

September 8, 2013

Steve Hayward at Power Line with a prescient Mencken quote.

Way back in 1920, the great H.L. Mencken offered the following forecast for the future of the presidency:

“As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart’s desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.”

Behold the proof: Barack Obama.

Jonah Goldberg is first up trying to explain US Syria policy.

... So from the vantage point of foreign brutes, bullies, and buffoons, it’s understandable that America’s methods could be confused for stupidity. This is why I love the old expression, “America can choke on a gnat, but swallow a tiger whole.”

So I am trying very hard to hold onto this perspective as I watch the president of the United States behave in a way you don’t have to be a pan-Arab autocrat to think is incredibly stupid.

Where to begin? Perhaps with Obama’s initial refusal to support the moderate rebels seeking to overthrow Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, a puppet of Iran and bagman for Hezbollah. Or we might start with Obama’s refusal to support the Green Movement in Iran, which sought to overthrow the Iranian regime, which would have been a triumph for both our principles and our national interests.

These were odd choices, particularly given his decision to help depose Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, an indisputably evil man, but also a dictator who posed no threat, who abided by our demands to relinquish WMDs, and whose domestic death toll was a tiny fraction of Assad’s. ...

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The buck stopped with Truman. For Obama, the buck is kryptonite.

In Stockholm on Wednesday, the president said that the credibility of the world, America, Congress, and the international community is on the line. Everybody is on the hook for his red line, except for the one person who actually drew it.

I’d love to see the genius in that argument, but it looks like clear-cut stupidity to me.

Charles Krauthammer says the president is not serious.

...Problem is, Obama promised U.S. weaponry three months ago and not a rifle has arrived. This time around, what seems in the making is a mere pinprick, designed to be, one U.S. official told the Los Angeles Times, "just muscular enough not to get mocked."

That's why Dempsey is so glum. That's why U.S. allies are so stunned. There's no strategy, no purpose here other than helping Obama escape self-inflicted humiliation.

This is deeply unserious. Unless Obama can show the country that his don't-mock-me airstrike is, in fact, part of a serious strategic plan, Congress should vote no.

John McCain changed the administration's authorization resolution to include, mirabile dictu, a U.S. strategy in Syria: to alter the military equation (against Assad). Unfortunately, Obama is not known for being bound by what Congress passes (see, for example: health care, employer mandate).

When Obama tells the nation what he told McCain and Lindsey Graham in private — that he plans to degrade Assad's forces, upgrade the resistance and alter the balance of forces — Congress might well consider authorizing the use of force. But until then, it's no.

Andrew Malcolm shares his thoughts.

You probably could have anticipated this. When President Obama gets in trouble, he either has no idea about the wrongdoing (think IRS, FBI). Or it was someone else's fault. (You-know-who from Texas.)

Now, we know that the red line statement Obama made as president 381 days ago about how any Syrian use of chemical weapons "would change my calculus" wasn't really Obama's fault.

According to Obama, although it looked just like the American president standing at the little podium with no teleprompter in the White House Briefing Room, that modest man was actually speaking on behalf of the entire world.

"I didn't set a red line; the world set a red line," Obama claims.

Also, you should know that just because the president of the United States threatened some vague response on Syria's President Bashar Assad should he use chemical weapons does not now put Obama's credibility on the line should nothing adverse, in fact, happen to Assad's regime.

This, henceforth, shall be known as Chicago Logic. Through Obama's hindsight, what's on the line now is the credibility of the world, which has thrice decided through the United Nations to do nothing about Assad's chemical use. Like the Arab League. And Britain's Parliament, which voted to join the "No's" last week.

Also what's also on the line, Obama declared at a Wednesday Stockholm news conference, is the credibility of the United States Congress, which until a couple of days ago had no clue it had any role in Obama's red line drawing almost 13 months ago. ...

Ann Coulter has a point of view.

Oh, how I long for the days when liberals wailed that "the rest of the world" hated America, rather than now, when the rest of the world laughs at us.

With the vast majority of Americans opposing a strike against Syria, President Obama has requested that Congress vote on his powers as commander in chief under the Constitution. The president doesn't need congressional approval to shoot a few missiles into Syria, nor -- amazingly -- has he said he'll abide by such a vote, anyway.

Why is Congress even having a vote? This is nothing but a fig leaf to cover Obama's own idiotic "red line" ultimatum to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria on chemical weapons. The Nobel Peace Prize winner needs to get Congress on the record so that whatever happens, the media can blame Republicans.

No Republican who thinks seriously about America's national security interests -- by which I mean to exclude John McCain and Lindsey Graham -- can support Obama's "plan" to shoot blindly into this hornet's nest. ...

Peter Wehner tries to square the "I didn't draw the red line." comments.

... In this particular case, the president seems to have dissociative amnesia, apparently having forgotten that a year ago last month he did, in fact, draw a red line. (Note the use of the first-person pronouns by the president — "That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.") The president may have forgotten, too, that he promised that crossing this red line would be a "game changer" (it was not). That Assad had to go (Assad is still in power, stronger than before). That he promised to arm Syrian rebels (he hasn't). That his "coalition of the willing" may include, if we're lucky, one other country besides America. And that on the matter of the Use of Force Resolution he was against going to Congress before he was for going to Congress.

The cause of Mr. Obama's dissociation appears to be the psychological trauma induced by his multi-year fiasco in Syria. And in order to cope, we are seeing signs of anger, petulance, and hero syndrome and, as is always the case with this president, blame shifting.

On a slightly more serious note, Mr. Obama's presidency is being wrecked by reality. He's being exposed at every turn, and in every crisis, as inept. He can't handle that truth so he's trying to distort it. ...

More from **Nile Gardiner** in the Brit Telegraph.

... As Obama's words made clear, he is himself 100 percent responsible for the 'red line' that has been laid down on Syria, a red line that he drew without much thought behind what it would

entail. He made these remarks at the height of his presidential election campaign, after a year and a half of doing absolutely nothing about the crisis in Syria, no doubt in an effort to look tough and to demonstrate that he wasn't 'leading from behind.'

It is not America's credibility that is on the line at the moment, or that of the United States Congress. It is the credibility of Barack Obama himself, who unwisely drew a line in the sand, and is now pushing for a military intervention in the Middle East without a clear strategy, while aggressively cutting defence spending and failing to demonstrate that a Syrian war is in the US national interest. And as I noted in an earlier piece, Mr. Obama is trying to drag America into war without the military support of key US allies, including Great Britain. The president has a grand coalition of two at present: himself and deeply unpopular French Socialist Francois Hollande. That is hardly an alliance that instills confidence at home, or fear into the hearts of America's enemies abroad.

Power Line

Mencken's Prophecy Vindicated?

by Steve Hayward

Way back in 1920, the great H.L. Mencken offered the following forecast for the future of the presidency:

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National Review

Clear-Cut Stupidity on Syria

Everyone's on the hook for Obama's "red line" comments. Except Obama.

by Jonah Goldberg

The genius of you Americans," the Arab-nationalist and one-time president of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, once explained, "is that you never make clear-cut stupid moves, only complicated stupid moves which make us wonder at the possibility that there may be something to them which we are missing."

I've long taken patriotic pride in such statements of befuddlement from foreigners. America is a gloriously complicated thing. We often confuse our national creeds for universal principles. We are a Jacksonian people (that's Andrew Jackson, in case you were wondering) in love with Jeffersonian ideals and legalistically committed to Madisonian mechanisms. Like a guard dog that would rather not leave the porch, we are quick to anger but not necessarily quick to fight, and we are just as eager to forgive.

So from the vantage point of foreign brutes, bullies, and buffoons, it's understandable that America's methods could be confused for stupidity. This is why I love the old expression, "America can choke on a gnat, but swallow a tiger whole."

So I am trying very hard to hold onto this perspective as I watch the president of the United States behave in a way you don't have to be a pan-Arab autocrat to think is incredibly stupid.

Where to begin? Perhaps with Obama's initial refusal to support the moderate rebels seeking to overthrow Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, a puppet of Iran and bagman for Hezbollah. Or we might start with Obama's refusal to support the Green Movement in Iran, which sought to overthrow the Iranian regime, which would have been a triumph for both our principles and our national interests.

These were odd choices, particularly given his decision to help depose Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, an indisputably evil man, but also a dictator who posed no threat, who abided by our demands to relinquish WMDs, and whose domestic death toll was a tiny fraction of Assad's.

"We cannot stand idly by when a tyrant tells his people there will be no mercy . . . where innocent men and women face brutality and death at the hands of their own government" was Obama's justification for an attack on Libya — without congressional approval. But when Assad killed tenfold as many men, women, and children, Obama refused to act for nearly two years. And when he finally decided it was imperative to attack Assad — after the dictator crossed a chemical-weapons "red line" drawn by Obama himself — he suddenly discovered the need for congressional authorization.

Sort of.

Obama doesn't believe he needs authorization from Congress to strike Syria, he just wants it. He's like a kid desperate for a prom date, but too vain to admit it. In Libya, Obama had the U.N. and NATO on each arm, so he didn't bother with asking the dog on Capitol Hill for a date. But now, faced with the prospect of going it alone, he's in effect telling Congress, "Hey, it's not like I need your company, but you'd be crazy not to go to war with me."

Whoops. As even Nancy Pelosi's own grandkid now knows, we mustn't call it a war. "The president is not asking you to go to war," Secretary of State John Kerry told Congress. He's merely asking them to authorize a sustained cruise-missile attack on military installations to "degrade" the regime's "capabilities."

But, according to Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman General Martin Dempsey, no one has asked the military to do anything that might change the "momentum" of the Syrian civil war. This is like saying you're going to attack a runaway car barreling toward a crowd of kids, but do nothing to

actually, you know, slow it down. What good does it do to trash the radio and rip out the cup holders on an out-of-control car?

Meanwhile, according to numerous accounts, Assad is moving military assets into civilian areas and civilians into military areas, even as the Obama administration insists it makes no difference militarily to wait for Congress to debate. That's not just stupid; it's an outright lie that will be fact-checked with blood.

I understand the attraction the buddy system has for a man who, as a state legislator, perfected the art of voting "present" on hard questions. But it's hard to see this as anything other than rank political cowardice.

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Ann Coulter's Blog

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER GOES TO WAR

Oh, how I long for the days when liberals wailed that "the rest of the world" hated America, rather than now, when the rest of the world laughs at us.

With the vast majority of Americans opposing a strike against Syria, President Obama has requested that Congress vote on his powers as commander in chief under the Constitution. The president doesn't need congressional approval to shoot a few missiles into Syria, nor -- amazingly -- has he said he'll abide by such a vote, anyway.

Why is Congress even having a vote? This is nothing but a fig leaf to cover Obama's own idiotic "red line" ultimatum to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria on chemical weapons. The Nobel Peace Prize winner needs to get Congress on the record so that whatever happens, the media can blame Republicans.

No Republican who thinks seriously about America's national security interests -- by which I mean to exclude John McCain and Lindsey Graham -- can support Obama's "plan" to shoot blindly into this hornet's nest.

It would be completely different if we knew with absolute certainty that Assad was responsible for chemical attacks on his own people. (I'm still waiting to see if it was a Syrian upset about a YouTube video.)

It would be different if instead of killing a few hundred civilians, Assad had killed 5,000 civilians with poison gas in a single day, as well as tens of thousands more with chemical weapons in the past few decades.

It would be different if Assad were known to torture his own people, administer summary executions, rapes, burnings and electric shocks, often in front of the victim's wife or children.

It would be different if Assad had acted aggressively toward the United States itself, perhaps attempting to assassinate a former U.S. president or giving shelter to terrorists who had struck within the U.S. -- someone like Maj. Nidal Hasan, the Fort Hood terrorist.

It would be different if Assad were stirring up trouble in the entire Middle East by, for example, paying bounties to the families of suicide bombers in other countries.

It would also be different if we could be sure that intervention in Syria would not lead to a multi-nation conflagration.

It would be different if we knew that any action against Syria would not put al-Qaida or the Muslim Brotherhood in power, but rather would result in a functioning, peaceful democracy.

And it would be different if an attack on Syria would so terrify other dictators in the region that they would instantly give up their WMDs -- say, Iran abandoning its nuclear program.

If all of that were true, this would be a military intervention worth supporting!

All of that was true about Iraq, but the Democrats hysterically opposed that war. They opposed it even after all this was known to be true -- indeed, especially after it was known to be true! The loudest opponent was Barack Obama.

President Saddam Hussein of Iraq had attempted to assassinate former president George H.W. Bush. He gave shelter to Abdul Rahman Yasin, a conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. He paid bounties to the families of suicide bombers in Israel.

Soon after Bush invaded Iraq in 2003, Libya's Moammar Gadhafi was so terrified of an attack on his own country, he voluntarily relinquished his WMDs -- which turned out to be far more extensive than previously imagined.

Al-Qaida not only did not take over Iraq, but got its butt handed to it in Iraq, where the U.S. and its allies killed thousands of al-Qaida fighters, including the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Iraq became the first genuine Arab democracy, holding several elections and presiding over a trial of Saddam Hussein.

Does anyone imagine that any of this would result from an Obama-led operation in Syria? How did his interventions work out in Egypt and Libya?

As for chemical weapons -- the casus belli for the current drums of war -- in a matter of hours on March 16, 1988, Saddam Hussein slaughtered roughly 5,000 Kurdish civilians in Halabja with mustard, sarin and VX gas. The victims blistered, vomited or laughed hysterically before dropping dead. Thousands more would die later from the after-effects of these poisons.

Saddam launched nearly two dozen more chemical attacks on the Kurds, resulting in at least 50,000 deaths, perhaps three times that many. That's to say nothing of the tens of thousands of Iranians Saddam killed with poison gas. Indeed, in making the case against Assad recently, Secretary of State John Kerry said his use of chemical weapons put him in the same league as

"Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein."

Not even close -- but may we ask why Kerry sneered at the war that removed such a monster as Hussein?

There were endless United Nations reports and resolutions both establishing that Saddam had used chemical weapons and calling on him to give them up. (For the eighth billionth time, we did find chemical weapons in Iraq, just no "stockpiles." Those had been moved before the war, according to Saddam's own general, Georges Sada -- to Syria.)

On far less evidence, our current president accuses Assad of using chemical weapons against a fraction of the civilians provably murdered with poison gas by Saddam Hussein. So why did Obama angrily denounce the military operation that removed Hussein? Why did he call that a "war of choice"?

Obama says Assad -- unlike that great statesman Saddam Hussein -- has posed "a challenge to the world." But the world disagrees. Even our usual ally, Britain, disagrees. So Obama demands the United States act alone to stop a dictator, who -- compared to Saddam -- is a piker.

At this point, Assad is at least 49,000 dead bodies short of the good cause the Iraq War was, even if chemical weapons had been the only reason to take out Saddam Hussein.

Washington Post

Unless he's serious, vote no

by Charles Krauthammer

Sen. Bob Corker: "What is it you're seeking?"

Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "I can't answer that, what we're seeking."

— Senate hearing on the use of force in Syria, Sept. 3

We have a problem. The president proposes attacking Syria, and his top military officer cannot tell you the objective. Does the commander in chief know his own objective? Why, yes. "[A shot across the bow](#)," explained Barack Obama.

Now, a shot across the bow is a warning. Its purpose is to say: Cease and desist, or the next shot will sink you. But Obama has already told the world — and Bashar al-Assad in particular — that there will be [no next shot](#). He has insisted time and again that the operation will be finite and highly limited. Take the shot, kill some fish, go home.

What then is the purpose? Dempsey hasn't a clue, but Secretary of State [John Kerry says](#) it will uphold and proclaim a norm and thus deter future use of chemical weapons. With a few

Tomahawk missiles? Hitting sites that, thanks to the administration having leaked the target list, have [already been scrubbed](#) of important military assets?

This is risible. If anything, a pinprick from which Assad emerges unscathed would simply enhance his stature and vindicate his conduct.

Deterrence depends entirely on perception, and the perception in the Middle East is universal: Obama wants no part of Syria.

[Assad has to go](#), says Obama, and then lifts not a finger for two years. Obama [lays down a “red line,”](#) and then ignores it. Shamed finally by a massive poison gas attack, he sends Kerry to make [an impassioned case](#) for righteous and urgent retaliation — and [the very next day](#), Obama undermines everything by declaring an indefinite timeout to seek congressional approval.

This stunning zigzag, following months of hesitation, ambivalence, contradiction and studied delay, left our regional allies shocked and our enemies gleeful. [I had strongly advocated](#) going to Congress. But it was inconceivable that, instead of recalling Congress to emergency session, Obama would simply place everything in suspension while Congress finished its Labor Day barbecues and he flew off to Stockholm and St. Petersburg. So much for the fierce urgency of enforcing an international taboo and speaking for the dead children of Damascus.

Here’s how deterrence works in the Middle East. Syria, long committed to the destruction of Israel, has not engaged Israel militarily in 30 years. Why? Because it recognizes Israel as a serious adversary with serious policies.

This year alone, Israel has four times conducted airstrikes in Syria. No Syrian response. How did Israel get away with it? Israel had announced that [it would not tolerate](#) Assad acquiring or transferring to Hezbollah advanced weaponry. No grandiloquent speeches by the Israeli foreign minister. No leaked target lists. Indeed, the Israelis didn’t acknowledge the strikes even after they had carried them out. Unlike the American president, they have no interest in basking in perceived toughness. They care only about effect. They care about just one audience — the party to be deterred, namely Assad and his allies.

Assad knows who did it. He didn’t have to see the Israeli prime minister preening about it on world television.

And yet here is Obama, having yet done nothing but hesitate, threaten, retract and wander about the stage, [claiming Wednesday in Sweden](#) to be the conscience of the world, upholding not his own red line but the world’s. And, incidentally, Congress’s — a transparent attempt at offloading responsibility.

What should Congress do?

To his dovish base, Obama insists on how limited and militarily marginal the strike will be. To undecided hawks such as Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham, who are prepared to support a policy that would really alter the course of the civil war, he vaguely promises the opposite — to degrade Assad’s military while upgrading that of the resistance.

Problem is, Obama promised U.S. weaponry three months ago and [not a rifle has arrived](#). This time around, what seems in the making is a mere pinprick, designed to be, one U.S. official [told the Los Angeles Times](#), “just muscular enough not to get mocked.”

That’s why Dempsey is so glum. That’s why U.S. allies are so stunned. There’s no strategy, no purpose here other than helping Obama escape self-inflicted humiliation.

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When Obama tells the nation what he told McCain and Lindsey Graham in private — that he plans to degrade Assad’s forces, upgrade the resistance and alter the balance of forces — Congress might well consider authorizing the use of force. But until then, it’s no.

Investor's Business Daily

About the Syria red line that Obama drew, he now claims it was someone else

by Andrew Malcolm



Obama's new fave presidential warrior post on historic desk given to the U. S. by Britain.

You probably could have anticipated this. When President Obama gets in trouble, he either has no idea about the wrongdoing (think IRS, FBI). Or it was someone else's fault. (You-know-who from Texas.)

Now, we know that the red line statement Obama made as president 381 days ago about how any Syrian use of chemical weapons "would change my calculus" wasn't really Obama's fault.

According to Obama, although it looked just like the American president standing at the little podium with no teleprompter in the White House Briefing Room, that modest man was actually speaking on behalf of the entire world.

"I didn't set a red line; the world set a red line," Obama claims.

Also, you should know that just because the president of the United States threatened some vague response on Syria's President Bashar Assad should he use chemical weapons does not now put Obama's credibility on the line should nothing adverse, in fact, happen to Assad's regime.

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Also what's also on the line, Obama declared at a Wednesday Stockholm news conference, is the credibility of the United States Congress, which until a couple of days ago had no clue it had *any* role in Obama's red line drawing almost 13 months ago.

Or any role in Obama's ill-defined, cockamamie plan to do something military sometime soon, after Syria had time to scatter its valuable military targets among the civilian populace.

As he did two years ago when launching his war to oust Libya's dictator, the Nobel Peace Prize winner had dismissed as unnecessary and irrelevant to any military attack on Assad those elected representatives on Capitol Hill with the constitutional responsibility for declaring war. A technicality.

Finally, according to Obama's newly-revealed doctrine, another group whose credibility is now directly on the line big-time is the American people.

Yes, *you*.

You may not have realized your integral role in Obama's off-the-cuff, red-line bluff because the elected leader of the United States has never once bothered to address the citizens of this country on the subject.

Nor actually has he done any consulting, say, through their elected representatives -- until this very week when the one-time opponent of war fully realized how stark naked alone he was wanting to start another war in the Middle East.



No, see, that guy just looked like me.

Obama didn't really need to do much consulting. Virtually every single public opinion poll shows a majority of Americans do not want any U.S. military involvement anywhere anyhow in Syria's ongoing civil war.

Americans only learned of their red line response responsibility and the global risk to their national credibility because their increasingly confused president just made his official responsibility announcement 4,184 miles from the Oval Office -- to the people of Sweden.

On his way to Russia to not meet with President Vladimir Putin.

Barack Obama, August 20, 2012:

"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; that would change my equation."

Barack Obama, Sept. 4, 2013:

"First of all, I didn't set a red line; the world set a red line.

"The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war.

"Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that -- in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act -- that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for.

"And so when I said in a press conference that my calculus about what's happening in Syria would be altered by the use of the chemical weapons, which the overwhelming consensus of humanity says is wrong, that wasn't something I just kind of made up. I didn't pluck it out of thin air. There's a reason for it. That's point number one.

"Point number two -- my credibility is not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line. And America and Congress's credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important."

Contentions

In Stockholm, Obama Loses Touch with Reality

by Peter Wehner

Most presidents, having presided over the Syrian debacle, would be chastened. But not the Great and Mighty Obama. He's decided to begin to rewrite history so that he emerges as the hero.

Consider what Mr. Obama, in Stockholm earlier today, [said](#) in response to a question about Syria:

First of all, I didn't set a red line. The world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use, even when countries are engaged in war. Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that in a piece of legislation entitled the Syria Accountability Act that some of the horrendous things happening on the ground there need to be answered for. So, when I said in a press conference that my calculus about what's happening in Syria would be altered by the use of chemical weapons, which the overwhelming consensus of humanity says is wrong, that wasn't something I just kind of made up. I didn't pluck it out of thin air. There's a reason for it.

The president added [this](#):

My credibility is not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line and America and Congress's credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important.

So literally everyone else in the world is to blame except the president.

Mr. Obama appears to be suffering from a variation of what psychiatrists refer to as dissociation, which is characterized by everything from mild to severe detachment from reality and one's immediate surroundings.

In this particular case, the president seems to have dissociative amnesia, apparently having forgotten that a year ago last month he did, in fact, [draw a red line](#). (Note the use of the first-person pronouns by the president — "That would change my calculus. That would change my equation.") The president may have forgotten, too, that he promised that crossing this red line would be a "game changer" (it was not). That Assad had to go (Assad is still in power, stronger than before). That he promised to arm Syrian rebels (he hasn't). That his "coalition of the willing" may include, if we're lucky, one other country besides America. And that on the matter of the Use of Force Resolution he was against going to Congress before he was for going to Congress.

The cause of Mr. Obama's dissociation appears to be the psychological trauma induced by his multi-year fiasco in Syria. And in order to cope, we are seeing signs of anger, petulance, and hero syndrome and, as is always the case with this president, blame shifting.

On a slightly more serious note, Mr. Obama's presidency is being wrecked by reality. He's being exposed at every turn, and in every crisis, as inept. He can't handle that truth so he's trying to distort it.

There's something poignant and painful in watching Obama's presidency collapse and seeing what it's doing to the man who promised to repair the world and slow the rise of the oceans.

Telegraph, UK

Obama's 'red line' remarks on Syria were a train wreck.

The president's credibility is on the line, not America's

by Nile Gardiner

President Obama has done himself no favours today with his [disingenuous statements](#) on Syria in Stockholm alongside Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt. As [The Weekly Standard first reported](#), Barack Obama claimed "he didn't set a red line" on Syria's use of chemical weapons, arguing that "the world set a red line" when it passed the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention prohibiting the use of chemical weapons. He also declared that his credibility isn't on the line, but Congress's credibility, America's credibility and the international community's credibility is at stake if military action isn't taken on Syria.

[Here is what Obama had to say](#), responding to a question from Steve Holland of Reuters:

Q: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, sir. Have you made up your mind whether to take action against Syria, whether or not you have a congressional resolution approved? Is a strike needed in order to preserve your credibility for when you set these sort of red lines? And were you able to enlist the support of the prime minister here for support in Syria?

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Let me unpack the question. First of all, I didn't set a red line. The world set a red line. The world set a red line when governments representing 98 percent of the world's population said the use of chemical weapons are abhorrent and passed a treaty forbidding their use even when countries are engaged in war.

Congress set a red line when it ratified that treaty. Congress set a red line when it indicated that — in a piece of legislation titled the Syria Accountability Act that some of the horrendous things that are happening on the ground there need to be answered for.

... my credibility's not on the line. The international community's credibility is on the line, and America and Congress' credibility is on the line because we give lip service to the notion that these international norms are important.

This is classic 'pass the buck' rhetoric from the president, who is clearly nervous that he won't get Congressional support for military action, not least when public opinion is [heavily against a US intervention](#). For clarification, here are the president's [original 'red line' remarks](#) to the White House Press Corps in August last year

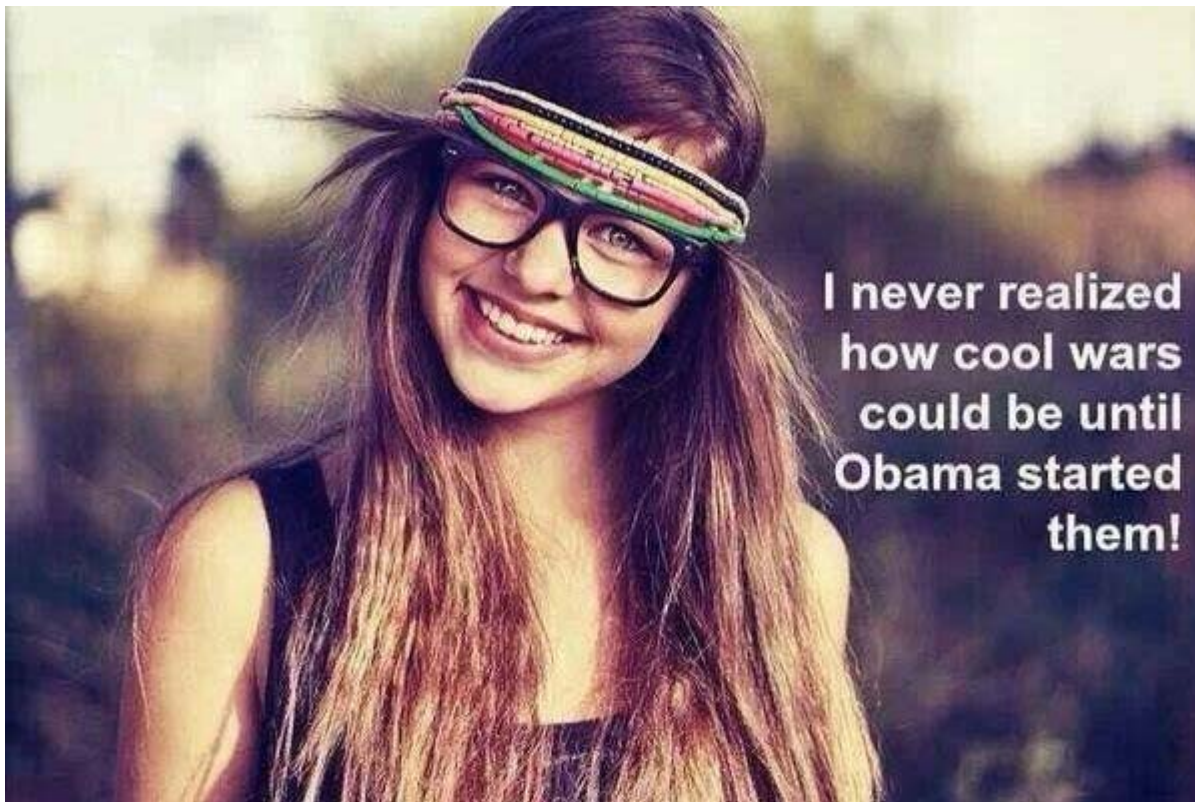
PRESIDENT OBAMA: We have been very clear to the Assad regime, but also to other players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized. That would change my calculus. That would change my equation...

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.

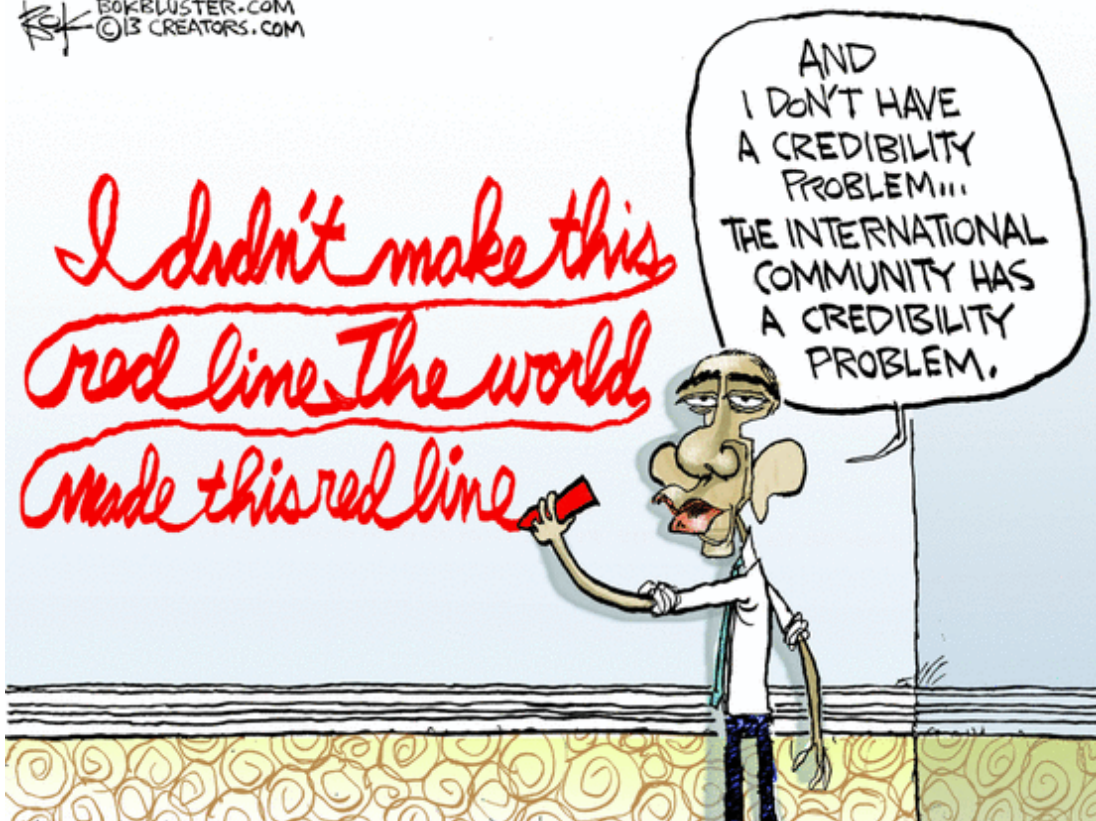
As Obama's words made clear, he is himself 100 percent responsible for the 'red line' that has been laid down on Syria, a red line that he drew without much thought behind what it would entail. He made these remarks at the height of his presidential election campaign, after a year and a half of doing [absolutely nothing](#) about the crisis in Syria, no doubt in an effort to look tough and to demonstrate that he wasn't 'leading from behind.'

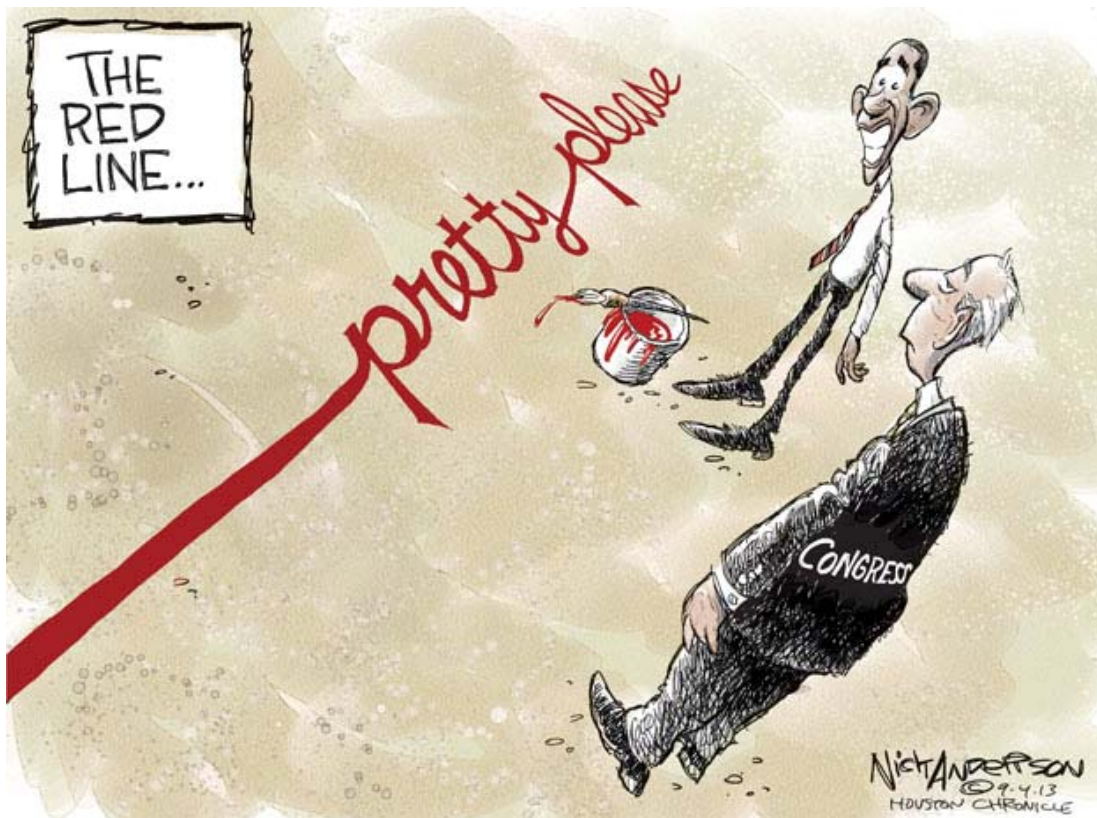
It is not America's credibility that is on the line at the moment, or that of the United States Congress. It is the credibility of Barack Obama himself, who unwisely drew a line in the sand, and is now pushing for a military intervention in the Middle East without a clear strategy, while aggressively cutting defence spending and failing to demonstrate that a Syrian war is in the US national interest. And as I noted in [an earlier piece](#), Mr. Obama is trying to drag America into war without the military support of key US allies, including Great Britain. The president has a grand coalition of two at present: himself and deeply unpopular French Socialist Francois Hollande. That is hardly an alliance that instills confidence at home, or fear into the hearts of America's enemies abroad.

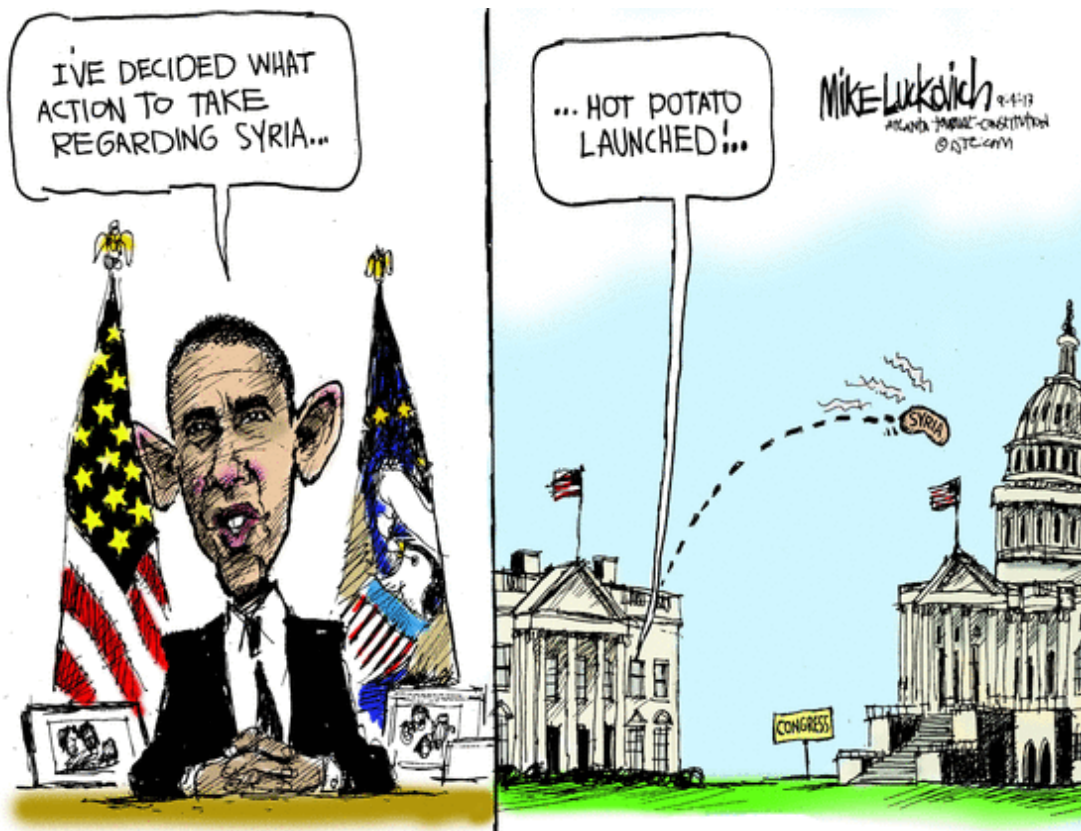




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**STILL HAS NO CLUE WHAT HAPPENED
AT THEIR OWN EMBASSY IN BENGHAZI**