

# Aristotle's Theory of Moderation, Capital Accumulation and Electoral Violence in Developing Societies

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**Matthew Dayi Ogali**

*Department of Political & Administrative Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.*

*Email: [dayi.ogali@yahoo.com](mailto:dayi.ogali@yahoo.com) Tel: +2348033841100*

## ABSTRACT

This paper sought to instigate a systematic application of Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation to an analysis of the electoral processes and outcomes in developing countries. The central objective was to relate Aristotle's theory of moderation to the practice of democracy under dependent capitalism in Third World countries. It was an essentially qualitative study that depended on secondary sources for data collection and data analysis was historical, normative, exploratory, and interpretive. Aristotle's theory of Moral Virtue served as the theoretical framework. A major finding was the pervasive trend of political leaders operating outside the parameters of democratic ethics. It arrived at the conclusion that the abdication of the normative virtue of self-restraint in the pursuit of power and wealth in underdeveloped economies often resulted in electoral violence and recommended that the ethical values that sustain democracy should be entrenched and strictly enforced in Third World democracies.

**Keywords:** *Democracy, Power, Wealth, Virtue, Violence, Moderation.*

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### Highlights of this paper

- This paper's contribution to knowledge is the effective utilization of Aristotle's ethical theory of the mean to identify the source of crises in modern states. Another is establishing the fact that the best preservative of society is the maintenance of the middle course or moderation.
- It also identified socialism, welfarism and socialist-oriented political parties as moderating or stabilizing forces in modern states.
- The paper further identified Aristotle's theory of the mean as the precursor of Marx's theory of socialism.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Political thought, defined in terms of man's abstract or reflective ability and effort to articulate mechanisms for the management of a social formation to ensure stable relations between rulers and their subjects, and his effort to understand and resolve emerging problems involving his group or society (Sabine & Thorson, 1973), might be as old as man's aggregation into communities of various forms and sizes. Aristotle (1999) himself had written that man is not only "gregarious" but also naturally a "political animal", in the sense of being both communal and individual, depending on which brand was dominant at any particular historical epoch. Even before the emergence of the state, patriarchal tribal leaders had set the rules and norms for socio-political interaction and engagement within the community (Filmer, cited by Locke (1988)).

Just as human communities have been effectively managed or administered to grow and flourish from one rudimentary or homogenous level to a higher and more progressive or complex stage others are known to have defeated, occupied and dispersed at some point in history due to either internal and external pressures or both, like Egypt came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, but later overthrown and occupied by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798, and eventually came under British colonialism (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Accumulation of public wealth or Commonwealth and its effective management to satisfy the needs of both the state and the citizens is a *sine qua non* for the growth and development of societies from the classical period till date. As a general norm, surplus extraction from slaves, serfs and workers, depending on the mode of production, in order to build a strong revenue base has been a hallmark of the state. Civilizations had flourished in Egypt, Babylon, Syria, Assyria, Medes, Persia, Greece, etc. in the ancient world and later Rome in the medieval era, with their greatness measured against the opulence and splendour of the respective kings, all based on wealth accumulation. Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) have argued that nations become poor when ruled by narrow elites that organized society for their own selfish benefits, and prospered when the elite was overthrown and society reorganised with political power and economic opportunities much more broadly distributed and the government made accountable and responsive to the people.

It is no accident that the best records of governance, tolerance, welfare of the people, healthy ruler and people relationships, etc. usually occurred at the middle ages of these kingdoms. On the negative side, a poor and wretched kingdom and king are far from laying claim to greatness. Poverty is not an attribute of greatness. At the other extreme over-accumulation of wealth is like a sedative to kings and drive them into attitudes of tyranny, oppression, deceit, arrogance, impunity and eventual and inevitable ruin. Kings or monarchs became uncontrollable as their wealth grew exponentially. Both poverty and extreme wealth are a curse to kingdoms and states, and that precisely is the kernel of Aristotle's principle of moderation.

Extremities in wealth concentration or poverty, ownership and dispossession, violence and laxity, cruelty and love, or any other similar diversity have historically ruined and ruptured communities and states. Rules, regulations and laws have often been enacted to moderate these extremities in human acquisitive behaviour and relations to avoid or mitigate the calamities they inevitably engender. But more than laws can restrict, social ethos, ethical

values and mores have imposed a greater restraint on human actions and aspirations, and accordingly sustained societies. In the thought of [Rousseau \(1987\)](#) laws are useless and often either trampled upon by the wealthy and powerful or disregarded by the extremely poor.

### *1.1. The Problem*

Despite the challenge of China, capitalism maintains its dominant and hegemonic position as a historical and conjunctural mode of production in the contemporary world system. The capitalistic component of Chinese socialism has been fingered as the driving force behind its astronomical scientific and technological growth. Consequently, in both west and east the driver of economic growth and development remains the same phenomenon of capital accumulation. Furthermore, whether the ownership structure of industrial capitalism is individualistic or socialized capital accumulation, concentration and centralization have struck an unbreakable bond between them in the ravaging surge to extract and convert both natural and synthetic resources to propel further growth. Would these growth rates have been possible without the massive accumulation of capital on a global scale such as is being witnessed in the contemporary world? That would appear practically impossible. If the benefits are enormous, irresistible and irreversible, so also are the dangers and threats to the continued existence of humanity on earth posed by these same innovative forces of civilization.

Capital accumulation, as theorized by [Lenin \(1975\)](#) and [Luxemburg \(Kowalik, 2014\)](#) is the hallmark and inseparable component of capitalism in all its ramifications and at all stages of its development, but the inevitability of violence associated with it is less conspicuous in the advanced social formations and accordingly often concealed and denied. Procedural and operational subtleties combined with structural imbalances and fortifications ensure the smooth and hegemonic extraction of surplus or exploitation of the working class in the advanced capitalist countries with the consent and even rationalization of the exploited. Ideological serenity, political security and economic stability resulting from the nationalistic consensus drastically reduce the incidence of electoral violence in developed countries. But, does that signify the absence of violence?

In the advanced countries the citizen simply walks naked before the surveillance apparatuses of the state working in tandem with big business to secure systemic guarantees of protection of the global interest of capital ([Poulantzas, 1978](#)). But this art of technologically stripping the citizen to create a society of mass consumption, alienation and artificiality is a far more effective violence than the deployment of arms and once achieved spreads seamlessly into the conduct of elections. In other words, the smoothness in the process of economic exploitation is easily translated to the peaceful conduct of elections. A technologically established social dictatorship ensures political stability through electronically controlled elections, despite the pockets of violent actions like school shootings, which all merely constitute a source of ventilation of social grievances and are easily quelled.

Like exploitation, bourgeois violence is conducted with utmost subtlety and simplified with modern technological devices for surveillance operations which ensure that all movements, interactions and actions of citizens are monitored, checked and controlled. All this presents the face of a sane, fair, just and equal society with broad national consensus and system stability. But what is presented to the world is subdued peace with subterranean bottled grievances that burst out in various forms of violent reactions like #Blacklivesmatter protests which also proceed within the broad parameters set by the bourgeois state and ruling class.

It has also been argued further and the evidence is rather glaring that this civility in the developed world is made possible by resource accumulation on a world scale ([Kowalik, 2014](#)), which is deployed to underwrite the opulence and a sense of entitlement and satisfaction to social existence ([Chinweizu, 1978](#); [Rodney, 1972](#)). For the purposes of this paper the vital point to note is that the consequences of the violation of Aristotle's principle of

moderation by the concentration and centralization of wealth are concealed in the advanced societies, except in the cyclical periods of economic crises like depressions. However, these pathologies are quite common and open in developing countries where the process of primitive accumulation proceeds in several illegal forms (Ake, 1978; Onimode, 1983). Politics assumes the nature of an investment the dividends of which are obtained by corruption (Ake, 2001). Electoral violence becomes pronounced and widespread, unmitigated by the guiding principles of ethical moderation as economic wealth, mostly illegally acquired, is transformed into political power, which is further deployed as a tool for further wealth acquisition. That precisely defines the fundamental issue to be addressed in this paper.

### *1.2. Aim and Objectives of Study*

This paper aims to study the implications of the neglect of Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation as applied to the analysis of dependent capitalism relative to electoral violence in Third World countries. Specifically, the study would be guided by the following objectives, viz, to;

1. Explain Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation.
2. Relate Aristotle's theory of moderation to dependent capitalism as practised in developing countries.
3. Demonstrate how the neglect of Aristotle's theory of moderation breeds electoral violence in developing countries.

### *1.3. Research Questions*

1. What does Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation signify?
2. How does Aristotle's theory of moderation relate to dependent capitalism as practised in developing countries?
3. In what way does the neglect of Aristotle's theory of moderation breed electoral violence in developing countries?

### *1.4. Research Assumptions*

1. Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation significantly applies to contemporary politics, particularly in developing countries.
2. Aristotle's theory of moderation adequately explains the pitfalls of dependent capitalism as practised in developing countries.
3. The neglect of Aristotle's theory of moderation breeds electoral violence in developing countries.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Aristotle's theory of virtue, which provides the framework for this study, is directly and deeply embedded and integrated in his ethical theory of the mean both at the level of the individual citizen and the state. Virtue dwells in the exercise of personal restraint or moderation in the management of personal affairs and participation in the sustenance and development of the state (Aristotle, 1996). A thought on the possibility and implications of states, from the loss of virtue, through the creeping depreciation of functional morality, degenerating into aberrations or deviations, was a major preoccupation of classical political thinkers (Aristotle, 1996; Aristotle, 1999; Plato, 2007). Only good citizens can produce and effectively manage a good state, but this only while being guided by the ethical virtue of the mean.

“We have sufficiently explained then, that moral virtue is moderation or observance of the mean, and in what sense, viz. (1) as holding a middle position between two vices, one on the side of

excess and the other on the side of deficiency, and (2) as aiming at the mean or moderate amount both in feeling and in action” (Aristotle, 1996).

In the classical era virtue resided not in the ownership of wealth or much less self-love, but rather in public service for the good of others or the community. Citizenship with virtue was nurtured through the ethical doctrines of the state. It was for this reason that Socrates was accused of teaching young men to disrespect the gods, eventually leading to his death. Such disrespect signified the absence of virtue in the youth as they grew into adulthood. Aristotle defined citizenship not in terms of rights but rather by the exercise of political power. To Aristotle a citizen is more than a mere “denizen or resident of a place”, neither is he defined in terms of the enjoyment of private rights. “He is ordinarily one who possesses political power; who sits on juries and in the assembly . . . he is a citizen who has political power” (Aristotle, 1999).

The significance of associating the citizen with political power lies in the imperative to protect the state against degeneracy. Only a good citizen can rule a good state and maintain it in that condition of being a good state. But this is made possible only with the guidance of the ethical principle of virtue defined in terms of the exercise of moderation or restraint from either of the extreme conditions wealth or poverty, which would ruin the state or cause it to degenerate. It is precisely for this reason that he defined the citizen in terms of the distribution of political power, the same condition for the state because when the mode of power distribution changes a new state comes into existence.

The result of ethical bankruptcy, particularly when it manifests in the public domain, is the degeneracy of the state. From polity to democracy, aristocracy to oligarchy and from monarchy to tyranny or despotism, the erosion of ethical values in the management of the state has consequences that are always negative and must therefore be held in check. In summary there is morality in politics and viewed as political economy then morality or ethical values should moderate both political and economic pursuits. This is the challenge confronting the capitalist in the modern capitalist society as he amasses political and economic power, the former either directly or through other class allies.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This is essentially a theoretical study with data collection principally from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, documentaries and internet sources. Personal observation in course of participation in election management also provided a veritable source of information and impression about elections in a developing country. The method of analysis was qualitative, interpretive and logical reappraisal and analysis of historical and contemporary facts, reports and records. Generally, the paper adopted a methodology of textual extraction and analysis, including periodization and content analysis of extant data i.e. “thorough examination of documents in order to generate information for inference based on the canons of scientific research” (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2010). Interpretive research, as adopted in this paper, views social reality as being contained within and impossible to separate from their social settings, it interprets the reality though a “sense-making” process rather than a hypothesis testing process (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

#### *3.1. Aristotle’s Theory of the Mean or Moderation*

In formulating his theory of the mean or moderation Aristotle conceived three positions or “classes of disposition”, two of which he considered to be “kinds of vices”. Of the two, one is positively excess or extreme and the other marked by deficiency or insufficiency or lack or inadequacy. The third position or disposition is the only one that is a “kind of virtue”, which is the “observance of the mean” (Aristotle, 1996). Each of the first two, which

are vices is somehow opposed to the other. On the other hand, the two extreme dispositions or vices are also opposed both to the mean or moderate disposition or position and to one another, while the moderate disposition is opposed to both of the extremes or vices.

Aristotle's conceptualization of the mean or moderation is a theoretical or philosophical construct designed as an ethical guide to actions, decisions and policies at both levels of the state and the individual citizen. Whether favourable or unfavourable, gain or loss, ambition or apathy, individualistic or communal, in relations, actions and expectations, the middle course or the mean should be the focus of human striving. From the perspective of Kantian ethical theory it is eloquently deontological, emanating from the inner conviction of the individual actor rather than being a derivative of the possible outcomes or consequences that might result from an action (Kant, 2002).

In relating this theory to property he acknowledges the difficulty in determining or stipulating the amount or level of acquisition that would reasonably satisfy the requirements for a decent life based on which restrictions could be imposed on extremes. It is also necessary to determine the level of poverty that would be intolerable in a decent society.

“for the amount of property which is needed for a good life is not unlimited, although Solon in one of his poems says that ‘no bound to riches has been fixed for man’. But there is a boundary fixed, just as there is in the other arts; for the instruments of any art are never unlimited, either in number or size, and riches may be defined as a number of instruments to be used in a household or in a state” (Aristotle, 1999).

Ideas such as this are more closely associated with socialism or communism than capitalism, under which the acquisitive instinct is not only the driving force behind societal development but also the foundation upon which the entire social fabric is structured. Extreme wealth acquisition in political leadership would, without doubt, engender destructive dispositions such as arrogance, impunity, intolerance, and insensitivity toward the plight of others, i.e. the citizens. Vices such as these lead inexorably to the creation of another extremity at the opposite pole, that of poverty manifesting as hunger, misery, frustration, anger, disobedience, dissension, and eventually insurgency. Nothing could be more destructive to a state than these social vices. Precipitation of crisis is obvious and unavoidable under such circumstances. Legal or constitutional prescriptions guided by ethical principles could provide the sobering effect needed for political stability, but these often run contrary to the pillars of capitalism. Perhaps this explains (Plato, 2007) rejection of property ownership among the guardians. At the preliminary stages of the development of capitalism Christian ethical principles guided and directed the process (Weber, 2001) and properly aligned with Aristotle's theory of moderation, but derailed at the stages of monopoly and imperialism.

### *3.2. Theory of Moderation, Contemporary Capitalism and Democracy*

Theory of the mean may have successfully served the purposes of a classical slave state with highly circumscribed citizenship. Conceptual nuances quickly manifest when applied to the modern capitalist state and society viz. the emphasis on individualism, self-interest, wealth accumulation and monopolization. Success in these endeavours is reckoned as virtue or moral excellence, measured in terms of business ingenuity, innovativeness and creativity, which also provide the standard of behaviour for the rest of society. The capitalist takes risks, being driven by that singular motivating force, viz. profit and its maximization, and bears alone the brunt of the outcome, whether positive or otherwise. Success in that endeavour is the sole determinant of virtue, but which runs contrary to the classical connotation that “virtue, then, is a kind of moderation, in as much as it aims at moderation or moderate amount” (Aristotle, 1996).

From the foregoing, the theory of moderation or mean is apparently inapplicable to the modern capitalist system, because the age of primitive accumulation characterised by the spectacles of slave trade, colonialism and imperialism introduced dramatic changes to the development of capitalism (Kowalik, 2014). The initial Christian-driven, ethically constructed capitalism was swept aside as the criminality of primitive accumulation took centre stage (Ogali, 2014). “Merchant capital can develop within feudalism without changing the mode of production; a challenge to the old ruling class and its state comes only with the development of the capitalist mode of production in industry and agriculture” (Hill, 1940). Transitions between modes of production cannot proceed as neat and perceptible as presented here. The writings of the Spanish priest, Bartolomé de las Casas ([1484-1566]; [www.las.casas.org/manissues.htm](http://www.las.casas.org/manissues.htm)), have revealed the criminal violence in Latin America against the indigenous populations resulting in the extermination of perhaps 90 million people. Gold and silver-inspired colonization, as well as plantation agriculture, funded Spanish, Dutch and English capitalism (Williams, 1944). Lamenting the ruthless exploitation of slave labour and the expropriation of indigenous land he queried:

Tell me by what right of justice do you hold these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged such detestable wars against these people who dwelt quietly and peacefully on their own lands? Wars in which you have destroyed such an infinite number of them by homicides and slaughters never heard of before. Why do you keep them so oppressed and exhausted, without giving them enough to eat or curing them of the sicknesses they incur from the excessive labour you give them, and they die, or rather you kill them, in order to extract and acquire gold every day (Las Casas, cited by Ogali (2014)).

Violent, bloody and ruthless accumulation of resources facilitated industrialization or the development of capitalism in Europe. Merchants, slave-traders and pirates, who had amassed fortunes overseas funded the agrarian transition, taking over from the savings of yeomen and craftsmen (Hill, 1940). In one particular instance, in Colombia, the Spanish leader of the expedition seized the King of Bogota and detained him for six to seven months demanding more and more gold to fill an entire building as condition for his release (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

From a Weberian perspective, capitalism took form from the womb of feudalism (a world dominated entirely by the Church), evolved from the Protestant Ethic, rooted in the Christian religion and guarded by ecclesiastical rules, principles and values. In reality the rules of self-discipline, avoidance of ostentation, restraint from extravagance, thriftiness, and frugality were, at that formative stage, the hallmarks of capitalism. The transition from feudalism to capitalism was dominated by the religious doctrine of “ascetic Protestantism”, a period when the religious and economic forces which expressed themselves through such channels as Church discipline, piety, and asceticism were “the decisive influences in the formation of national character” (Weber, 2001).

Consequently, it would appear that the greed, impiety, avarice, the pursuit of extreme wealth acquisition, disregard for institutional regulation, treading down environmental control measures, tax evasion, etc. which define and sustain contemporary capitalism were unknown and even antithetical to the previous age of competitive capitalism driven and guarded by protestant ecclesiastical doctrines. The defining features of contemporary capitalism, at the stage of monopoly and imperialism (Ake, 1981; Brewer, 2001; Lenin, 1975; Nabudere, 1977; Onimode, 1983; Tandon, 1982) obviously contradict Aristotle’s theory of moderation from which perspective they are vices that threaten societal sustainability. What remains is to explore its link with democracy and electoral violence.

Democracy, without doubt rules the modern world in which every state must justify its existence based on its democratic scorecard (Diamond, 1997). It is a judgmental alter before which all states that were hitherto fascist, theocratic, despotic, and tyrannical, must bow and demonstrate penitence. For admission into the portals of

civilization before the global community every state at least pretends to be democratic or democratizing. However, to attract this universal love democracy itself had to pass through a period of mutation, baptism and rechristening. In this age of universal democratization a double-face is being presented to the world, stable democracy in the advanced countries, but a fraudulent model characterised by electoral violence, voter apathy, incumbency factor, political parties without ideology, godfatherism, prebendal politics, harassment of opposition, constitutional tinkering, curtailment of fundamental rights, etc. in Third World countries.

In the advanced liberal states a subtle and effective alienation of the citizen from the exercise of democratic power was achieved with the consent of the ruled, through hegemonic politics, with series of political reforms, rendering the citizen indolent, a voting zombie, and a watcher from the sidelines of democratic competition. Capital accumulation and its attendant economic and political empowerment of a few in modern liberal society has resulted in a simultaneous disempowerment of the majority from the chambers of crucial macro and micro political decision making.

It might look quite easy and appealing and is very common to be disdainful of the capitalist's acquisitive spirit and preach personal or socially-imposed restraint as a mechanism for income redistribution to achieve social justice. But, in fairness to him, such an action could evoke far more serious consequences than are perceptible. His involvement in a cut-throat competition against his contemporaries and as a zero-sum game in which one either gains or loses all, is in itself a systemic spirit that erases all forms of ethical considerations in the practise of his art. It is note-worthy that capitalist competition is a state of affairs that views moral considerations or restraints as a suicide mission. How would a capitalist identify an ample opportunity for profit making and refuse to exploit it?

Capitalism is a structured dynamic that operates independently of the will and sometimes even expectations of the individual capitalist. [Smith \(2012\)](#) identified this process as the "invisible hand" under *laissez faire* capitalism ([Black, 2002](#)). An investment may not yield the desired profit and may even end in a loss. However, it is this same process of capital accumulation that also results in the impoverishment of the worker, all as aspects of an integrated, orderly, civilized and institutionalized construct, in the advanced capitalist countries. In such societies a civilised process ensured that this change was achieved with little or no resistance as both processes of wealth acquisition/monopolization and citizen political disempowerment were institutionalized. However, what obtains in the developing world is an entirely different story.

What is described above is capitalism in a sane environment. How was this democratic double-face achieved? A redefinition of citizenship, just as democracy, was the starting point. First, the concept of active citizenship espoused by Aristotle in terms of the exercise of real political power was surreptitiously replaced with powerless representation ([Macpherson, 1972](#)).

"How are we to define a citizen? He is more than a mere denizen; private rights do not make a citizen. He is ordinarily one who possesses political power; who sits on juries and in the assembly . . . To define him as the son of citizen parents is futile. Some say that his civic rights must have been justly acquired. But he is a citizen who has political power, however acquired. Similarly, the state is defined by reference to the distribution of political power; when the mode of distribution is changed a new state comes into existence . . . In a constitutional state the good citizen knows both how to rule and how to obey. The good man is one who is fitted to rule. But the citizen in a constitutional state learns to rule by obeying orders. Therefore, citizenship in such a state is a moral training" training ([Aristotle, 1996](#)).

A meticulous textual analysis of this statement would reveal the soft underbelly of modern representative democracy which has largely disempowered the citizen first by economic conquest and disparity in wealth

distribution and then political alienation and deprivation through the concept of representative democracy with its emphasis on voting without being voted for (Miliband, in [Diamond and Plattner \(1993\)](#)). A severe restriction is imposed on the quality of modern democracy by the economic and political disempowerment of the ordinary citizen. It is for this reason ([Marx & Engels, 1977](#)) defined the state as a “committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie”.

The practicability or applicability of Aristotle’s normative theory of moderation or restraint, developed in an ancient epoch far removed from and evolving through the eccentricities and layers of historical transitions, in a modern society ruled or driven by a completely different system of social structures, laws and processes, is a question whose relevance and validity are simply undeniable. That leads us to an examination of the situation in developing countries.

### *3.3. Dependent Capitalism and Democracy in Developing Countries*

Imperialism entered the Third World with violence and operated, conquered, subjugated, ruled and exploited with violence. Consequently, the state in the Third World has been described as over-developed ([Alavi, 1973](#)), predatory ([Evans, 1989](#)), absolute, authoritarian and totalistic ([Ake, 2001](#)). At independence this culture of violence was bequeathed to the political leaders who still effectively deploy it against the citizens. Wealth acquisition in these countries is obtained not through investment or business ingenuity but mainly through politics, which is viewed as an investment. It is also for this reason that electoral contests are full of violence. In Third World countries the extremities of poverty and wealth are so conspicuous that even the blind can see them, without the mediation of welfare packages or motivational incentives for workers and the unemployed. To attain positions from which to authoritatively allocate values everything is deployed to ensure victory.

Here again Aristotle’s ethical principle of moderation, which evinces morality in politics, is neglected in developing countries and the consequences are equally conspicuous. Elections have been institutionalized in almost all countries across the world, except a few like Brunei, China, Eritrea, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and South Sudan. Despite the conflict in Afghanistan elections have been held eight (8) times ([Birch, Daxecker, & Huglund, 2020](#)). Togo in 2005, Nigeria in 2007, Côte d’Ivoire in 2010-2011, Guinea in 2010, have been cited as instances of election violence in developing countries.

Electoral violence as a variant of political violence can be distinguished from the latter as it is aimed at influencing the behaviour of the voters, intimidating candidates or distorting results. It seeks to delay or prevent the vote or compilation of results, or to obtain results which do not reflect the decision of the electorate. Furthermore, it could occur before or on the polling day, as in Guinean 2010 or just after the elections as in the 2005 Togolese presidential election, Côte d’Ivoire in 2010 and Nigeria 2015. Electoral violence is associated with political instability, civil war, or coup, in a context of democratic transition or disarmament and demobilization following civil war; real or alleged rigging of elections; perpetrators include ethnic groups, clans, economic powers, and political actors; triggers could be a minor difference between the candidates’ results, unclear or disputed legal framework, non-impartial management bodies, lack of transparency, including electoral data management, proven or alleged fraud in the electoral process, more prone in first-past-the-post system; exclusionary effects and fears ([United Nations, 2017](#)).

It is not the design of this paper to belabour the reader with a litany of facts about electoral violence in developing countries. The colonial administration controlled the economy of the colony without teaching the colonized the virtues of entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity. The colonial economy was as a matter of deliberate policy made dependent on the metropolis for manufactured goods and the colony to concentrate on

primary production. Consequently, economic means of wealth generation remain elusive and unattractive to the colonies. Even independence was mere flag substitution with neo-colonial dependent networks. Politics has become the only means of wealth creation. Politics means everything, life and death, survival of the fittest, winner take all, and several other political jargons. African egalitarian values were desecrated in favour of western culture. Ironically, much of the wealth stolen with political tools found its way to the western banks for safe keeping where they are deployed for the economic development of the host.

Discussing democracy under such circumstances is empty and vacuous and even distasteful. Africa is not even striving for democracy but is rather retrogressively accepting and institutionalizing anti-democratic forces as the new reality to form the basis for political power pursuit, deployment and governance. Such forces as ethnicity, corruption, sponsorship of terrorism, insurgency and greed have become the new norm. Criminality is widespread and largely perpetrated not against the rich but rather against fellow poor, wretched and struggling people while the oppressors are worshipped.

Some international efforts at promoting democracy through the eliminate of electoral violence, include the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which provides for strict compliance with constitutional provisions in electoral practice, and also set the parameters for the conduct of peaceful, credible, free, fair, and transparent elections. The African Union's (AU) 2012 Memorandum of Understanding on Stability, Development, and Cooperation emphasizes transparent and credible elections as well as respect for the fundamental and universal right to participatory and democratic governance, forbidding unconstitutional changes of government. Collaborating with these regional organizations is the United Nations through the UNOWAS and other agencies to contribute to eradicating electoral violence and promote good governance (United Nations, 2017).

Some of these protocols, treaties and charters are simply self-serving, particularly the principle of non-interference, respect for sovereignty and unconstitutional changes of government. What have been produced are sit-tight leaders who consistently manipulate elections, using the incumbency factor to remain in office. Such measures have not yielded any positive result, particularly in Africa.

“For the average city-state the best constitution will be a mean between the rule of rich and poor; the middle-class will be supreme. No state will be well administered unless the middle-class holds sway. The middle-class is stronger in large than in small states. Hence, in Greece it has rarely attained to power; especially as democracy and oligarchy were aided by the influence of the leading states”.

Virtue, integrity and patriotism are very close to the lips of Third World leaders but far from their hearts. Even ideological positions are difficult to associate with their political parties, always identifying with the winning party just to have the opportunity to loot the treasury. Particularly African leaders have had their consciences seared with a hot iron. These are the motivations for desperation in seeking political office through electoral violence and resulting in several other conflicts and crises in developing countries.

### *3.4. Socialism and Welfarism as Moderating Forces*

As stated earlier capitalism is a natural process, which once put in motion produces results that are independent of the will of the operators of the system. Consequently, extreme wealth and poverty are inevitable outcomes of the process of capitalist practice. Some safety nets that were later introduced through Welfarist reforms have had the effect of moderating the capitalist system and delayed the socialist revolution in the west. Welfarism is a

moderating force that has played a crucial role in sustaining the capitalist system as well as liberalism generally. The Welfare State has been defined as:

A state committed to ensuring for all its citizens at least some minimum standard of living, including housing, education, medical services. Advocates argue that the welfare state is not merely equitable but also efficient, since the absence of this provision leads to externalities in the form of crime, poor public health and failure to become employable (Black, 2002).

Within the liberal theoretical paradigm (Rawls, 1999) theory of fair distribution as the basis for justice presents a similar argument, particularly the difference principle, which makes provision for the most vulnerable in society. Externalities resulting from the absence of such programmes are enormous and unpredictable, including terrorism, insurgency and other dangerous crimes that the world is witnessing.

Marxism and socialist ideas were also a reaction against the vices of capitalist practice, such as alienation, exploitation, deprivation, environmental degradation, destructive exploitation of resources and grinding poverty. Variations in the intensity of these inevitable outcomes of capitalism between the developed and developing countries depends on the availability of resources to sustain the wealth of the respective nations. While the imperialist plundering of resources increases the level of capital accumulation to fund the general wealth of the advanced capitalist countries the loss of these resources in the developing or underdeveloped countries introduces crises of various forms within that geographical belt (Nabudere, 1977; Rodney, 1972). Dependency theories (Emmanuel, 1972; Frank, 1966) have successfully exposed the exploitative results of these linkages and interactions between the two groups of states tied in a metropolis-Satellite structure.

Consequent upon the deprivations suffered by the majority in the capitalist countries several socialist revolutionary upheavals were recorded across Europe with various levels of success in Russia, France, Spain, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, etc. Even where the revolution failed political organisations with a strong socialist orientation contend for power and constantly act as a check on extreme wealth disparities. Standard examples are the Labour Party in Britain, the Socialist Party in France, the Social Democratic Party in Germany, etc. These political parties act as moderating influences both to protect the weak and checkmate the strong in line with Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation. It could be argued that Aristotle was the classical precursor of Marx, who only modernized and built on the fundamental principles laid down by the former's theory. America is only being shielded from a socialist revolution or a strong socialist-oriented political party by the Welfarist programmes that give a sense of entitlement, ownership or opportunities to the working class and less privileged.

Democrats take Equality for their motto; oligarchs believe that political rights should be unequal and proportionate to wealth. But both sides miss the true object of the state, which is virtue. Those who do most to promote virtue deserve the greatest share of power. On the same principle, Justice is not the will of the majority or of the wealthier, but that course of action which the moral aim of the state requires (Aristotle, 1996).

Aristotlean theory of the mean operates like an iron law, which when violated casts a spell of revolutionary crisis on the society. It views and abhors both democracy and oligarchy as extremes that operate in the interest of the majority poor or wealthy few respectively, rather than the interest of the whole society, and to that extent are vices or aberrations that should be avoided if society should hope to enjoy a prolonged lifespan. Moderation is the best preservative of societies. Aristotle's greatest vindication lies in the fact that virtually all modern societies that lay a claim to democracy are in reality a combination of democracy and aristocracy, somewhere between the two, a

mean, and such societies thrive better. Virtue is in the mean rather than the extreme. Consequently, the inability of the Third World countries, particularly Africa, to strike this mean or middle course is their greatest undoing.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion this paper states that Aristotle's theory of the mean or moderation is timeless normative theory that societies neglect or reject at their peril. Extremes of wealth and poverty are both vices that should be avoided. Both societies and at the individual level citizens and the state that fail to thrive at the middle course are prone to crises of various forms. Societies struck with the bolt of poverty would certainly disintegrate as the state would not be able to fulfil its obligations to the citizens, while on the contrary extreme wealth courses states, like the Roman Empire, become lethargic and focus on indulgences that despise and neglect the duty of sustaining and maintaining its integrity and protecting its borders and citizens.

Extreme wealth disparities in capitalist societies resulted in the advancement of socialist ideas and eventual revolutions across Europe as a moderating force. In the contemporary core capitalist societies like the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Japan, etc. the existence of socialist-oriented political parties or the introduction of welfare programmes or both act as moderating forces to stabilize the system. The theory of moderation or mean is therefore a *sine qua non* for all societies seeking stability. In Third World countries the absence of a moderating force could be identified as being responsible for their numerous crises.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn above the following recommendations have become rather imperative:

1. There is virtue in moderation at both the state and individual levels against either extreme wealth or poverty. States should strive toward that end.
2. Extreme wealth disparities should be avoided as they have usually resulted in the destruction of such societies.
3. Both welfare programmes and socialist-oriented or workers' political parties should be encouraged as they act as a moderating force in contemporary societies.
4. The study of ethical political theories like Aristotle's theory of the mean should be encouraged as they provide the answers to some of the arduous challenges confronting states.

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