

OBAMA PITCHES HIS IRAQ INTERVENTION WITH “SUCK ON THIS” FRIEDMAN

Steve Coll has a depressing article describing why Obama – after having ignored red lines in the past – drew one in Erbil.

Erbil’s rulers never quite saw the point of a final compromise with Baghdad’s Shiite politicians—as each year passed, the Kurds got richer on their own terms, they attracted more credible and deep-pocketed oil companies as partners, and they looked more and more like they led a de-facto state. The Obama Administration has done nothing to reverse that trend.

And so, in Erbil, in the weeks to come, American pilots will defend from the air a capital whose growing independence and wealth has loosened Iraq’s seams, even while, in Baghdad, American diplomats will persist quixotically in an effort to stitch that same country together to confront ISIS.

Obama’s defense of Erbil is effectively the defense of an undeclared Kurdish oil state whose sources of geopolitical appeal—as a long-term, non-Russian supplier of oil and gas to Europe, for example—are best not spoken of in polite or naïve company, as Al Swearengen would well understand. Life, Swearengen once pointed out, is often made up of “one vile task after another.” So is American policy in Iraq.

Meanwhile, Obama has inexplicably decided to go pitch his intervention in an exclusive with the

man Atrios dubbed the Wanker of the Decade – not for inventing the Friedman Unit – but for his honesty that the first time we went, it was to say “Suck On This” in spectacular fashion.

In it, Obama as much as admits he fucked up Libya and had no business pretending there were secular Syrians to arm. But (as Coll notes in his piece) Obama pretends the Kurds aren’t angling for maximum advantage here, just as all other players are.

“When you have a unique circumstance in which genocide is threatened, and a country is willing to have us in there, you have a strong international consensus that these people need to be protected and we have a capacity to do so, then we have an obligation to do so,” said the president. But given the island of decency the Kurds have built, we also have to ask, he added, not just “how do we push back on ISIL, but also how do we preserve the space for the best impulses inside of Iraq, that very much is on my mind, that has been on my mind throughout.

Obama’s lesson here is that you can’t strive for maximalist advantage. But then to sell Iraq War 3.0, he obfuscates about doing just that, with the man who justified Iraq War 2.0 by saying “Suck On This.”