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## **Northern Ireland: election, voters are divided. Bairner (Loughborough University), “institutionalised conflict”**

“Sadly, this election confirms that the conflict in Northern Ireland has been institutionalised, even though violence is very unlikely to make a comeback for the moment. Those who voted rewarded Sinn Fein, the party that works for a united Ireland, and DUP, the hardliner Protestant party that opposes such plan, confirmed its position as well. In addition, the Alliance Party, the centrist party that is looking for a third way, got 62 councillors, stealing votes off the Green Party, not off the two parties that are on the opposite sides of the conflict”. This is how Alan Bairner, a political scientist at Loughborough University and a great expert in Northern Ireland where he lived for twenty-five years, comments the results of the council election in this region, in which Sinn Fein conquered 137 seats versus the 116 seats of DUP, thus confirming its position as the number-one party. “To prevent violence making a comeback, we must work so that a large share of the unionist population may accept the idea of a united Ireland, but the losses suffered by the Ulster Unionist Party, the most moderate Protestant party, which got just 51 councillors, suggests it will not be easy”, the expert goes on. “While Sinn Fein has grown more sensible and has talked of the need to restart the local Parliament at Stormont, the DUP, which interrupted such Assembly last October, as unsatisfied with the new Brexit deal, has withdrawn into a negative attitude and been unable to reinvent itself”.

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