# Alfano “Justified response by violations in Damascus. But now let us resort to the UN” (Corriere della Sera)

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“Minister Alfano, are we sure that Assad used chemical weapons during the Khan Sheikhoun bombing, or was the area bombed with conventional armaments from ISIL chemical weapon stocks, as Russia maintains?”

“Practically speaking, the missiles launched from U.S. ships struck the Syrian bases where the attacks to civilians originated. In other words, the U.S. response is not an attack to local communities, nor to Russian military forces, but  a response to Assad’s repeated violations to the cease-fire, and the multiple acts of violence made by his armed forces to civilians. It was a concrete and targeted sign. I do not mean that we should leave aside a definitive investigation on what actually happened at Khan Sheikhoun, the site of dozens of victims, especially children. But, as the international community’s opinion confirms, it was an intervention which was shared and justified. Not only that, there is the fact the Russians were informed ahead of time, and shows the will to avoid the inadvertent involvement of their soldiers.”

“Do you exclude that the attack is the prelude to new actions leading to an escalation?”

“The Pentagon clearly stated that it was a “one-off” action. The paradox is that the U.S. one-off intervention might put an end to stagnated negotiations, which have slowed down in recent months. The ceasefire established at the Astana Summit, the diplomatic tool Russia designed to measure its creditworthiness among the international community, has not been enforced either. Now the window for opportunity lies, once again, in the hands of the United Nations and in the Geneva negotiations led by Staffan de Mistura. We acknowledge the merits of Astana, but the solution can come only from the United Nations. And today, we need to take advantage of the shock produced by President Trump’s decisive action to reopen the Geneva scenario.”

“You said you are looking forward to Secretary of State Tillerson’s visit to Moscow. Is it still possible to relaunch a dialogue between Russia and the United States?“

“Any individual with common sense cannot but hope that it is. A resumption of relations would be beneficial for peace, stability and the wellbeing of everyone. I still think that it is a mistake to isolate Moscow. I hoped the Syrian issue would provide the scenario for a new entente

between Russia and the United States. From the beginning of Trump's administration, it was obvious that there was a mutual interest. Putin was aiming at finishing up the Russian military commitment, and Trump was interested in focusing on Syria again. But, it did not actually turn out that way. However, now that scenario can be reopened again after the traumatic attack which killed those children and the North American reaction to it."

"And how?"

"By referring the issue to the UN, the favoured venue for finding the point of equilibrium capable of stabilising Syria. By bringing the political transition to fruition, Syrians will be able to choose their leader. This will leave space to Europe for reconstruction, an issue we are investing much of our leadership in."

"Is it likely for U.S. action to have negative consequences in Iraq, where Shiite militias linked to Iran fight next to U.S. militaries against ISIL? Is this fear grounded?"

"We need to clarify that the anti-terrorism coalition is broad and stretches across dozens of countries, which do not always enjoy good bilateral relations. We must do everything we can to keep this alliance united against the common enemy that is Da'esh, especially facing incidents such as the tragic attack which occurred in Stockholm. It is an asymmetrical and deadly global challenge. That is why the United Nations is the right venue to focus on Syria under the condition that it should not lead to the collapse of the anti-terrorism coalition."

"Does the action on Syria bring the Trump Administration back to a more traditional path with U.S. foreign policy?"

"Yes. First of all, it makes the United States the featured actors again on a stage where they had been on the margins. Secondly, if Democrats show their support of the intervention, it will bring back national unity on foreign policy issues. Thirdly, it places the United States within a framework of actions strongly supported by the European Union. Just read the declarations of the Italian, German, French and British governments to realise this. And all of this will also have an effect on European domestic policy."

"Would you please explain that?"

"There are some opinions against Trump's intervention, namely residing among Populists such as [France's] Le Pen, [Italy's ] Lega, and [Italy's] Five-Star Movement. Until now, they had commended Trump and Putin alternatively. Now, reality imposes them to make a choice. Evidence shows that European governments, the ones led by popular movements, Socialists or both forces together, stand with their American ally, while anti-European forces are against the United States. This is the European divide today."

Source : https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/2017/04/intervista-a-angelino-alfano-risposta/