



# Red Line Regret

## *Two Years After Obama's "Red Line" Statement, The Obama-Clinton Foreign Policy Is In Shambles*

**Two Years Ago Today, Obama Said That The Use Or Movement Of Chemical Weapons In Syria Would Be A "Red Line" That Would "Change My Calculus."** OBAMA: "We cannot have a situation where chemical or biological weapons are falling into the hands of the wrong people. We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus."

(President Barack Obama, [Remarks To The White House Press Corps](#), Washington, DC, 8/20/12)

- **Obama: We Have Said "That's A Red Line For Us And That There Would Be Enormous Consequences If We Start Seeing Movement On The Chemical Weapons..."** OBAMA: "We have communicated in no uncertain terms with every player in the region that that's a red line for us and that there would be enormous consequences if we start seeing movement on the chemical weapons front or the use of chemical weapons. That would change my calculations significantly."

(President Barack Obama, [Remarks To The White House Press Corps](#), Washington, DC, 8/20/12)

### *But After Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad Crossed Obama's "Red Line" And Gassed Thousands Of His Own Civilians, Obama "Didn't Do Anything" About It*

**After Obama Declared That, In Gassing 1,400 Civilians To Death, Assad Had "Violated Civilized Norms And Crossed His, Obama's, Red Line," He Shelved His Request For A Military Response.** "Obama declared that Assad, in gassing 1,400 civilians to death, had violated civilized norms and crossed his, Obama's, red line. He asked for congressional approval for a military response; then he shelved that request in favor of a deal, brokered by Russian President Vladimir Putin, for Assad to hand over his chemical arsenal." (Fred Hiatt, Op-Ed, "Obama's Foreign Policy Reveals The Effects Of Disengagement," [The Washington Post](#), 7/27/14)

- **Council On Foreign Relations' Leslie Gelb On Failed Syria Policy: "We Drew Red Lines And Then Didn't Do Anything About Them."** We drew red lines and then didn't do anything about them, walked away from them. And now we're in a position where it seems we're just going to let this war drag on with terrible consequences that Fred Hof described and you know full well the horrors of it." (Leslie Gelb, Committee On Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, [Testimony](#), 10/31/13)

## **THE ADMINISTRATION'S "FECKLESS" FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY, PARTICULARLY IN SYRIA, HAS "FUELED" MANY OF TODAY'S INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS**

**Council On Foreign Relations' Richard Haass: The Obama Administration Has Opted For A "Feckless" Foreign Policy Approach, Particularly In Syria.** "The Obama administration has largely opted for the former, i.e., feckless approach. The most egregious case is Syria, where the president and

others declared that 'Assad must go' only to do little to bring about his departure." (Richard N. Haass, Op-Ed, "A Foreign Policy Flirting With Chaos," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 4/29/14)

**Several Diplomats Abroad Believe Obama's Policies "Have Fueled Today's Conflicts."** "The president's critics in Washington, as well as some diplomats abroad, believe Mr. Obama's policies have fueled today's conflicts." (Jay Solomon and Carol E. Lee, "Obama Contends With Arc Of Instability Unseen Since '70s," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 7/13/14)

- **The Washington Post Headline: "Obama's Foreign Policy Reveals The Effects Of Disengagement"** (Fred Hiatt, Op-Ed, "Obama's Foreign Policy Reveals The Effects Of Disengagement," [The Washington Post](#), 7/27/14)

**Former Secretary Of State Madeline Albright: "[T]o Put It Mildly, The World Is A Mess."** MADELINE ALBRIGHT: "There are an awful lot of things going on that need understanding and explanation, but to put it mildly, the world is a mess." (CBS' "Face The Nation," 7/27/14)

## **OBAMA'S FAILURE TO ENFORCE HIS OWN "RED LINE" EMBOLDENED OTHER LEADERS, LIKE ASSAD AND PUTIN, TO CREATE CHAOS AROUND THE GLOBE**

**According To A Former Senior Aide, Obama's "Oft-Repeated Lines That Those Who Violate International Norms Will Be 'Isolated' And 'Pay A Heavy Price' Over The Long Term Have Sounded 'More Like Predictions Over Time, And Less Like Imminent Threats.'" "We're seeing the 'light footprint' run out of gas," said one of Mr. Obama's former senior national security aides, who would not speak on the record about his ex-boss. 'No one is arguing for military action, for bringing back George Bush's chest-thumping,' the former aide said. At the same time, he said, the president's oft-repeated lines that those who violate international norms will be 'isolated' and 'pay a heavy price' over the long term have sounded 'more like predictions over time, and less like imminent threats.'" (David E. Sanger, "Global Crises Put Obama's Strategy Of Caution To The Test," [The New York Times](#), 3/16/14)**

- **"When The Leader Of The World's Only Superpower Issues A Military Ultimatum And Then Blinks, Others Notice."** (Editorial, "Putin Declares War," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 3/2/14)

**"Greedy Lawbreakers Have Been Emboldened By Obama's Unenforced 'Red Lines' In Syria"** (Leslie H. Gelb, Op-Ed, "Obama Must Show He'll Use Military Means To Deter Russia In Ukraine," [The Daily Beast](#), 3/30/14)

- **Obama's Wavering On The Syrian "Red Line" And "Dithering On A Decision Projected Weakness."** "Americans don't favor military action in Syria and can't stomach genocide. That may be right, but wavering on a 'red line' and dithering on a decision projected weakness. Months later, Syria is flouting chemical weapons deadlines imposed in the deal Obama cut via Russia." (Ron Fournier, "A President Blinded By Righteousness," [National Journal](#), 3/10/14)

### ***Crisis In The Middle East & ISIS***

**Years Of Civil War In Syria "Have Left Much Of The Country In Shambles" And The Radical Islamic Group, ISIS, Has Taken Advantage Of The Crisis To Expand Its Territory In The Region.** "Three years of civil war have left much of the country in shambles. While regime helicopters drop barrel bombs on opposition neighborhoods, dissidents say, the government maintains its stance that it's only fighting terrorists. As if the civil war wasn't enough, the radical Sunni group Islamic State in Iraq in Syria is using this opportunity to carve its own swath of territory from the Iraq border to deep inside Syria." (Holly Yan, "How Did This Happen? Iraq, Syria, Gaza And Libya All In Flames," [CNN](#), 7/16/14)

- **"President Bashar Al-Assad's War On His Own People Created A Vacuum Of Authority That ISIS Has Filled, And ISIS Now Threatens The United States As Assad's Barrel Bombs Never Did."** (James Traub, "Doing Nothing In Now Out Of The Question," [Foreign Policy](#), 7/3/14)

- ***The Washington Post's David Ignatius: "The Delay In Framing A Credible Plan For Stopping The Islamic State Is Part Of A Larger Worry About President Obama's Foreign Policy."*** (David Ignatius, Op-Ed, "Obama's Foreign Policy Inertia," [The Washington Post](#), 7/15/14)

### ***Crisis In Ukraine***

**"In The Brutal World Of Global Power Politics, Ukraine Is In Particular A Casualty Of Mr. Obama's Failure To Enforce His 'Red Line' On Syria."** (Editorial, "Putin Declares War," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 3/2/14)

**Russian President Vladimir Putin Is "Flagrantly Disregarding" The Administration's "Red Lines" And He Has Reason To Do So: "Obama Also Doesn't Observe Them."** "Again Vladimir Putin is flagrantly disregarding the warnings and 'red lines' of the Obama administration. He has reason to do so: President Obama also doesn't observe them." (Editorial, "President Obama, Disregarding His Own 'Red Line,' Dithers On Ukraine," [The Washington Post](#), 4/21/14)

- ***The Washington Post Headline: "President Obama, Disregarding His Own 'Red Line,' Dithers On Ukraine"*** (Editorial, "President Obama, Disregarding His Own 'Red Line,' Dithers On Ukraine," [The Washington Post](#), 4/21/14)

## **EVEN DIPLOMATS AND OBAMA ALLIES ARE SKEPTICAL OF HIS HANDLING OF THE SYRIAN CRISIS**

**Obama's Former Ambassador To Syria, Robert Ford: "As The Situation In Syria Deteriorated, I Found It Ever Harder To Justify Our Policy."** "In February, I resigned as the American ambassador to Syria, after 30 years' foreign service in Africa and the Middle East. As the situation in Syria deteriorated, I found it ever harder to justify our policy. It was time for me to leave." (Robert S. Ford, Op-Ed, "Arm Syria's Opposition," [The New York Times](#), 6/10/14)

- ***Ford: The Administration's Current Policy Is "Treating Symptoms, Not The Disease."*** "Americans can be proud that we have provided over \$2 billion in humanitarian aid to help Syrian refugees. But this is treating symptoms, not the disease. We must have a strategy that deals with both Mr. Assad and the jihadists." (Robert S. Ford, Op-Ed, "Arm Syria's Opposition," [The New York Times](#), 6/10/14)

**In An April Speech, Ambassador Samantha Power "Seemed To Rebuke The Administration In Which She Serves For Its Handling Of The Syria Catastrophe."** "Last week, in a powerful speech that should have received more attention than it has so far, Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, seemed to rebuke the administration in which she serves for its handling of the Syria catastrophe." (Jeffrey Goldberg, "Did Samantha Power Just Rebuke Obama On Syria," [Bloomberg](#), 5/6/14)

**Former Obama National Security Advisor General Jim Jones: "[W]ashington Bears Some Blame For Not Taking Timely Action That Could Have Limited This Summer's Chaos."** "Mr. Maliki's failure to unify Iraq's diverse populations is the chief cause of the current crisis, but Washington bears some blame for not taking timely action that could have limited this summer's chaos." (James L. Jones, Op-Ed, "How To Save Iraq And Honor American Sacrifice," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 8/14/14)

- ***Jones: "The Obama Administration Could Have ... Acted In Syria Last Year When The Chemical Weapons 'Red Line' Was Crossed..."*** "The Obama administration could have maintained a limited military training presence in Iraq after 2011; could have acted in Syria last year when the chemical weapons 'red line' was crossed; and could have insisted that Mr. Maliki arm the Kurds. But what matters more is what the U.S. can do now." (James L. Jones, Op-Ed, "How To Save Iraq And Honor American Sacrifice," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 8/14/14)

## AND IT'S NOT JUST OBAMA – HILLARY CLINTON HAS LONG ADDED TO THE CONFUSION OF U.S. POLICY IN SYRIA

### *In 2011, Then-Secretary Clinton Called Assad A "Reformer"*

**In 2011, Then-Secretary Of State Hillary Clinton Said Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad Was A "Different Leader" From His Autocratic Father And Was A "Reformer."** CBS' BOB SCHIEFFER: "But I mean, how can that be worse than what has happened in Syria over the years, where Bashar Assad's father killed 25,000 people at (inaudible). I mean, they opened fire with live ammunition on these civilians. Why is that different from Libya? This is the friend of Iran, an enemy of Israel?" CLINTON: "Well, if there were a coalition of the international community, if there were the passage of a security council resolution, if there were a call by the Arab League, if there was a condemnation that was universal. But that is not going to happen because I don't think that it's yet clear what will occur, what will unfold. There's a different leader in Syria now. Many of the members of congress of both parties who have gone to Syria in recent months have said they believe he's a reformer. What's been happening there the last few weeks is deeply concerning. But there's a difference between calling out aircraft and indiscriminately strafing and bombing your own cities than police actions which frankly have exceeded the use of force that any of us would want to see." (CBS' ["Face The Nation,"](#) 3/27/11)

- **In Her Comments, Clinton Was Reflecting A Piece Of "Wishful Thinking" To Which The Obama Administration Had "Tenaciously Clung."** "Ms. Clinton was only reflecting a piece of wishful thinking to which the Obama administration and its congressional allies have tenaciously clung: that Mr. Assad, despite his brutality, sponsorship of terrorism and close alliance with Iran, can somehow be turned into a Western ally." (Editorial, "Can Syria's Dictator Reform?" [The Washington Post](#), 3/29/11)

### *With Obama's Foreign Policy In Shambles, Clinton Is Trying To Rewrite History On The Obama-Clinton Syria Policy*

**This Month, Clinton Took Her "Furthest, Most Public Step Away" From Obama, Saying His Decision Not To Back The Syrian Opposition Early In The Conflict Was A "Failure."** "Hillary Clinton has taken her furthest, most public step away yet from President Barack Obama, rejecting the core of his self-described foreign policy doctrine and describing his decision against backing Syrian rebels early on as a 'failure.'" (Maggie Haberman, "Why Hillary Clinton Spoke Out On Obama," [Politico](#), 8/10/14)

**But During A 2012 Hearing, Then-Secretary Clinton Expressed Skepticism Over Arming The Syrian Opposition.** REP. DENT: "At what point do we, along with our friends and allies, start materially supporting the Syrian people? And what impediments are there to arming the Syrian opposition? You know, the press releases and denunciations just don't seem adequate, given what's happening over there." CLINTON: "Well, with your permission, Congressman Dent, I will combine Congressman Jackson's question with yours and attempt to answer both. ...And at this point it is not clear -- like we had, you know, in Libya the Libyan opposition commanded territory. They held Benghazi. They had a face, both the people who were doing the outreach diplomatically and the fighters. We could actually meet with them, we could eyeball them, we could ask them tough questions. Here, you know, when Zawahiri of al-Qaida comes out and supports the Syrian opposition, you've got to ask yourself, if we arm, who are we arming, and how would we get the arms in there, and what good would automatic weapons against artillery and tanks do?" (Hillary Clinton, State, Foreign Operations And Related Programs Subcommittee Of The Committee On Appropriations, U.S. House Of Representatives, Testimony, 2/29/12)

- **Clinton, 2012: "[Y]ou've Got To Ask Yourself, If We Arm, Who Are We Arming, And How Would We Get The Arms In There, And What Good Would Automatic Weapons Against**



**Artillery And Tanks Do?"** REP. DENT: "At what point do we, along with our friends and allies, start materially supporting the Syrian people? And what impediments are there to arming the Syrian opposition? You know, the press releases and denunciations just don't seem adequate, given what's happening over there." CLINTON: "Well, with your permission, Congressman Dent, I will combine Congressman Jackson's question with yours and attempt to answer both. ...And at this point it is not clear -- like we had, you know, in Libya the Libyan opposition commanded territory. They held Benghazi. They had a face, both the people who were doing the outreach diplomatically and the fighters. We could actually meet with them, we could eyeball them, we could ask them tough questions. Here, you know, when Zawahiri of al-Qaida comes out and supports the Syrian opposition, you've got to ask yourself, if we arm, who are we arming, and how would we get the arms in there, and what good would automatic weapons against artillery and tanks do?" (Hillary Clinton, State, Foreign Operations And Related Programs Subcommittee Of The Committee On Appropriations, U.S. House Of Representatives, Testimony, 2/29/12)

**Clinton On Arming The Syria Rebels, 2012: "What Are We Going To Arm Them With And Against What? We're Not Going To Bring Tanks Over The Borders Of Turkey, Lebanon And Jordan."** "But the Obama administration has thus far resisted requests by Arab countries and by U.S. lawmakers like Sen. John McCain to begin the full-scale armament of the Syrian dissidents. 'What are we going to arm them with and against what? We're not going to bring tanks over the borders of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan,' Clinton said." (Wyatt Andrews, "Clinton: Too Many Concerns Over Arming Syrians," [CBS News](#), 2/27/12)

**"A Former Obama Administration Official Who Attended White House Meetings On Syria Said Mrs. Clinton Didn't Push Hard On Arming The Rebels."** (Peter Nicholas, Adam Entous, and Carol E. Lee, "Hillary Clinton's Legacy At State Dept.: A Hawk With Clipped Wings," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 5/30/14)

***But As She's Called Out For Her "Strategic Move," Clinton Finds That Creating Distance From Obama Will Not Be So Easy***

**Clinton Made The "Strategic Move" To Try And Distance Herself From Obama's Foreign Policy, But "It Failed."** "Hillary Clinton made a strategic move to begin to distance herself from President Obama's foreign policy over the weekend. It failed. Clinton's team, concerned about the blowback from Obamaworld for her critique of his 'don't do stupid stuff' comments, put a statement out Tuesday evening seeking to quiet the tensions." (Chris Cillizza, "Hillary Clinton's Barack Obama Problem," [The Washington Post](#), 8/13/14)

**Clinton's Tenure As Secretary Of State "Ties Her Political Standing To The Condition Of American Foreign Policy Even After She Has Departed Foggy Bottom."** "At the same time, that tenure ties her political standing to the condition of American foreign policy even after she has departed Foggy Bottom." (John Harwood, "She's Gone From Foggy Bottom, But Global Chaos Still Hurts Hillary," [CNBC](#), 7/30/14)

**Politico's Jon Allen: Clinton Will Have Difficulty Distancing Herself From Obama On Unpopular Actions.** ALLEN: "The difficulty she's going to have distancing herself from President Obama on things that haven't been popular that he's done." (CPSAN'S "[Washington Journal](#)," 6/8/14)

- **Completely Distancing Herself From Obama "Would Reek Of Disloyalty" And "Risk Looking Like An Assault On Her Own Record As The Country's Top Diplomat."** "Clinton cannot launch a wholesale attack on Obama's policies. That would reek of disloyalty, it would anger Obama's core supporters, and it would risk looking like an assault on her own record as the country's top diplomat." (Frida Ghitis, Op-Ed, "Should Hillary Clinton Embrace Obama's Foreign Policy?" [CNN](#), 6/11/14)