“A truce in Syria, or Al Qaeda will step in” (Nazione – Carlino – Giorno)

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“The only credible way out of the Syrian crisis is a government of national agreement”. This is in Russia’s interest too, because “if the conflict continues, Assad’s regime will in any case emerged defeated and only Al Qaeda and radicalism will be left standing in the ruins”. In other words, the opposite of what Moscow wants. In his first-floor office in the Farnesina building, Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi apprehensively scans the agency dispatches and reports on the situation on the ground. And his approach is based on realism.

Aleppo is capitulating. Was there no way to avoid a victory of Assad’s regime?

“I think that even if, as is likely, the Syrian regime emerges as victors on the military level in Aleppo, it will be the losers on the political level. And it is no coincidence that the break-up of the regime has accelerated. Of course, it’s difficult to way how long Assad will manage to stay in the saddle”.

In the last few days we’ve seen increasingly explicit and worrying support from Iran.

“We’ve always known there was an Iranian-Syrian axis. Recently, it’s become much more explicit. But this only shows that Syria feels isolated and weak; it feels it’s being pushed into a political corner”.

And what’s the international community doing, other than voicing its condemnation?

“It’s focused on appointing a successor to Kofi Annan. We expect that successor’s mandate to be more robust: the new special envoy will need to be able to speak with the members of the opposition and with the regime, and convince it that the only credible way out, for the Alawites too, is to establish a government of national agreement that would guarantee Syria’s future and prevent the country from falling into the abyss of disintegration”.

The free Syrian Army is suffering a dramatic lack of resources. Will we ever cross the Rubicon and supply direct military aid to Assad’s opponents?

“The no-fly zone could be a necessary card to play to prevent this dreadful massacre. In concrete terms, however, I view it as a remote possibility. The English have confirmed the intention of many of the allies to provide non-lethal support to the resistance, but we’re still far

from supplying military equipment. And we're even further from sending troops, which nobody thinks can be deployed without a legal framework that we know is not on the cards".

And what about the Syrian population? The displaced persons now number nearly two million.

"That's the really urgent question: how to exponentially increase humanitarian aid within and outside Syria. We need to do more. I discussed this yesterday with the French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, in the run-up to the Security Council meeting at the end of the month, and will take action in Brussels too, with the French, to urge the EU also to do more".

Do you think it's in Russia's interest to go on supporting Assad's regime a priori?

"Russia reads everything to do with the Arab Spring from a critical perspective, because it deems it to be a field where extremist political Islam will emerge. And in view of what's happened in the Caucasus, their concerns are understandable. But I would like to say to Russia that, given how things now stand, there really is a risk that the post-Assad Syria will be worse than it might be if the conflict stopped now. If the regime ends up collapsing as a result of a civil war, only Al Qaeda and its allies will be left standing in the ruins".

One last question. The case of our marines still hasn't been resolved. Does dialogue pay, or not?

"It's not a question of dialogue or no dialogue. We found ourselves with two courageous marines, doing their duty, who were caught up by a deception. At that point, our priority was to ensure that they were safe and their dignity safeguarded, by using all the procedures envisaged by that country's [India's] legal system. At the international level we've engaged in intensive diplomatic activity in all of the most important fora, such as the UN, the G8 and the EU, and with our principal partners, to affirm Italy's sole jurisdiction in the case. And it's a good thing that last Friday [10 August] the Inter-Departmental Committee for the Security of the Republic discussed the issue in some depth. The Committee reiterated the Government's joint approach to any action and its determination to pursue all the roads available to us".

Source : https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/2012/08/20120813_siria/