THE FOLLY OF STRIKING SYRIA

You might as well try to teach a snake to juggle as hope the Obama administration will think strategically.

The "peace president" is about to embark on his third military adventure, this time in Syria, without having learned the lessons of his botched efforts in Afghanistan and Libya. He hasn't even learned from the Bush administration's mistakes - which he mocked with such delight.

Before launching a single cruise missile toward Syria, Team Obama needs to be sure it has a good answer to the question, *"What comes next?"*

If Obama does a Clinton and churns up some sand with do-nothing cruise-missile strikes, it will only encourage the Assad regime. But if our president hits Assad hard and precipitates regime change, then what?

If al Qaeda and local Islamists seize Damascus, what will we do? The enfeebled "moderate opposition" we back rhetorically couldn't dislodge hardcore jihadis, no matter how many weapons we sent (the jihadis would simply confiscate the gear).

What if we weaken the regime to the point where the fanatics rev up their jihad to drive out Christians and other minorities? What's your plan then, Mr. President? After your night of explosive passion, will you still love the opposition in the morning?

Exactly which American vital security interests are at stake in Syria, Mr. President? Your credibility? Put a number on it. How many American lives is your blather about red lines worth?

Chemical weapons use? Horrible and illegal, a war crime. So is the mass slaughter of civilians. Is it really so much worse to be gassed than tortured to death by al Qaeda or burned alive in your church? Which is more important, the number of dead, or the means that killed them?

Islamist terrorists have killed tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of innocent Muslims. Aren't *they* the real enemies of civilization?

Mr. President, do you really think it's wise to send our missiles and aircraft to provide fire support for al Qaeda? That is exactly what you'll be doing, if you hit Assad.

Assad's an odious butcher, filth on two legs. But in the world of serious strategy, you rarely get a choice between black and white. You choose between black and charcoal gray.

Employing our military assets to support either side in Syria would be a mistake. Employing them without a worst-case plan for what might follow would be criminal.

We just can't seem to learn, though. Invading Iraq, the Bush team, egged on by ideologues who never served in uniform, refused to allow our military to plan for an occupation. That sure worked out. Then, in Libya, the Obama administration deposed Khadafy, but refused to plan seriously for the aftermath. Welcome to Benghazi.

There *are* wars worth fighting. It was essential to go to Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11 (although staying there was idiocy). There will be future conflicts that demand our blood to defend vital interests. But we've now had a decade of do-gooder wars that haven't done much good.

For the record, I don't regret getting rid of Saddam or Khadafy. I regret the ineptitude with which we did these things. When you propose a war, don't ever expect a cheap date.

Now there's an unholy alliance pushing for attacks on Syria.

*We have liberal zealots, such as our UN ambassador, Samantha Power, who believe that our military's primary purpose is to protect people who hate America.

*We have a few Republican senators like John McCain and Lindsey Graham who support any war, any time.

*We have a president who thinks that, "Gee, maybe, well, gosh, I said I'd do something, so maybe I should..."

*And we have elements in the defense industry who long for a return to our free-spending years in Iraq and Afghanistan and view a war in Syria as a great way to beat the sequester.

And the one thing every member of that Bomb-Syria-Now coalition has in common? Not one will have to fight.

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