

Aurelian Craiutu

Indiana University, Bloomington

Moderation in the Twenty-First Century

Moderation is a contested and fuzzy concept. Today the only famous line that returns time and again in any discussion of moderation belongs to Barry Goldwater: “Extremism in the pursuit of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue.” Goldwater’s skepticism toward moderation was unsuccessful in the end. Yet, his witty words force us to acknowledge that moderation is a complex virtue with many facets, both ethical and institutional. What kind of virtue is political moderation and how can we study it? What does it mean to be a moderate voice in politics? What are the limits and benefits of moderation? And can moderation ever be a winning card in politics?

1. A lost archipelago.
2. The skepticism toward moderation.
3. A difficult but necessary virtue.
4. What do moderates stand for? The many faces of moderation.
5. The benefits of moderation.
6. Rules for moderates.

Aurelian Craiutu is Professor of Political Science at Indiana University, Bloomington. His main research interests are in modern French political thought. His most recent books are [*A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*](#) (Princeton University Press, 2012) and *Faces of Moderation: The Art of Balance in an Age of Extremes* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017)

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1. "Extremism in the pursuit of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." --Barry Goldwater (former GOP presidential candidate in 1964)
2. "Moderation will be stigmatized as the virtue of cowards, and compromise as the prudence of traitors. ... This virtue of moderation (which time and situations will clearly distinguish from the counterfeits of pusillanimity and indecision) is the virtue only of superior minds. It requires a deep courage, and full of reflection, to be temperate when the voice of multitudes (the specious mimic of fame and reputation) passes judgment against you." --Edmund Burke (1729-1797, author of *Reflections on the Revolution in France*).
3. "In times when passions begin to gain control over the conduct of human affairs, it is less what people of experience and knowledge think that deserves attention than what fills dreamers' imagination." --Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859, author of *Democracy in America*)
4. "Moderation is a disposition rather than an agenda.... The moderate creates her policy agenda by looking to her specific circumstances and seeing which things are being driven out of proportion at the current moment." --David Brooks (editorialist for *New York Times*)
5. "By definition, moderates can't be brave- they don't have opinions! ... Brave moderates? Great moderates in American History? Show me that book! --Rush Limbaugh (American conservative radio host)
6. "Wanted: fanatical moderates" --Thomas Friedman (editorialist for *New York Times*)
7. "In politics as in chess, the man who holds the center holds a position of almost unbeatable strength." --Arthur Larson (Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Eisenhower Administration)
8. "This innocent word *Trimmer* signifieth no more than this, that if Men are together in a boat, and one part of the company would weigh it down on one side, another would make it lean as much to the contrary; it happeneth there is a third Opinion of those, who conceive it would do as well, if the Boat went even, without endangering the passengers." – Halifax (1684).
9. "Our world does not need tepid souls. It needs burning hearts, men who know the proper place of moderation" -- Albert Camus (1913-1960).
10. "Without moderation, every man in power becomes a ravenous beast of prey." -- John Adams (1735-1826)