

throughout has played a hugely influential role in the process – is regarded as a friend, an ally and a willing helper.

My theme has been the value of talking over fighting, a concept employed in many conflicts around the world today. I have already mentioned the case of Afghanistan and I note that in Spain, both the present and the former government have engaged in talks with ETA in an attempt to end the forty-year-old campaign for Basque independence.<sup>7</sup> Other instances come to mind. Talks held last year between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and representatives of the Philippine government have led to an offer by the latter to recognize the right of self-determination for Muslims in the south of the country. Some fighting still goes on there but the government has continued the talks. I have maintained an interest in that conflict since I visited Manila at the request of the Swedish Foreign Affairs Department in May 2006 to brief the Philippine government on the Northern Ireland experience. Similarly, over a period of years in Nepal the Seven Party Alliance has held numerous meetings with the rebel Maoist Communist Party while fighting still continued between Maoists and the Nepalese Army. I attended one such meeting in Stockholm two years ago and in November that year the Seven Party Alliance signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the Maoists. While the conflict there is not fully resolved, talking continues.

All that noted, I think it is significant that in each of these cases the countries concerned have maintained security forces in place while talks proceeded, ready to take appropriate action if violence intervened and talking failed. In Northern Ireland British troop-strength was not reduced until the Agreement was nearly ten years old and the majority of its terms had been implemented.

I do not for a moment suggest that in the ongoing conduct of Canada's foreign policy we should follow Teddy Roosevelt's advice of talking softly and carrying a big stick, but I do support the concept of having credible national means to react to threats, with force if necessary. Given the size of our military resources today it seems unlikely that the employment of Canada's stick alone would be considered much of a deciding factor abroad. Nor do I think it should be. But used in conjunction with those of our allies, Canada's armed forces can contribute

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<sup>7</sup> *Vatican Told to Stop Bishops 'Meddling' in Spain's Election*. Thomas Catàn. Madrid. *The Times*. 14 February 2008. p 45.