

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 出爾反爾

*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*

Donald Trump ordered an attack on Syria for suspected use of chemical weapons that killed dozens of civilians. Over 50 Tomahawk cruise missiles rained down on the Syrian airfield from where the earlier chemical attack was believed to have been launched.

The media pointed out, however, that just four years ago, Trump wrote online to ask his predecessor Barack Obama not to attack Syria, saying "There is no upside and tremendous downside." In directing an attack on Syria now, Trump has "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*).

"出" (*chu1*) is "to exit," "to produce," "to go out," "to come out," "爾" (*er3*) "you," "thou," "thus," "so," "反" (*fan3*) "in reverse," "contrary," "opposite," and "爾" (*er3*), again, "you," "thou,"

"thus," "so." Literally, "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*) is "coming from you, reversed by you."

In old usage, the idiom means to "reap the consequences of one's actions." In modern usage, it means "to renege on one's words," "to go back on one's words."

"2" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*) is usually frowned upon. When people fail to honor a promise or reverse their position, you can express your dismay by saying: "Why do you "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*)?"

When your boss promised you a pay rise but it never materializes, it is clearly a case of "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*). But bombing Syria won international support, so Trump's "出爾反爾" (*chu1 er3 fan3 er3*) appeared to be a positive one.

### Terms containing the character "反" (*fan3*) include:

反對 (*fan3 dui4*) – to oppose; to fight against

反應 (*fan3 ying4*) – a response; an answer to

反感 (*fan3 gan3*) – resentment; to be disgusted with

反抗 (*fan3 kang4*) – to resist; to revolt against; to hit back