elaboration of this point belongs to the consequences of the model, to which I turn now.

4. Consequences

I will consider three consequences.

The need for additional caution in the interpretation of data

An important implication of the foregoing analysis is that one must be very careful in the interpretation of answers to surveys. When people are asked about their preferences or opinions on an issue, we can expect them to answer according to their ideal point, whereas the position of the party, movement or coalition that they support does not as a rule correspond at all to that ideal point. With regard to our usual concerns, however, what counts is support. Thus, we should not draw great comfort from the knowledge that on many issues people supporting an extremist movement may have quite moderate views, nor even that within these supporters no extremist position gets a majority. The last result, for instance, could be the observable outcome of a coalition of dangerous fanatics. Assume that there are five groups of equal size and five issues. Each of the groups has very moderate positions on four of the issues and an

extreme position on the fifth, a different one for each group. The observable implication is that approval of the extreme positions is expressed only by 20 percent of respondents, and, as a consequence the supporters of extremism may well turn out to look more moderate on average than the supporters of moderate coalitions. In addition, of course, as we saw, salience is essential. Without a high degree of salience, an extremist position is harmless, we argued. Thus one should not be unduly alarmed, perhaps, to learn that many supporters of moderate parties or coalitions are extremists on some issues.[16]

Feelings of non-responsibility

The positions of extremist coalitions are not the preferred position of their supporters. In fact, in Figure 3, the individuals whose ideal point is A and who support a program situated in C would pay to have less extremism in regard of the policy they are less concerned with. To be precise, they would give up distance GH in terms of issue 2 (the issue they are mostly concerned with) to get the coalition's position with regard to issue 1 brought down to the moderate level they prefer. As a consequence, there is some reason for them not to feel really responsible for the extreme position which is adopted by the extremist coalition with regard to issue 1. If there had been a vote within the members of the extremist coalition, individuals whose ideal point is A would have voted against issue-1 extremism. This kind of reasoning is of course even more likely on the part of the non-extremist members of the extremist coalition. They can point out that the solution that they favor is particularly moderate on all dimensions. They also would have paid something for extremism to be avoided also along the dimension they are little concerned with.

An additional factor explaining feelings of non-responsibility stems from the fact that efforts to get information and attention are never equally divided among issues. In particular, the utility of information about an issue, and thus, in general, the level of

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16 On average, voters supporting the French Front National are moderate with regard to many issues, economic as well as social ones (see footnote 3). But the fact that supporters of the FN have on average a moderate position on issue X - say, abortion - does not mean that there are not a number of monomaniac extremists on that issue among them and that the platform of the movement will not reflect their presence in the coalition. This heterogeneity within the electoral support of the extremist coalition - rather than a difference between the "mindset" of leaders and that of voters (DeClair, 1999, p. 136) - is,

attention devoted to it are related to the relative salience of that issue. People will pay little attention to most of the issues that have low relative salience for them. When told about the position of the extremist coalition with regard to one such issue, they may express surprise and this surprise may be in large part sincere.

Typically, the major moral or social objections to extremism are focused on some of the dimensions only. Suppose that extremism with regard to issue 1 ("ethnocentrism", say) is the only one which is really objected to. Extremism with regard to issue 2 (protectionism, say) is a matter of indifference or considered as admissible. In other words, from a general social perspective, extremism is measured only along the dimension of issue 1. If this is the social attitude, people whose ideal point in Figure 3 is A will not feel responsible for the issue-1 extremism of the coalition that they support. Since their own form of extremism is not questioned, they may well not feel responsible at all. The same kind of sentiment can be expected from the non-extremist individuals whose ideal point in Figure 4 is also labeled A. Only for people whose ideal point is B in either figure will it be difficult to evade responsibility.

Of course, in general, and especially under authoritarian regimes, ideal points, relative salience, feelings, etc. are not observed. What can to a larger extent be observed is support. Thus there will always be some suspicion of those who, after the demise of an extremist regime that they supported, put forward their ideal points to elude any responsibility with regard to that support. Such suspicion is legitimate given the incentives that these persons have. Or, perhaps, responsibility imposes itself for reasons of principle. What I am only saying is that no contradiction between true feelings and revealed acts is necessarily involved in their attitude.

Retrospective assessments varying over time: the case of Vichy

Although it included many people who were not extremists, the regime of Vichy was typically an extremist coalition in the sense given to that expression in this paper. It brought together a number of groups who could be extremists in some respects or centrist in all dimensions but almost always monomaniac in the sense of our model. Each

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I submit, the proper explanation of the observed discrepancy between the priorities stressed by the leadership and those expressed on average by the voters (see also Mayer, 1999, p. 285).

group was concerned with a particular issue, or small set of issues, and more or less unconcerned with the other issues. This, to a large extent, explains a complexity that historians and more generally French opinion are currently discovering or rediscovering. This also accounts for the way responsibilities and relative guilt have been sorted out in retrospect.

What I am interested in is not exactly Vichy but the way the perception of it has changed over time (Rousso, 1987). The discovery of new facts about Vichy is not the main factor of this evolution. Most facts have always been known.[17] New facts about what happened *after* Vichy is another matter. The younger generations in France progressively discover that the values they refer to when they assess responsibilities under Vichy were not those of the generations who judged Vichy and its staff after the war.

Salience is mainly attached today to issues of human rights, the Holocaust, etc. After the war, salience was not associated at all with that type of issues. De Gaulle hardly mentions them, for example, in his *Mémoires*. The main question at the time was that of treason, and collaboration with the enemy, versus patriotism and resistance. This change in salience explains a large part of the uneasiness that many have felt about the recent trial, in Bordeaux, of Maurice Papon. I think that the foregoing theoretical analysis can capture important aspects of the phenomenon involved.

[Figure 6 about here]

Because a large number of Frenchmen could legitimately be charged with a lack of patriotism or some form of complicity with the breach of human rights, only the cases of a small number of individuals whose acts were particularly significant could be submitted to the scrutiny of the courts. These individuals had pushed some line "beyond the limits" of what by necessity had to be tolerated from larger numbers, and this allows us to interpret their behavior in terms of extremism. Since the recent trials and current

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17 This is an exaggeration. The discoveries made in the late sixties or early seventies mostly by foreign historians like Jäckel (1968) and Paxton (1972) should not be underestimated. Still there was a large element of wishful thinking in the interpretations of Vichy that dominated after the war, as well as concerns and criteria quite different from those that prevailed later (Rousso, 1987).

debate in France focus on the part of the French bureaucracy which collaborated with the Nazis to arrest Jews and send them to concentration camps, it is worth examining the kind of extremism, if any, that motivated the bureaucrats concerned. What emerges, quite surprisingly, from recent scholarship is the presence in the higher tiers of the bureaucracy of a genuine and somewhat absurd concern, verging on the obsessional, with safeguarding as much as possible of the sovereignty of the French State over the whole French territory, even or especially when that territory was occupied by German troops (Baruch, 1997).[18] This led some high-level bureaucrats to insist in doing jobs that the Germans were offering to do themselves, and in particular to participate actively in the arrest and deportation of Jews. That, in this case as in some others, collaboration with the Germans was in part inspired by a form of (misguided) patriotism was to a surprisingly large extent accepted by the courts and public opinion after the war. This is clear, it seems to me, from the way a senior official of the French police, René Bousquet, involved at a high level in the massive arrest and deportation of Jews, was treated when his case came for the first time to trial, in 1949. In Figure 6, Bousquet can be placed in the box labeled "Bousquet-like Vichy bureaucrats", whose location reflects an uncertain net effect of collaboration with and resistance to the Germans and a more secure net outcome in terms of breach of human rights. Given the 1950 guilt frontier, and even though the main facts were known (Conan and Rousso, 1994, p. 28), he was found not guilty.

Almost two generations later, though - thanks to a few newly revealed facts, but mainly because in the meanwhile the criteria had changed, and despite the efforts of the then President - a second trial was started (in 1991), and Bousquet would certainly have been sentenced heavily if he had not been shot (in 1993). Similarly, to his undoubtedly sincere surprise, Maurice Papon - appointed "Compagnon de la Libération" and prefect by De Gaulle himself in 1945, later budget minister under Raymond Barre as prime minister - was prosecuted in 1997-1998 for deeds similar to those Bousquet was charged with in his second trial.[19] In both cases, what allowed the episodes to be

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18 This interpretation of the concerns of bureaucrats in terms of issues is compatible with an interpretation of them in terms of interests along the line of Breton and Wintrobe (1986).

19 See Paxton (1999).

revisited in this way is a profound change in society's views about what is extreme, and thus intolerable, behavior. I will not attempt to explain the change itself.[20] It is depicted, in Figure 6, in the form of two "(beyond-limits) guilt frontiers" that refer somewhat arbitrarily to years 1950 and 1980 and conspire to explain the fate of some Vichy bureaucrats.

5. Conclusion

An army naturally eager to prepare a war of revenge, a Church understandably worried by modern trends towards secularization, overly conscientious professors irritated by declining standards, policemen specialized in law and order, bureaucrats tired of being lobbied by politicians, industrialists anxious to remain in control of costs, farmers facing the perspective of leaving the farm, small shopkeepers endangered by modern forms of commerce, settlers whose horizon is darkened by nationalist claims, blue-collar workers whose jobs are threatened by relocations, even mild forms of anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia: in itself, none of these factors may be particularly noteworthy or serious. Most of the people concerned are in many respects nice people (President Mitterrand said of his friend Bousquet that he was "charming", or had "great charm", I do not remember which of the two). The mischief that extremist coalitions of on the whole nice and transparent human beings can cause is an ominous discovery of modern times. More then in individual extremism, the danger lies in the existence of overspecialized concerns and motivations. In the vocabulary used in this paper, the main problem is monomania. There is no seriously pejorative intention underlying recourse to that term because we all are or can become monomaniac in some circumstances.

This paper is an attempt to address this topic with simple tools borrowed from the spatial theory of voting. An extremist is defined as an individual whose ideal point in the issue space is comparatively extreme along some dimensions, and a "monomaniac" (no derogatory connotation) as an individual for whom one issue has much greater salience than all others. As a consequence of salience, monomaniacs, even though they

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20 As noted by Rousso (1998, p. 99), all of the almost 1,500 persons who were shot legally after 1944 were condemned for "intelligence avec l'ennemi", i.e. treason. Nowadays, again according to Rousso

are not necessarily also extremists, can easily be induced by extremist politicians to form or support extremist coalitions. This can account for some of the characteristics of some of the relatively successful extremist movements as they are reported in the literature. It also has implications on the questions of how the results of surveys should be interpreted, of why members or supporters of extremist coalitions can sincerely not feel responsible for some of the deeds of these coalitions, and of what may happen to social judgments of guilt and innocence when the salience of issues, as perceived in retrospect by society, changes in the course of time -as has been the case in recent time with regard to the nature and main aspects of the Vichy regime. I am aware that many points or assumptions need to be clarified or made explicit. This might be addressed in future work.

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(1998, p. 119), a very large majority of the French condemns Vichy without reservation and mainly for its antisemitic legislation and for its participation in the realization of the Final Solution.

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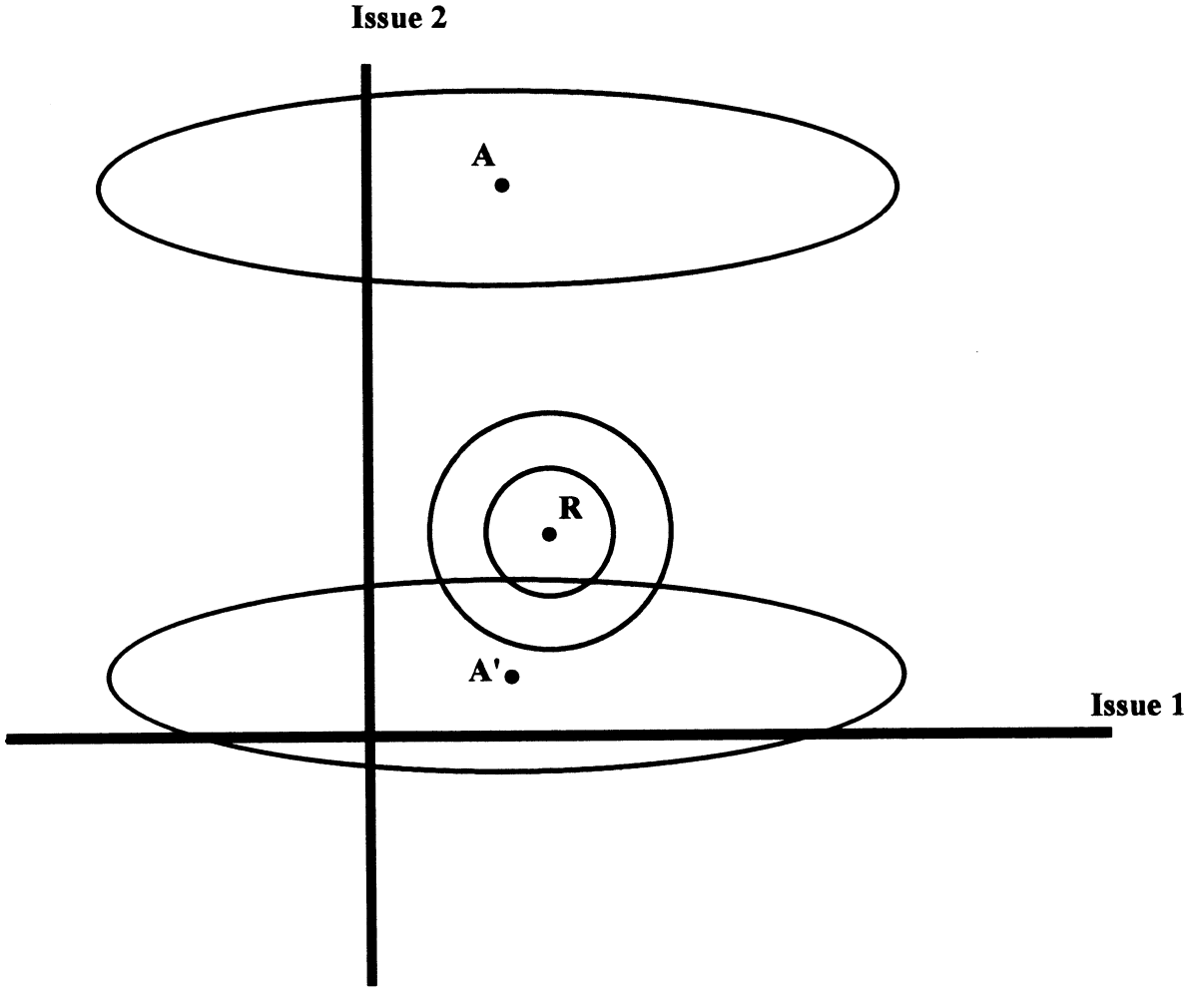

Figure 1: Moderation, extremism, and salience

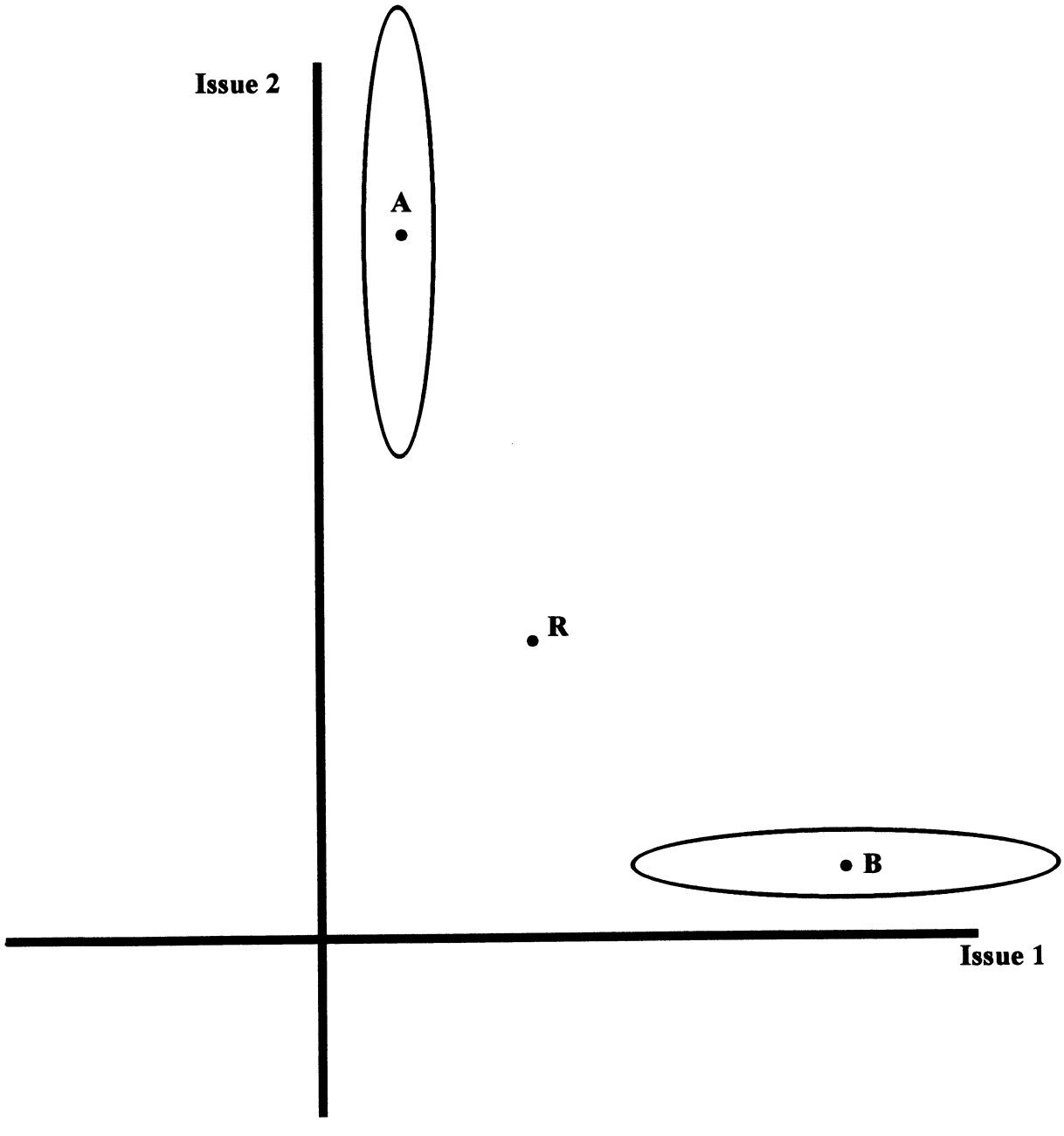

Figure 2: Inconsequential extremists

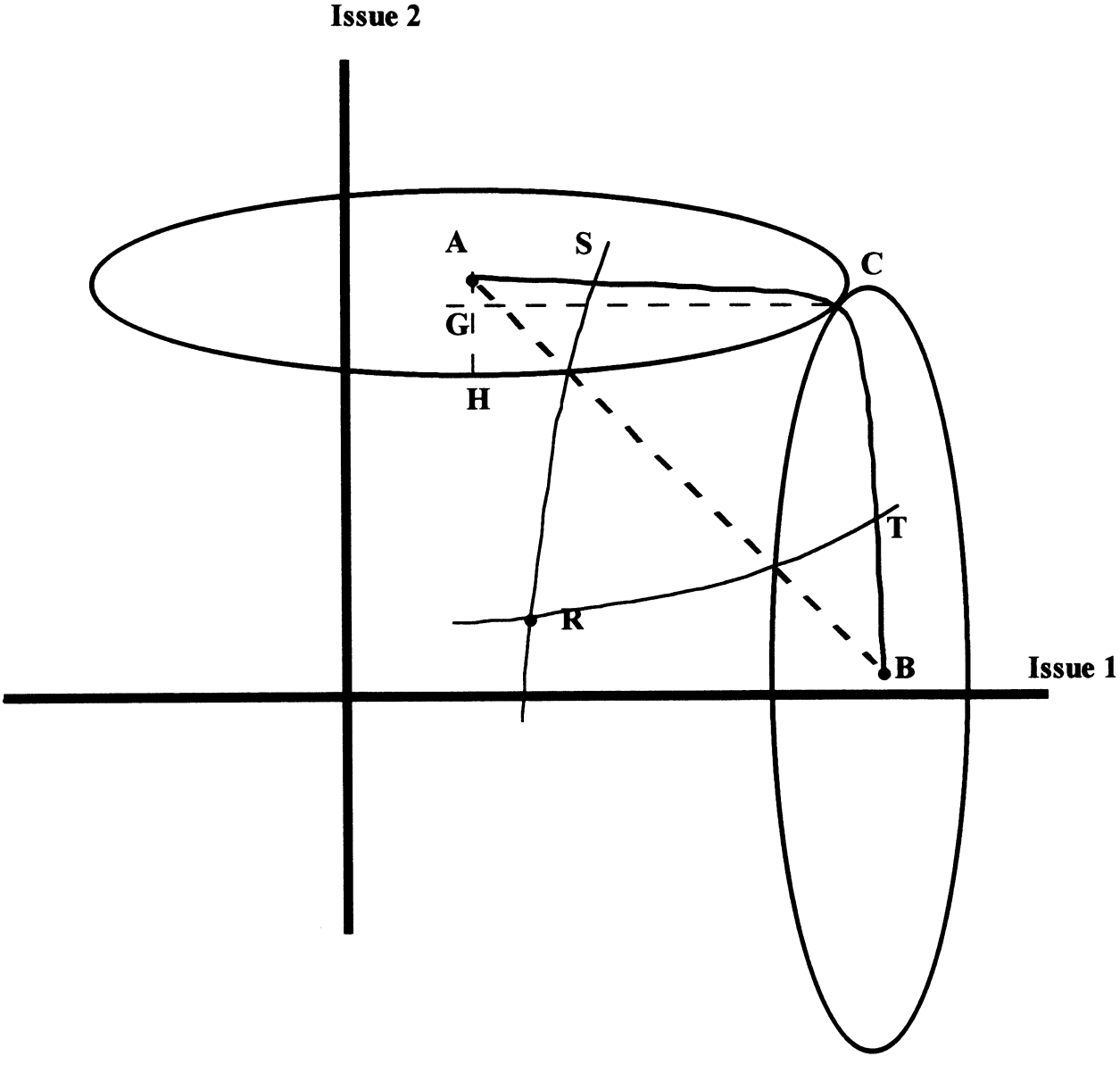

Figure 3: Extremist Coalition of Monomaniac Extremists

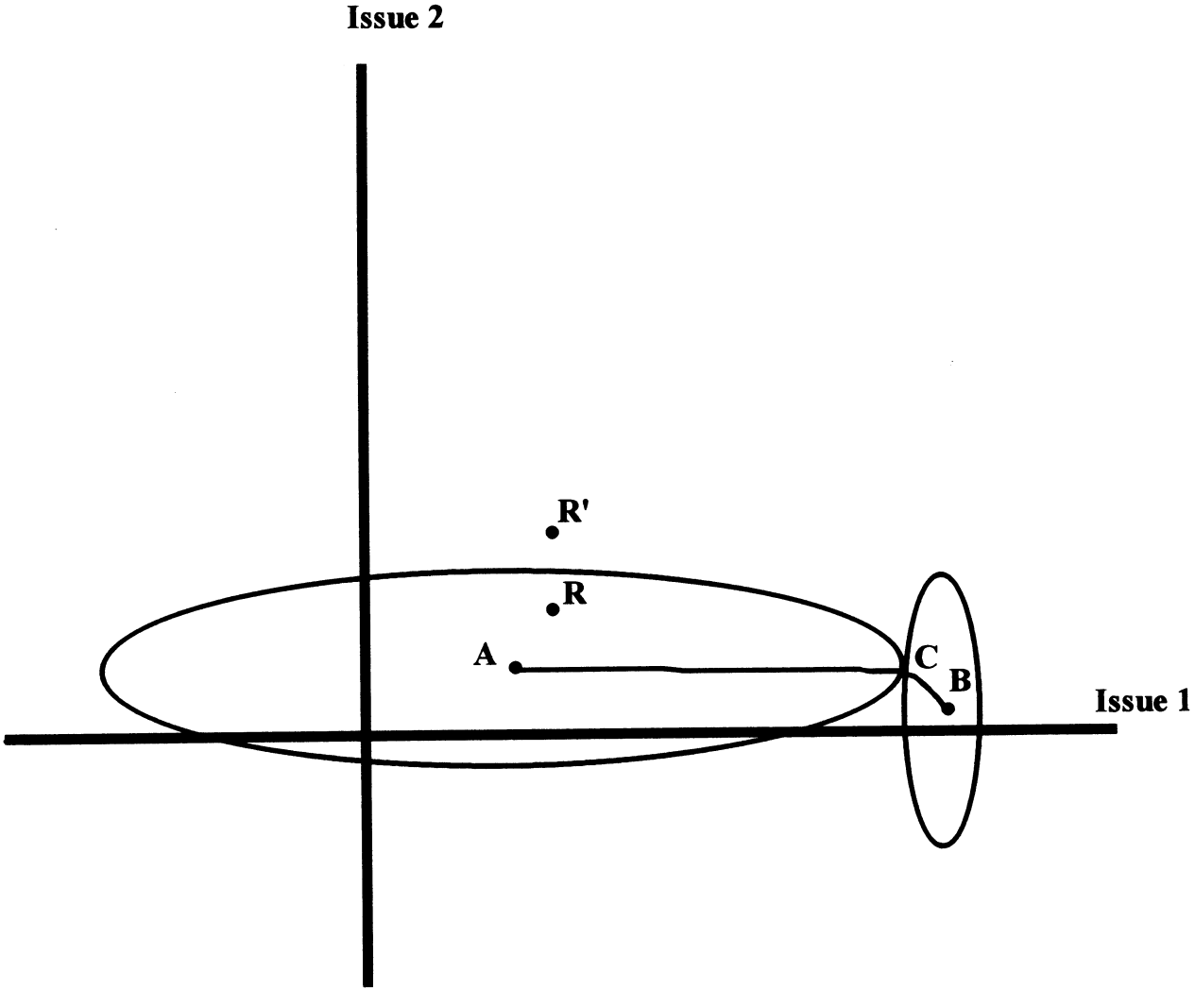

Figure 4: Non-extremist membership of an extremist coalition

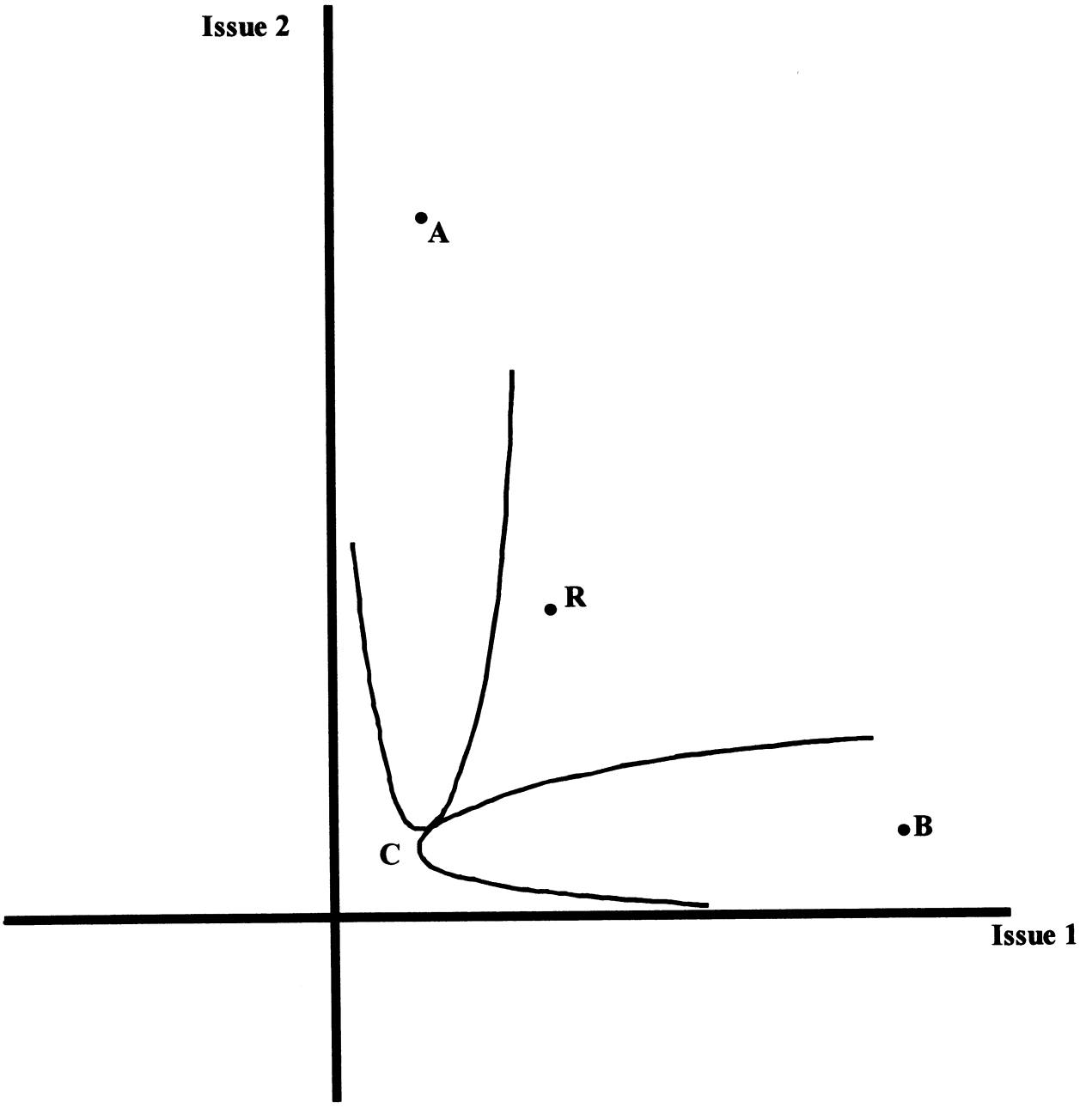

Figure 5: Non-extremist coalition of extremists

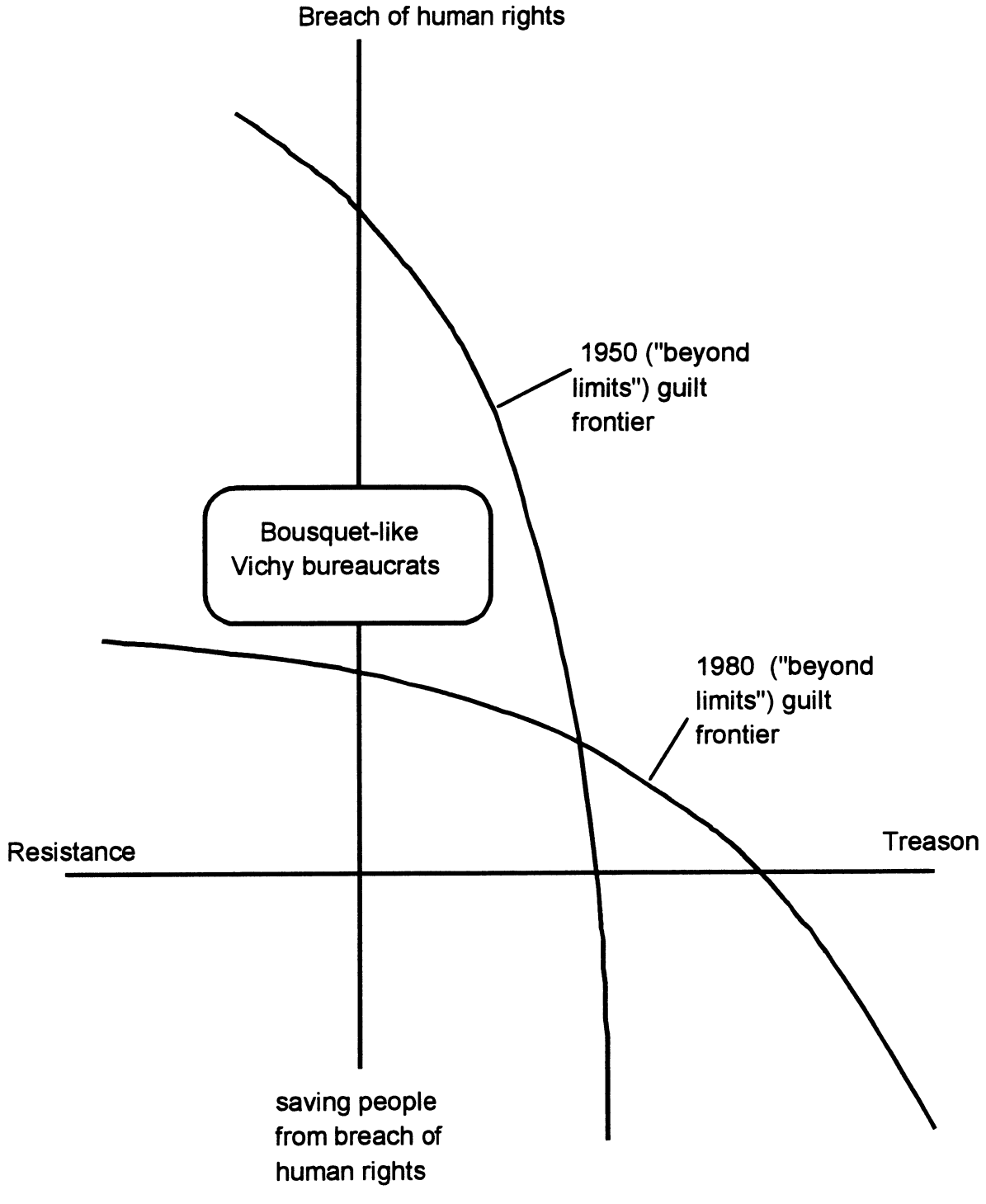

Figure 6: Retrospective assessments of "beyond-limits" consequences of extremism