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Let's be grown-up about blame **January 14, 2020**

Yes, the Iranian government is terrible. Yes, they are responsible for the killing of 57 Canadians. But also the killing of so many Canadian permanent residents and landed immigrants. They were already Canadians in their minds and in ours.

And it is by no means certain that the missile was shot by accident. After all, it came from the Revolutionary Guard, General Soleimani's outfit, which can't have been happy with the regime's soft response to the American killing. And it now seems the regime may be using live ammunition against the demonstrators. There is nothing good to be said about these people.

But let's not be narrow or naïve. The situation in Iran and the whole region is fragile and turbulent. The relationship between Iran and the West has been a mess since the British decision in 1913 to get control of Iranian oil in order to run their naval fleet. What followed during the 1920s and 30s were a series of destabilizing interventions by the West. All of this came to a head in 1953 when the US/UK organized a coup d'état to overthrow the Iranian Prime Minister Mosaddegh and so to replace a growing democracy with an autocratic Shah. The Ayatollah Khomeini and the current Iranian government follow from that.

In other words, smart people - people concerned by the wellbeing of humans - act carefully and with consideration when it comes to Iran. And at the very least, they try to plan for the outcome of their actions.

That is what any professional military action consists of. If you act you must have already tried to think through the reaction from the other side. You plan. You prepare multiple scenarios.

Yes, the Iranian government is to blame. But so is Donald Trump.

In this case the American president doesn't seem to have taken any of this regional fragility into account. He did not warn his allies. He doesn't seem to understand that concept: ally. He and his military, immediately after the killing of General Soleimani, had the obligation to lay out reaction scenarios which would include American allies.

For example, yes, the Iranian government should have shut down their civilian airspace once the semi-war situation emerged. But equally, putting a civilian air cordon around Iran should have been central to Washington's reaction planning. War isn't just about what your enemy might or should do. It is about what might happen in an atmosphere of disorder. In this case only Washington had any idea what was happening and had the time to plan. It was their initiative. Its allies were left in uncertainty, scrambling to invent tactics and strategy in a virtual vacuum.

Yes, the Iranian government is to blame. But so is President Trump and his government. Deeply to blame.

I have heard Trump supporters say - 'What do you expect us to do? Let this terrorist escape?' That is a false Manichean description of the situation. Action does not prevent thinking, preparing the aftermath, working with your allies. Besides, what are they arguing? That 176 civilians must die to advance US foreign policy, providing they are not Americans? Is that the fine point which allows him to declare - "Last week, the United States once again took the bold and decisive action to save American lives and deliver American justice."

Let me go back to the tragic personal reality of war. I cannot find a single public word expressing even the most basic condolences from Mr. Trump to Canadians, his closest ally, whose citizens have died. This feels like indifference and self-absorption. Above all, it feels as if he is frightened that his narrative of urgent danger, which he says forced his unplanned action, will collapse and lead even more attention back to him as one of two guilty parties.