



Accademia di studi storici Aldo Moro

CONVEGNO INTERNAZIONALE

Il governo
delle società
XXI^{nel} secolo
Ripensando ad Aldo Moro

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Introductory speech

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Introduction

This is now the third time that the Accademia Moro has organised a public initiative to mark another decade since Aldo Moro's death.

As was the case with the 10th and 20th anniversaries, on this occasion, too, the Accademia is commemorating his death by inviting researchers, politicians and exponents of culture to take part in more than a mere celebration of remembrance of Aldo Moro, and namely to participate in an overall reflection, open to all contributions, on some **emerging issues** in the contemporary world, and to examine them also with reference to the figure of Aldo Moro.

This parallel attention to Moro and to the great issues of our times has, over the decades, enabled the Accademia to develop its **own position on Aldo Moro's thinking and work**.

This development is summed up in the title we have given to the itinerary of reflection and study promoted in occasion of this 30th anniversary of Aldo Moro's death – an itinerary that started in May 2007 and is now coming to a close with this conference. The title makes reference to **Moro's "plan"**, that is to say, to a conscious "design" geared to providing guidance to the development of Italian democracy, to European unification and to the transformations of international relations – a plan that supposedly steered his actions throughout his political career.

If there actually was a plan of this kind, then it was certainly an "**interrupted plan**", stunted in its development by Aldo Moro's political murder at the age of 62; therefore, it is very much like talking about a novel that remains largely unfinished.

Nevertheless, referring to Moro's plan still appears particularly appealing and suggestive, especially because it allows us to explain many of the continuities emerging with some clarity from the figure of this statesman.

The plan, in effect, seems to revolve around **three main strategic axes**.

The **first axis** is the constant **tendency towards inclusion** which Moro showed throughout his political career. First and foremost, the inclusion of

all citizens in the life of the State, but also of all political cultures – Catholic, Socialist and Communist – within the democratic system. This inclination is also seen in Moro's foreign policy actions, such as in his interpretation of the détente processes between East and West, in the relations between rich and poor countries of the world, and in the construction of European unity or in promoting human rights.

A **second axis** is found in Moro's great efforts to support **social pluralism**, which he perceived as the manifestation of the multiplicity and vastness of forms found in social life. This was also influenced by his great interest in modernity and especially in an openness and curiosity towards cultural, religious and philosophical options different from his own, in each one of which he perceived a "piece" of truth about mankind.

The **third strategic axis** which appears to characterise Moro's "plan" focuses on the idea of the "**achieving of democracy**". Moro saw a condition of unfulfillment and temporariness in politics and in the institutions, above all, with regard to a society that he acknowledged as "more moved and demanding". Hence his reflections on the crisis of the "political party" format or on "stunted democracy", his fears concerning the emergence of a rigid and static State, compared to the growing fluidity of social life, or the idea of a "third phase" of Italian democracy – open to the prospect of truly alternating governments.

The Accademia' actions

This interpretational key is not something of today, but is the **product of a long analysis** of Aldo Moro carried out by the Accademia Aldo Moro in almost thirty years of its existence.

It has not always been a simple task, and not just for the complexity of Moro's personality and life.

Firstly, one had to fight against the many unfounded **clichés**, largely overcome today, on the figure of Aldo Moro that had given an image very distant from – and sometimes even the opposite – of the reality, such as of being a not very pragmatic leader, of being a not very communicative politician, quite detached from the people, or of being a pessimistic intellectual with pointlessly complicated thinking.

A fairly significant part of the Accademia's activities has thus had to take on an **apologetic** feature, so to speak, that is, of defending the figure of Aldo Moro at least from the most evident distortions.

This was not the only obstacle to overcome, however. The Accademia has made great efforts over these years also to **detach Moro from the pages of news coverage**, to free it of the "Moro case", in order to get Italian culture and media to finally focus the attention on his overall political and human life, certainly a high profile one, and not just on his last days.

What is at stake: Moro – an interpreter of the crisis of politics

All this has enabled us to grasp some of Moro's peculiar traits, which I still find, even today, of some interest for us.

And I wish to start from Moro's ability to strategically approach the problems of his times with farsightedness – an ability which makes him particularly close to our sensibility of today. In effect, many of his **worries** as regards the capability of politics to **steer contemporary societies** are extraordinarily similar to those found in most of today's political discussions. Moro was an **interpreter** – an **epistemologist**, I would say – of the **crisis of politics**; not just of the crisis he saw before his own eyes, but, perhaps, also of the one we are facing today.

The crisis of politics as de-socialisation

Perhaps, what Moro feared most was not a mere cultural and communicational detachment between "citizens" and "politics", but a more general and more serious **gap** between "**society**" and "**politics**", which structurally prevents the latter from grasping, interpreting and thus guiding the macroscopic changes underway in contemporary societies.

What he said in 1976 is quite significant in this regard.

The power of the State has diminished. (...). It is thus right to fear for the democratic State, to doubt that it cannot manage to be an open,

flexible instrument that is institutionally capable of giving freedom all its space. The balance between the growing freedoms of modern society and the power necessary for collective order is among the greatest problems of our times – if not the greatest one.

It is quite surprising to see how strong these statements by Moro still are after forty years.

They manage to summarise – in its fundamental traits – that phenomenon which we can call the “**de-socialisation**” of politics, which seems to be even more marked today. A **de-socialised politics** is a kind of politics that is out of place with the lines of development of society – no longer fully in line with the social body, in permanent delay with respect to the mentality, action and expectations of citizens, who inevitably tend not to appreciate it and thus to marginalise it.

Socialisation as re-adaptation and re-organisation

It is not difficult to grasp what is at **stake** in all this. The risks are not measured solely in terms of missed opportunities or wasted resources, but also in terms of an overall deterioration of the democratic system, destined to lose social strength, authoritativeness and consensus.

For politics, the issue is thus that of a “**resocialisation**”, that is, of coming back into play in a leading role, to establish new and deeper bonds with society. This implies a dual parallel movement.

Firstly, it seems to me that institutions and political leaders have to “**readapt**” to **society**, by learning to know it and, above all, to be permeated by social changes. On this, allow me to quote another passage by Aldo Moro, of November 1968:

Of course, we shall work within the real data of the situation, defending freedom, order and peace from disorder. But we must do so – and this is the novelty and difficulty of our condition – with the spirit of those who, being aware of the political limitations and reasons of realism and prudence, deeply believe that a new mankind is on the move, accept this prospect, wish it intensely, and strive to make possible and accelerate a new order in the world.

Hence, the idea of accepting the prospect of change, and wishing it intensely.

But, in order to be resocialised, politics also needs to gain **greater control over itself**, by knowing how to grasp and interpret the changes which, through successive shifts great and small, change it from within, making sure that all of this does not take on the form of a “drift” that goes along without any guidance.

However, both of these movements involve a capacity for political leaders to recognise the **actors** who, in the institutions, in civil society, in the business world or in political and trade union organisations, are already moving in the right direction in order to – as Aldo Moro used to say – “sustain this motion” and to promote it as much as possible.

A new way of doing politics

This reasoning brings us to the heart of our international conference starting today.

As its title suggests, it is not just a conference on Aldo Moro. At its heart there is, rather, a **reflection on some great changes**, pertaining to the so-called “knowledge society”, that are challenging politics today.

Inasmuch as he only saw the beginnings of these changes, it seems difficult to see a topicality in Moro that is immediate, simple and direct. Indeed, the more time goes on, the more his topicality – if there still is one – must be sought through interpretative paths that are each time more articulated and mediated. It is in this key that we should interpret “thinking back to Aldo Moro”, which is part of the conference title, that refers to a hermeneutically open, flexible and non-ideological bond with Moro.

However, reconnecting with Moro is an effort worth making, especially because it enables us to **once more put into play** – in the present time – **some of his ideas** on politics and on its relationship with society that are still suggestive, penetrating and of amazing refinement. Aside from any analysis of their topicality or non-topicality, they do seem to constitute, so to speak, a set of “guidelines” that are perhaps useful even for the political world of today.

Politics as a form of knowledge

First. I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that, for Moro, politics – even before being a specific form of acting – was a **specific form of knowledge**, the place *par excellence* where – to use his expression – intelligence is called upon to “dominate events”, to recognise them, more deeply study them, evaluate them in their positive and negative potential, and thus guide and channel them towards desired goals.

The autonomy of politics

Second. As a specific form of knowledge, Moro considered politics to have its own **incontestable autonomy**. It grasps relations, issues, stakes, risks and opportunities that other forms of knowledge – such as religious knowledge or artistic, philosophical or scientific knowledge – are unable to do, when analysing the same objects. By developing on its own level, **politics does not oppose anything and does not fear any encroachment on its field**, but is actually interested in ensuring that all other forms of knowledge of reality can express themselves fully.

Politics as a synthesis and guide of social dynamics

Third. Despite its autonomy, politics – in Moro’s view – **exists only if it constantly relates to the whole social dynamics**, of which it is partly the expression.

Moro’s humour cannot escape us when, in dealing with this theme in an article in 1978, he starts by noting how the politician’s task is firstly that of “not spoiling what social life, in its positive development, is already building by itself”.

But the politician’s role goes well beyond this: it is, obviously, that of “making a synthesis” – a **broad and sophisticated synthesis** able to grasp all the demands and expectations of the different actors concerned, including them within “an overall design which is, on the whole, complete and stable”. Politics, yesterday as today, is thus at the point of greatest turbulence of social life, and is therefore facing the drives produced by various expressions of human subjectivity, which it is called upon to recognise, support, and if necessary to firmly oppose, in order to make them compatible with one another and to coordinate them within a shared perspective.

The positive view of social reality

Fourth. This idea of politics is connected to a **positive view** of the dynamics enlivening society, even if well aware of the risks that may derive from them.

For example, it is difficult to overlook the fact that Moro was one of the very few leaders of his times who saw the **ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s** in a positive light and even with some hope, not hesitating to grasp a process of liberation within them, the imposing of a “moral force” coming from below, the heralding of new times, the advancing of a new mankind.

In not too dissimilar a manner, he saw **positive signs of emancipation in the international sphere**, such as the birth of a global public opinion, a strengthened role of the United Nations, a more widespread awareness of human rights, and, more generally, the emergence of “a new vision of international relations”, conscious of the increased intensity of relations between national communities, at all levels.

All this reflects a more general attitude of Moro to look positively and, I would say, with **prudent, but grounded optimism**, to society and to its changes. As he wrote in 1977:

I am thinking of the immense interweaving of love uniting the world, of authentic religious experiences, of orderly families, of the generosity of youth, of forms of industrious solidarity with the marginalised of the Third World, of social communities, of workers' moving attachment to their work. The examples are manifold. It is enough to look where we do not often look and to concern ourselves with what very often does not interest us. (...)

Politics as negotiation

Fifth. In this perspective, the **negotiation** theme becomes a key one for Moro. Negotiation is the alternative to conflict; it is the way to overcome the logic of force and to open up to logics based on mutual trust and cooperation, and thus on discussion and dialogue; it is the instrument through which it becomes possible to include all members of society within the democratic process. All this inevitably slows down political action; as Moro himself noted in 1978:

It is, indeed, an inevitable way of proceeding, which makes political life complicated, difficult to decipher, sometimes irritating (...). Yet, and this must be stressed here, it is not a matter of alchemy, of artifice, of smoke screens, but of a serious pondering of the elements at play, of a search for compatibility, of a valorisation of unity within diversity.

The politician's habitus

Sixth and last point. What clearly emerges from this complex mix of Moro's orientations and positions is a sort of "**habitus**" of the politician, a peculiar idea of what "doing politics" and "being in politics" means.

What Moro sees is a politician bearing a **vision of the world** that is full of meaning and based on profound internal experiences, often of a religious nature, and able to formulate solid **strategic prospects**. In many ways, Moro himself embodied this idea of politician – he certainly did not lack the ideas or strategic orientation, nor a solid spiritual and ideological base, based, in his case, on a profound faith.

However, this kind of politician devotes **constant positive attention to what happens in society** and places him/herself at its service, without expecting to force it, but also without giving up the idea of steering it. For this reason, too, a political leader is one who understands the **limitations imposed by reality** and can make those **necessary decisions**, even when they are unpopular, putting his or her own personal subjectivity into the background. Moro stated that a politician must often renounce finding the best solutions, those that interpret him the most, and must make do with improving some merely passable solutions or even downright mediocre ones.

In short, I believe that Moro was thinking of a politician who is flexible, open to **negotiation**, gifted with great driving ideals and able to build **wide-ranging action prospects** on them; but, at the same time, a person who is **concrete and pragmatic** – with a concreteness and pragmatism capable of measuring up to a society in which, as far back as then and even more so today, the intangible, symbolic and cognitive aspects are decisive in determining the fate of a community.

Emerging indications

As I said, I am not concerned here with going into depth on the topicality and relevance of these representations of politics with respect to today's world. It must be said, though, that however farsighted Moro was, he could not, of course, even imagine the complex – and in some ways indecipherable – development lines that contemporary societies are following today.

It is enough to look about oneself to understand this. This conference is being held when there is still a financial crisis underway – a crisis whose features and scale still escape contemporary analysts themselves; a crisis that, above all, shows the **fragility and inadequacy of those government instruments** that we, as national and continental communities, but also as a human race, have given ourselves. Moreover, this conference is being held in the wake of the United States presidential elections whose features – and I am thinking of the role of internet in the electoral campaign, of the complex social and cultural segmentation of the electorate, of the similarly complex ways of building consensus, of the biography of the US president elect – allow us to fully measure the **distance** between the society we live in and the one Moro knew.

Everything makes us think that we are only at the start. What awaits us is not just a deep reconfiguration of social and economic systems. Something is probably also changing in individuals themselves, in the way they experience reality, communicate, have feelings or handle themselves. If it weren't a very much abused term, it would be appropriate to talk of a "revolution", I would say a cognitive revolution before a specifically material one, in view of the fact that what happens inside the heads of billions of actors moving around on this planet today seems to be more important than what happens at a material level.

Nevertheless, despite the great distance between Moro's world and ours, I think we can grasp two general indications – I would say **two "messages"**, coming from the by now almost thirty years of studying the figure of Aldo Moro.

The message to ordinary citizens

The first could be addressed to citizens in general and above all to those who are suspicious of politics.

Politics plays a decisive role in shaping our future; a role whose significance appears all the more evident today as its weakness appears to be. We are used to thinking of strong politics and weak citizens. We must instead start thinking in the opposite manner, for better or for worse: it is politics that is weak and citizens who are strong.

In order for it to work, **politics thus needs society**; that is, citizens who do not turn their backs on politics, but who take on their own responsibilities, become bearers of those demands and solutions that politics does not see – not in order to by-pass politics but to ensure that politics sees them. The core of this first message is thus that of **giving back confidence and value to politics**, to support it, not leaving it to go along by itself, because without the support of the community, it runs great dangers; and with it, all of us.

The message to politicians

There is then a second message, in some way mirroring the first, and specifically addressed to politicians.

Moro was fully aware of just how “small” politics is compared to the depth and scale of the processes it is called upon to regulate. All this also challenges the political leaders today.

Hence, it is around this challenge that this second message revolves, which takes on the features of an invitation to politicians: that is, of **recognising their own limits** and own difficulties, but also of being **more aware of the centrality** and, I would say, the nobility of the tasks that society as a whole entrusts to it: guaranteeing order within the disorder of things; assuring a fair synthesis of the many drives present in society; guiding social processes in order to maximise their benefits and minimise their damage.

These are tasks which politics cannot guarantee if not in continuous harmony with the social body; they are, in any case, tasks which require an exercising – I would say, an aristocratic exercising – of intelligence and

of ability, as well as an ethos and sense of responsibility that leaders themselves must rapidly strengthen; because there is no longer room for superficial or ideological interpretations and for short-lived improvised solutions.

Conclusions

I have tried to highlight, above all, the sense of that “thinking back to Aldo Moro”, which we decided to include in the title of this international conference. In the next few days, in the various séances, we will have the chance to discuss the great pressing issues concerning the **governance of societies of the 21st century**, which the main part of this conference starting today will refer to.

I shall, therefore, close my address by thanking all the authorities present, starting from the President of the Republic, who has granted his High Patronage to this initiative, as well as to all those who accepted to take part in the debate on the conference themes over these four days. I am convinced that all the speakers and participants will not only field their experience and competence, but also that passion, curiosity and open-mind which are the essential ingredients in order to intelligently dominate, as Moro suggested, the events of particular complexity we are facing today and on which an important part of our common future depends.