

acting in tandem with our friends, and on the other from our conviction that our intentions were good and that our transformational model – our general idea – was well founded. Taken together, all this would see us through, even if it would take more time and trouble than Canadians at large were conditioned to expect. And to be fair, an attempt to *re*-condition them was launched. We were warned over and over again by the pertinent ministers and military commanders that the cost of the enterprise in terms of time, resources, and personnel would probably be high. Beyond that, however, there appears to have been little sense that we needed a better understanding of Afghanistan itself before going in, and our forces arrived in the theatre knowing very little about warlords, clans, the drug trade, and the intricately intermeshed rivalries and competing zones of influence that they created. In effect, we barged into the china shop, confident that we weren't bulls and hence posed no danger to the inventory.

I realize, of course, that in some measure it is always like that. I have already conceded that uncertainty is inevitable and we have to live with it. But we can trim it down a little if we do our homework. In the offices where this decision was made, however, it would appear that very little homework was actually done.



It has not been my intention in this disquisition to argue that we cannot usefully do anything anywhere, although I can certainly understand why some of you, at the end of so gloomy a catalogue, might think so. But I do wish to suggest – ever so gently – that we need in the conduct of foreign policy to be distrustful of general ideas and grand designs, and to undertake, before we leap, as careful a study of the "terrible facts" as we can.

In this connection, I threatened at the beginning of my remarks to conclude with an outrageously gratuitous list of "do's" and "don't's". You may think I have already done damage enough to your patience, but I suppose nonetheless that I should keep my word. A few illustrative exhortations therefore follow, in no particular order. They are directed primarily at politicians, although not exclusively so. This is because politicians and their partisan aides in high office are often among the least well tutored in foreign affairs, while at the same time having the capacity to do the most damage. I fully expect them, of course, to ignore what I say.