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experts, and our intelligence and foreign service resources for years have been too thinly distributed to supply all the analytical capacity we require in a world in which no region anywhere can now safely be left unattended.

But I think, too, that we may be operating in some measure on the premise that having knowledge of the kind I have in mind doesn't matter very much. Why is that? Because we have our model, our 'general idea', and we are convinced that its applicability is universal. Even though I am advertised as a political scientist with an interest in foreign affairs, I am tempted to suggest that we have been exposed too much to the study of International Relations, and far too little to the reading of history and to the analysis of societies, politics and cultures that fall outside our own tradition.

I am reminded of a conversation I had some time ago with a well-informed person in Ottawa (not in Foreign Affairs) who shall remain nameless. I said to him that I was making a hobby of trying to find out whether anyone in government had done a serious policy-analysis of the problem in Afghanistan before we decided to commit our forces. I knew, of course, that important diplomatic interests were at stake. A significant Canadian deployment would strengthen our position in NATO. It could repair some serious damage in Washington. More specifically, our political leadership, sustained by apparatchiks in the PMO, may have thought it a tolerably acceptable alternative to action on the ground in Iraq, a view that might conceivably have been shared, albeit with a measure of disappointment, in Washington. Broadly speaking, in short, our like-minded friends were all for it, and it was in our interest to coalesce with like-minded friends. But the real question, it seemed to me, was whether the job itself was do-able, and for commentary on that, a comprehensive analysis of conditions in the field would seem to have been required. Obviously we could import, and then accept, the assessments of others if we found them persuasive. On complex matters of this sort, in any case, nothing is ever certain. But uncertainty is a matter of degree. Did we try as best we could to gauge the hazards in advance? Did we know what we were getting into?

There was a long pause before the answer came. I paraphrase it, but not by much: "We couldn't have done such an analysis because we lacked the necessary expertise. We are getting some now, acquired through the experience of our soldiers in the field. But we didn't have it then."

I conclude from this that such zone of comfort as we initially thought we could enjoy came on the one hand from the knowledge that we were