

THREE YEARS LATER:

# **“THE REFORMER” AND “THE RED LINE”**



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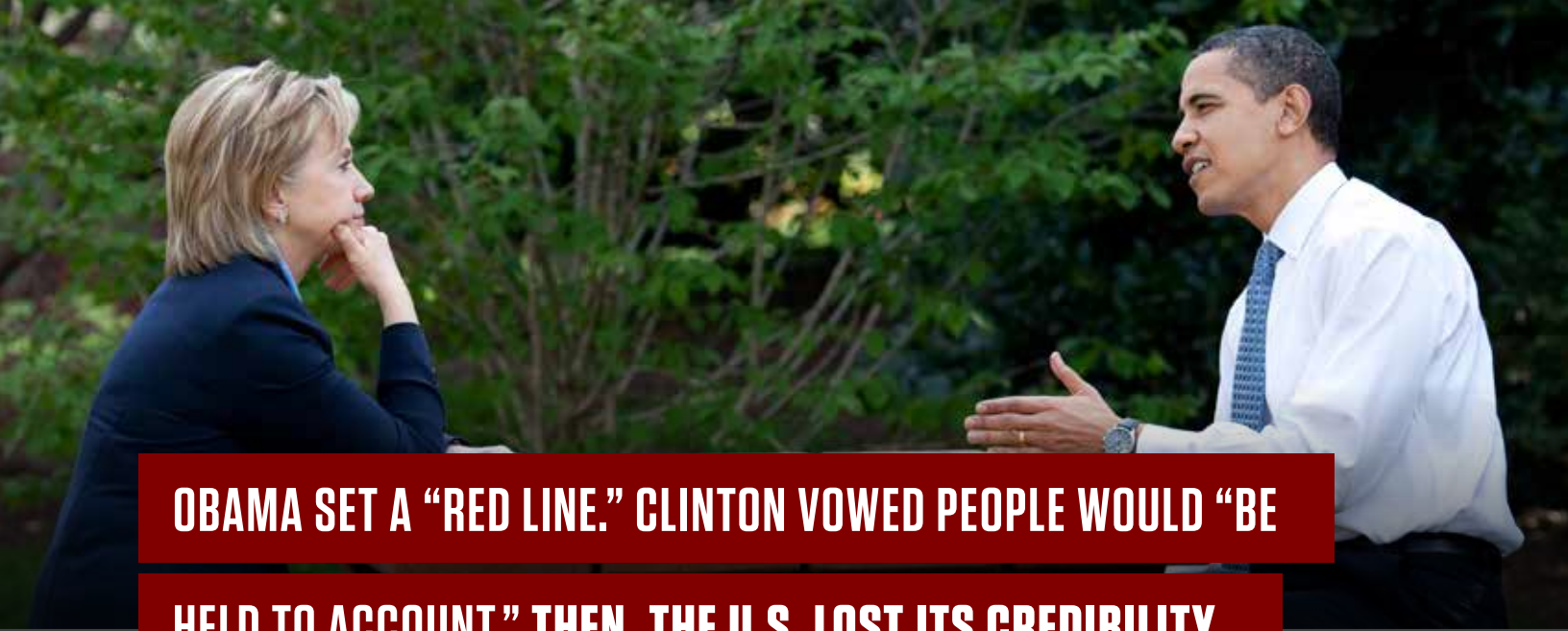
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## **OBAMA DREW A RED LINE. ASSAD CROSSED IT. OBAMA DID NOTHING.**

“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, August 20, 2012*



## OBAMA SET A “RED LINE.” CLINTON VOWED PEOPLE WOULD “BE HELD TO ACCOUNT.” THEN, THE U.S. LOST ITS CREDIBILITY.

On August 20, 2012, President Obama said that the use or movement of chemical weapons in Syria would be a “red line” that would “change [his] calculus” on acting in Syria.

As Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton reaffirmed his red line. They wanted people to know they were serious. “We have made our views very clear,” she said in December 2012. “This is a red line for the United States.”

If they found “evidence that the Assad regime had resorted to using chemical weapons against their own people,” she said, “we are certainly planning to take action.”

In August 2013, one year after the red line warning, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad did exactly that. He launched a chemical attack and murdered over 1,400 Syrians.

“The United States Government assesses with high confidence that the Syrian government carried out a chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburbs on August 21, 2013. We further assess that the regime used a nerve agent in the attack.”

— *White House Press Release, 8/30/13*

### **Obama did nothing about it.**

Leslie Gelb of the Council of Foreign Relations had this to say two months later: “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...”

Or as Former Clinton Defense Secretary William Cohen said in February 2015, “[W]hen you draw a red line, you have to enforce the red line or else you lose credibility. So we lost credibility with those in the region. We lost credibility with UAE, with the Saudis, with the Israelis. We sent a signal to other adversaries, the Russians, that we aren’t serious when we draw a redline.”



**OBAMA DIDN'T KEEP HIS WORD. SO HE TRIED TO REWRITE HISTORY.**

**AND WORLD LEADERS STARTED CREATING CHAOS.**

Soon after the White House confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria, President Obama began trying to walk back his “red line” statement. In September 2013, he argued, “I didn’t set a red line. The world set a red line.”

But other world leaders, like Assad and Putin, didn’t care about the president’s semantics. Instead, they saw a lack of U.S. leadership.

According to a former senior advisor in the Obama administration, the Syria punt “was the real turning point for the administration’s foreign policy...this was when things really started to go bad.”

“Greedy lawbreakers have been emboldened by Obama’s unenforced ‘red lines’ in Syria”

— Leslie Gelb, *The Daily Beast*, 3/30/14

“[W]avering on a ‘red line’ and dithering on a decision projected weakness.”

— Ron Fournier, *National Journal*, 3/10/14

“When the leader of the world’s only superpower issues a military ultimatum and then blinks, others notice.”

— Editorial, *The Wall Street Journal*, 3/2/14



“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, *The Washington Post*, 4/21/14

“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, *Obama’s former Ambassador to Syria*,  
*The New York Times*, 6/10/14





**ASSAD PROMISED TO GIVE UP HIS WEAPONS. OBAMA PROMISED NOT TO**

**ATTACK. ASSAD USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS ANYWAY. OBAMA DID NOTHING.**

In September of 2013, President Obama said he “welcomed” an agreement that Russia helped broker that required Syria to give up its chemical weapons. In exchange, the U.S. would not use force.

Hillary Clinton announced her support for the deal. In her book, she said that the deal should be judged a success.

In reality, it was a failure. Assad continued to use weapons anyway. And the U.S., having backed away from its “red line,” let Russia fill the leadership void, lost standing in the world, and did nothing to stop the use of chemical weapons.



In May 2015, traces of chemical weapons were found inside Syria, and the White House conceded that it was “aware that the OPCW [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] continues to receive credible allegations that the use of chemical weapons in Syria is still taking place.”

“[T]he regime is using chemical weapons regularly — even if not sarin gas now, they’re using chlorine gas regularly and they are not deterred from doing so.”

— *Robert S. Ford, Obama’s former Ambassador to Syria.*

Assad didn’t just cross the red line once. He kept crossing it. President Obama continues to let him, and the Syrian people continue to suffer.



**THE CRISIS IN SYRIA ONLY GETS WORSE.**

**THE TURMOIL IS UNIMAGINABLE.**

In March of 2015, Syria entered its fifth year of conflict.

Since the start of the civil war, more than 240,000 people have died, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. That includes nearly 12,000 children. Another 840,000 had been wounded, according to the United Nations, meaning “6 per cent of the population were killed, maimed or wounded during the conflict.”

Ten million people had fled their homes. Life expectancy fell from 76 years to 56.

“[I]t is also safe to say that conditions on the ground have continued to worsen, the Syrian people continue to suffer....”

*--John Kirby, State Department spokesman*

Robin Wright of the U.S. Institute of Peace wrote in January 2015 that the Syrian civil war “has created the region’s most costly humanitarian disaster, with every country in the neighborhood destabilized—to different degrees—by spillover.”

That instability has enabled and empowered ISIS and extremist groups like them.

“Ongoing instability has enabled the expansion of powerful jihadist elements. The self-declared Islamic State, most notably, has captured extensive territory in Syria, perpetrated shocking violence against Shias, Christians, and fellow Sunnis, and beheaded captives from the United States, United Kingdom, and France.”

*--The Council on Foreign Relations*

**There is no end in sight to the violence and the conflict.**



## THE CLINTON-OBAMA IRAN DEAL WILL MAKE THINGS WORSE FOR THE SYRIAN PEOPLE.

According to Middle East experts, Obama's focus on getting a deal with Iran influenced his approach to Syria. He needed to keep Iran happy, and Iran supports Assad.

Tony Badran, a research fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, argues as much: "The administration's Syria policy has been predicated on the White House's desire for a deal with Iran and its care to accommodate Iranian interests in Syria, which he [Obama] saw as an Iranian sphere of influence."



Indeed, Assad congratulated his allies in Iran on the nuclear deal, calling it a "great victory."

Assad certainly seems to think the deal is good for him, and it's not hard to see why. Iran has been described as Assad's "funder, protector, and supplier of weapons, foot soldiers, and strategists."

As Jeffrey Goldberg writes in *The Atlantic*, Iran is playing "a crucial role in the destruction of Syria." Now President Obama is giving them legitimacy with the nuclear deal that ends sanctions.

So thanks to President Obama and Hillary Clinton, Iran will become richer and even more influential. That's not good for the Syrian people. Quite the opposite: Iran is expected to have an even easier time propping up Assad and his brutal regime.





## BAD CHOICES: OVER AND OVER AGAIN HILLARY CLINTON

### SHOWED POOR JUDGMENT ON SYRIA.

Bashar al-Assad is waging war against his own people, but Hillary Clinton once called him “a reformer” in a 2011 interview.

*The Washington Post* criticized her days later in an editorial: “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.”

A fact checker even gave her “three Pinocchios” for the statement.



Time has confirmed just how wrong Clinton was.



But it wasn't the last time she showed poor judgment on Syria. She backed the “red line,” and then backed the president when he backed away from it.

More recently, she has tried to rewrite history, criticizing the president's decision not to arm Syrian rebels. She says they should have been armed. But in reality, she was also skeptical about arming them. In 2012, she testified to Congress and said, “[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?”

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, “a former Obama Administration official who attended White House meetings on Syria said Mrs. Clinton didn't push hard on arming the rebels.”

You can't trust Hillary Clinton to show good judgment on foreign policy. But you can trust her to try to make herself look good after the fact.