

Militias, Political Claims and Commitments to Peace in Northern Ireland from the Beginning of the Troubles in 1968 to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998

Aurélien EYANE* and Basile Marius NGASSAKI**

Abstract

This article deals with the paradoxical double role that paramilitary groups played in the political life of Northern Ireland from the beginning of troubles in 1968 to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. It shows two facts. On the one hand, it demonstrates how militias served as the supports of the political claims for the different political groups that sponsored them. On the other hand, the work highlights how some dissident militias opposed the political commitments to peace of the political groups that sponsored them.

Keywords

Militias, The troubles, Claims, Commitments, Peace process, Good Friday Agreement.

Résumé

Cet article traite du double rôle paradoxal que les groupes paramilitaires ont joué dans la vie politique en Irlande du nord, du début des troubles en 1968 jusqu'aux accords du Vendredi Saint de 1998. Il démontre deux faits majeurs. D'une part, comment les milices servaient de base d'appui de revendications politiques de différents groupes politiques, et d'autre part, comment certaines milices dissidentes se sont opposées à des engagements politiques pour la paix pris par des partis politiques dont elles servaient de bras armés.

* Docteur, Faculté des lettres, arts et sciences humaines, Université Marien Ngouabi, Brazzaville, Congo

E-mail: aeyane@yahoo.fr / eyaneauirelien@gmail.com

** Professeur titulaire, Faculté des lettres, arts et sciences humaines, Université Marien Ngouabi, Brazzaville, Congo

E-mail : Basile.ngassaki@hotmail.com

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Introduction

After the partition of Ireland in 1921, a multi-facets conflict began in Northern Ireland. This confrontation culminated during the period named the troubles. The main actors of this communal crisis were the Protestant and Catholic political parties with paramilitary branches. There is a substantial range of works related to the Northern Ireland conflict. These works are sometimes biased according to the religious opinions of their authors as was the conflict itself. This fact makes it difficult to have a neutral view about this situation.

Concerning the relation between militias and political parties, we came across two works. The first one is the book entitled *Indivisible Territory and the Politics of Legitimacy: Jerusalem and Northern Ireland* by Stacey E. Goddard (2010, p. 1) who asserts that the notion of indivisible territory is current in international politics. He mentions, among others, the cases of Jerusalem in the Middle East, Taiwan and China in East Asia and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in Europe. In each of these cases “indivisibility” is a central element of violent conflict. In many of these cases, the notion of indivisible territory has led to negotiation failure. The second study is an article entitled “Turning to Terror” by Leonard Weinberg (1991, p. 424) stresses upon the conditions under which political parties turn into terrorist organizations for various purposes such as: the perpetration of “coups” to accede to power, the threatening and assassinations of their opponents. In this regard, it must be noted that in the United Kingdom, according to the provisions of the Public Order Act of 1936¹, political parties are not allowed to have militias.

¹ Public Order Act of 1936, Section 2. This section prohibits two main facts. Firstly, it prohibits quasi-military organizations. Secondly, it forbids the fact

The political that creates a paramilitary group breaches the law and is liable to ban or disbandment.

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how from the beginning of the troubles and onwards, the political parties of Northern Ireland used the militias as the support of their political claims, and how some dissident paramilitary groups opposed the commitments to peace of their former sponsors. Therefore, these militias became the obstacles for the peace process. This work falls within the traditional empirical historical approach. Marc Clapson (2009, p. 163) asserts that this approach suggests a careful evaluation of contemporary documents and an attempt to provide a fair-minded and original point of view as it is possible to sustain the historian's judgement of events. The data analysed in this paper were collected from the Acts of Parliament, the agreements related to the peace process,² from history books and journal articles. These data are grouped into primary and secondary sources.

This article is divided into four sections. The first section is entitled "political claims and the use of militias as their supports by political parties from the beginning of the troubles in 1968 to 1972". The second one deals with "the Irish Republican Army (IRA) cease-fire of 1972, the birth of the Provisional IRA, the Ulster Volunteer Force and their agendas to obstruct this cease-fire". The third one examines "the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and how some dissident paramilitary groups such as the Continuity IRA, the Real IRA, and the Ulster Volunteer Force disrupt the peace process related to this agreement. The last section highlights the "true nature of the Northern Ireland militias that stood as fundamentalists and the "spoilers" of the peace process.

of being trained militarily for political purpose, training people for such purpose or managing a paramilitary organization.

² The peace process in this article connotes the various steps and attempts of the resolution of political and social troubles in Northern Ireland from 1968 to 1998.

1. Political claims and the Use of Militias as Supports by Political Parties from the beginning of the troubles in 1968 to 1972

After the partition of Ireland by the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, two governments were established. One was in the Irish Free State in the South, another in the North, in the protestant dominated zone of Ulster. It is the protestant-dominated government of Northern Ireland which instituted discrimination against Catholics which affected all the aspects of society. The most concerned sectors were politics, employment, public accommodation, and education.

Concerning politics, the electoral constituencies for the election to Northern Ireland parliament were gerrymandered in order to ensure the domination of the Protestant community. The arrangement was to leave the Catholics of Northern Ireland as second-class citizens (J. Kingdom, 1992, p. 152). The victims of this policy organized in themselves in various kinds of organizations, political and paramilitary associations, in order to overcome this situation.

The struggle started after 1922, declined some years later and revived in 1939-40 and 1950-51. It disappeared again and finally erupted in 1968. Although it seemed latent in the mid-1970s, it continued until its official end in 1998. The very active Catholic paramilitary group which was behind their claims was the Irish Republican Army. On this fact, Steve Hewitt (2011, p. 15-16) argued that the Irish Republican Army fought in the war of independence. Even if it became illegal in the South, it remained active in both part of Ireland. The main political party that defended the interests of the Catholic population was the Sinn Fein which used the Irish Republican Army as its armed wing. In this respect, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Klaus Weinhauer quoted by Bloxam's and Gerwath (2011, p. 196-197) assert that the Sinn Fein was joined in this struggle in the 1960s by two main civil society organizations named Northern Ireland Campaign for Civil Rights (NICRA) and the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ).

The latter half of the 1960s would see the escalation of the conflict which spread all over the whole country. Part of the impetus was the Black American Civil Rights Movement. In Northern Ireland, the minority Catholic population had experienced decades of discrimination under the yoke of the Protestant-dominated society. The segregation was expressed through the denial of employment opportunities. Accordingly, the resonance of the Black American Civil Rights Movement fighting against the same evil appeared as obvious. This view is expressed by Brian Dooley (1998) through the comparison of the Afro-American struggles for their civil rights in the United States of America in the 1960s with that of Catholics in Northern Ireland for the same rights during the same period. Dooley(1998, p. 1) asserts that Northern Ireland civil rights activists borrowed slogans from Black Americans protestors, and called themselves “White negroes” and indentified themselves in a positive way with the struggle led by Martin Luther King in the United States of America.

Campaigns to improve the situation of Catholics began in the late 1960s during a period of growing tensions and eventually led to a political and armed confrontation between republicans and loyalists (D. Bloxam, 2011, p. 107). This period of tension is called the “The Troubles” the beginning of which is not clearly dated by historians. Although originally used with reference to the period from 1918-21 when the whole Ireland was plagued by civil war, the term “the troubles” has more recently been applied to the period of sectarian strife in Northern Ireland that lasted from the late 1960s until the 1990s. Around 1968, civil liberties marches and violent disturbances became increasingly common as largely Roman Catholic group campaigned for a greater say in the devolved government of the province. These marches were often attacked by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Northern Ireland Protestant-dominated police, and the loyalist militias, leading to the retaliatory rejuvenation of the Irish Republican Army (J. Kingdom, 1992, p. 152). *The Historical*

Dictionary of the Contemporary United Kingdom (2008) noted that the dispersal of marches by the police in Londonderry in October 1968 is often regarded as the start of this phase of the troubles. It is this period that ran from 1968 to 1998 that we have taken into account in the framework of this article.

“The troubles”, was a period of violence in Northern Ireland culminating in massive riots and terrorism. Despite the true purpose of the civil rights campaign to challenge injustice in the social sphere in Northern Ireland, the whole nature of protest unravelled and became battles in streets in which forces that were seen as representatives of Catholicism and Nationalism, were fighting against those from the Protestant and unionist population. During the troubles, following long tradition of paramilitary tradition that ran back to the past years of Ireland, it became a common practice for political parties and associations of Northern Ireland to have militias. The Northern Ireland militias had many purposes. They militarily backed up the actions of the political parties to which they were linked. They practised political violence in order to change or maintain the political order and to protect their communities from the actions of adverse paramilitary groups. They were also involved in drug trade and other criminal activities (*Historical Dictionary of the Contemporary United Kingdom*, 2008, p. 478). Few militias are pinpointed to illustrate the case.

On the Catholic side the main paramilitary force was the Irish Republican Army. Apart from the Irish Republican Army other Catholic militias were, among others, the Irish National Liberation (INLA) and the Ulster Freedom Fighter (UFF). These militias backed up the actions of the Sinn Féin and other republican political parties and protected the Catholic community against the brutality of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force of Northern Ireland and the actions of the Protestant militias.

The militias that represented the Protestant cause were the Ulster Volunteers Force splintering into Ulster Defence Association and the

Ulster Freedom Force. In addition, the Royal Ulster Constabulary was protestant-dominated and it used unusual and extremely violent methods. Another loyalist paramilitary organisation that practised terrorism during the troubles was the Ulster Vanguard Movement (M. Cronin, 2001, p. 255). The other loyalist militia was the Orange Volunteers (US Department, 2001, p 43). The militias of both sides, republican and loyalist, very often experienced schisms inside them.

Officially, the militias be they Catholic or Protestant, were considered by the British Government and the Northern Ireland devolved executive as terrorist organizations and therefore banned.³ Open expression of membership of any paramilitary group was liable to indefinite detention. In relation to this fact, Laura K. Donohue (2008, p. 36-38) asserted that in 1972, 342 people were indefinitely detained without trial. The number of people indefinitely detained for paramilitary activities increased during the course of the troubles.

Coming back to the course of the troubles during the years they began, in August 1969, levels of disorder on the streets grew, and communal violence escalated. In Londonderry particularly, the situation swept out of control, and became clear that the police force of Northern Ireland could not contain the rapid escalating situation. Attacks on the houses that were deemed to belong to those of the wrong religion became a common feature of life throughout in August of 1969.

Large sections of population of both communities were forced to flee their homes because the followers of their religion did not form the majority of in their localities. Many took new addresses within areas inhabited by their religious communities, many Catholics fled to the Republic of Ireland, while others of both communities left Northern Ireland. To stop violence and disorder and to restore order and peace, the Northern Ireland devolved executive was obliged to

³ Northern Ireland Emergency Powers Act of 1973, section 21. See also Prevention of Terrorism Act of 1974, section 2.

call the British government to send soldiers to intervene in Northern Ireland.

In attempt to calm this situation, restore order and reassure the Catholic population, the British forces were sent to Northern Ireland on 15th August 1969 (J. Kingdom, 1992, p. 151). These forces were eventually considered by the republicans as a foreign army of occupation. Their military wing, the Irish Republican Army attacked the British forces. It launched a campaign of terrorism, targeting the British troops and the Protestant community. On 30 January 1972 the British soldiers killed thirteen people during a march of the civil rights movement. This day is referred to by the nationalists as “the Bloody Sunday”. In the same year the Irish Republican Army responded with the bombing of the parachutists’ regiment in Aldershot, killing six civilians including a Catholic priest. After this attack, the Irish Republican Army split into two wings. The official wing disapproved violence and announced a cease-fire in June of that year (S. Hewitt, 2011, p. 23).

On the other side, the protestant paramilitary, the very active militia that backed up the political actions of the Unionist party was the Ulster Voluntary Force. Charles Townshend (2011, p. 52) mentioned that on 17th May 1974, Ulster loyalist groups planted three car bombs in South Leinster Street in Dublin, killing 63 people. This attack was perpetrated as a response to various hits of republican militias on the Britain mainland. For the loyalists, the Republic of Ireland was the sanctuary of the republican terrorists. Loyalist militias were also responsible for many sectarian assassinations targeting the members of the Catholic community and the Provisional IRA.

2. The Birth of the Provisional IRA, its actions against the Cease-fire of 1972 and the Official Position of the Sinn Féin

The Provisional IRA is a dissident Catholic paramilitary group that broke away from the Irish Republican Army and opposed the official

position of the Sinn Féin to stop violence and to settle the Northern Ireland conflict by negotiation. It continued attacks in Northern Ireland and on the Britain mainland. The Provisional IRA wanted to continue and intensify pressure on the British government to withdraw from the province. Their campaign started on 8 March 1972, when bombs exploded at the Old Bailey and Whitehall. Numerous bombs would explode over the next two-and-a half years.

Provisional IRA's hits intermittently killed and injured many people, in Northern Ireland, on the Britain mainland and abroad, during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1984, the Provisional IRA's activists attempted to kill Margaret Thatcher and other cabinet members while they were guest in a Brighton Hotel during the October 1984 Conservative Party Convention. A bomb exploded in the middle of the night, killing five people (S. Hewitt, 2011, p. 26). The Provisional IRA also murdered a British diplomat in Germany (S. R. Gibbon, 1982, p. 124). After many cease-fires, the Provisional IRA definitively stopped military operations in 1998 after the signature of the Good Friday Agreement.

On the Protestant side in 1996, a faction of the Ulster Volunteer Force that wanted to continue armed resistance against the Provisional IRA and other republican groups broke away from the Ulster Volunteer Force and formed the Loyalist Volunteer Force. This group continued to plant bombs in Catholic areas and perpetrated targeted assassinations among republicans. Some researchers estimated that during "the troubles" the Ulster Volunteer Force killed over 400 people in Catholic community (*Historical Dictionary of the Contemporary United Kingdom*, 2008, p. 481).

3. The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and the Actions Republican and Loyalist Dissident Paramilitary groups against this Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement was signed on 10 April 1998. It followed a series of talks chaired by the American senator George Mitchell

from which most of Northern Ireland political parties, the Government of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed an agreement known as the Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement. It was designed to end the violence that had plagued Northern Ireland for three decades. This agreement is divided into six strands. The strand that reminds the history of the nature of the social and political context of Northern Ireland is strand 6 entitled: Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity. It reads:

- 1- The parties reaffirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community. Against the background of the recent history of communal conflict, the parties affirm in particular :
 - The right of free political thought;
 - The right to freedom and freedom of religion;
 - The right to pursue democratically national and political aspirations;
 - The right to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means;
 - The right to freely choose one's place of residence;
 - The right to equal opportunity and in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity;
 - The right to freedom from sectarian harassment; and
 - The right of women to full and equal political participation.

Most of the major political parties supported the agreement, which was endorsed a month after the signing by referendums on both sides of the borders, with 71 per cent of those who voted in Northern Ireland and 94 per cent of those voting in the Republic of Ireland approving the proposal (V. Bogdanor, 2009, p. 179).

However, some republican and loyalist dissident militias refused to accept the terms of this agreement and try to undermine it. One of these dissident paramilitary groups is the Continuity IRA (CIRA) that

broke away from the Provisional IRA in 1986.⁴ It did not recognize either the Provisional IRA cease-fire of 1994 or the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and continued to plant bombs. In 2005, Michael Mc Dowell, the minister for justice, equality and law reform in the Republic of Ireland told the Dail, the Irish Parliament, that the organization had less than 150 members, and the following year, the Independent Monitoring Commission, which reviews the activities of the paramilitary groups in the province on behalf of both the British and Irish governments, reported that two dissident groups had broken away. In 2004, the United States designated the Continuity IRA a foreign terrorist organization, a decision that made American support for its activities illegal (US Department, 2002, p. 43).

Another dissident republican paramilitary group the Real IRA (RIRA), was formed in early 1998 as a clandestine armed wing of the 32-County Sovereignty Movement, a political pressure group dedicated to the departure of the British forces from Northern Ireland and unify Ireland. The Real IRA seeks to disrupt the Northern Ireland peace process. Its sponsor, the 32-County Sovereignty Movement, opposed Sinn Féin's adoption in September 1997 of the Mitchell Principles of Democracy and non-violence and opposed the amendment in December 1997 of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, which laid to claim Northern Ireland as part of Ireland Republic.

⁴ One year, before this schism, in 1985 the British government and the government of the Republic of Ireland signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The accord marked a major shift in British attitudes toward the problems in Ulster because it granted the republic's politicians a formal role in the administration of the province's affairs through an Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Standing Conference. Also, it guaranteed that decisions relating to the territory's political status, either as part of the United Kingdom or as part of a unified Ireland would be determined by a majority vote of residents (*Historical Dictionary of the Contemporary United Kingdom*, 2008, p.28). The terms of this accord could be the reason for the separation between the Provisional IRA and the Continuity IRA

Despite internal rifts and calls by some jailed members, including the group's founder Michael "Mickey" McKevitt, for the group's disbandment, the group pledged additional violence in October 2002 and continued to conduct attacks through bombings and assassinations (US Department, 2003, p. 50). It operated in Northern Ireland, in Britain mainland and the Irish Republic. Many Real IRA members are former Provisional IRA members who left that organization following the Provisional IRA's cease-fire of 1994 and brought to the Real IRA a rich experience in terrorism and bomb making. The other members of the Real IRA are some Irish Republican Army's hardliners dissatisfied with the IRA's cease-fire and other republican sympathisers. Their targets included civilians, the British military, the police in Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland Protestant Community. In 1998, its most notorious attack was Omagh Bombing in Northern Ireland, killing 25 people on 15 August 1998 (S. Hewitt, 2011, p. 27). Three months after the signature of the Good Friday Agreement. Since October 1999 until 2002, it was reported that the Real IRA carried out more than 80 terrorist attacks (US Department, 2003, p. 51).

The Real IRA was suspected of receiving funds from sympathisers in the United States of America and attempting to buy weapons from American gun dealers. The Real IRA was also reported to have purchased sophisticated arms from the Balkans. In May 2002, three Irish nationals associated with the Real IRA pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to cause an explosion and try to obtain weapons after their extradition from Slovenia to the United Kingdom (US Department, 2003, p. 52).

The loyalist paramilitary groups also tried to disrupt the Northern Ireland peace process related to the Good Friday Agreement. For instance, in 2001, there was an upswing in paramilitary violence in form of pipe-bomb attacks on Catholic homes in North Belfast. In addition, for twelve weeks during the autumn of that year, Protestants residing near a Catholic school near Belfast held highly publicized

protests that were sometimes marred by violence (US Department, 2002, p. 151).

4. The True Nature of Northern Ireland Militias: the Fundamentalists and the “Spoilers” of the Peace Process

The militias used by the political parties of Northern Ireland during the troubles were fundamentalists and the “spoilers” of the peace process. Ian Adams (2011, p. 255) defines fundamentalists as violent political radical activists who are linked with religion. Thus, they are often called religious fundamentalists which is something of an umbrella term, often used to cover religious revivals of all kinds. Here, it means a political activism inspired by traditional religious belief that aims at radical transformation of society and that is at odd with the norms of modern world such as turning a secular state into a religious one. Another political analyst, Robin Lovin’s opinion expressed in “Religion and Politics”, in *The Encyclopedia of Democracy* (1992, p. 530) asserts that contemporary Islamic fundamentalism is the paradigm for the political realization of fundamentalist views. However, one should know that fundamentalists are found in all religions. For instance, Protestant and Catholic fundamentalists of Northern Ireland are all Christians.

Many facts prove that Northern Ireland militias and their sponsors were religious fundamentalists. The first fact is that they rejected religious plurality as it is promoted by modern societies. This fact was clearly demonstrated in “Strand 6, Paragraph 1” of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. This paragraph mentions the various ways freedom of religion was breached in Northern Ireland in the past. In the United Kingdom, religious plurality is guaranteed by the British and the international legislation. Concerning the British legislation, one can mention, among others, the Catholic Emancipation Act of

1829, and the Government of Ireland Act of 1920.⁵ This Act has provisions that bans religious inequality and guarantees freedom of religion. This is declared in section 5 entitled:” Prohibition of law interfering with religious freedom and taking property without compensation”. This section reads:

5(1)- In the exercise of their power to make laws under this Act neither the Parliament of Southern Ireland nor the Parliament of Northern Ireland shall make a law so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religious or prohibit or restrict the exercise thereof , or give a preference, privilege, or disadvantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage, on account of religious belief or ecclesiastical status.

(2)- Any existing enactment by which any penalty, disadvantage, or disability is imposed on account of religious belief or on a member of any religious order as such, as from the appointed day, cease to have effect.

Some international texts that can be cited are: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950.

The second characteristic that corroborates the fundamentalist aspect of Northern Ireland paramilitary groups was terrorism which is one of the features of religious fundamentalism (I. Adams, 2001, p. 256). All over the world the majority of religious fundamentalists are linked to terrorism. It is the case of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq, the Levant and Al-Qaeda.

Referring to Northern Ireland militias as “the spoilers of the peace process”, Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond (2006, p. 4), argue that spoilers are the “*actors who obstruct peace processes in any armed conflict.*” And that:

⁵Government of Ireland Act of 1920 (23rd December 1920), Chapter 65, Section.5

Contemporary conflicts are complex, diverse in nature, and involve an array of actors, motives and processes both within the conflict and outside. From such a perspective, traditional conceptualization of peace-building, conflict settlement processes, and the role of disputant and third parties can be limited.

Spoilers inside the area of the conflict may be using the peace process as a means of gaining recognition, time, material benefits, or avoiding sanctions, and this can be described as having “dubious objectives”. Spoilers may also include actors who are geographically external to the conflict but support internal spoilers and spoiling tactics: ethnic or national diaspora groups, states, political allies, multinational corporations, or any other who might benefit from violent or holding out. Civil or domestic conflicts are, in reality, often influenced or characterized by international processes, causes, and consequences. That is why it is important to consider factors not only to confine the analysis of spoiling to a zone of armed conflict (E. Newman and O. Richmond, 2006, p. 6).

The spoilers of the peace process in Northern Ireland were the Catholic and the Protestant militias. On the Catholic side, the Provisional IRA obstructed the peace process after the cease-fire of 1972. It continued to perpetrate terrorism for various purposes. The external spoilers that helped the Provisional IRA were the Republic of Ireland, Libya and the Irish diaspora living in the United States of America. The main benefit the Irish Republic would get through this was the eventual unification of the whole Ireland.

As mentioned in the previous section, before the amendment of Article 2 of the Irish constitution in December 1997, this Article claimed that Northern Ireland was the part of the Republic of Ireland. This Article reads: “It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland which includes its islands and seas to be part of the Irish Nations”. The Republic of Ireland would also get

economic, territorial and demographic profits. For Libya, to maintain the perpetuation of conflict in Northern Ireland was an indirect way to fight one of her enemies that is to say the United Kingdom. The Real IRA like the Provisional IRA tried to obstruct the peace process for many reasons. Two of these reasons can be mentioned. The first one was to get recognition as the actors in Northern Ireland conflict. The second motivation was to get material benefit from criminal activities such as robbery and drug trade (US Department, 2002, p. 47).

Conclusion

This study has shown two facts concerning the relationships between militias and political parties in Northern Ireland which waves from alignment and disobedience. First, the political parties of Northern Ireland used paramilitary organizations as the supports of their political claims. Then, this work highlighted how the militias paradoxically opposed the political will of their sponsors for peace. This last aspect led to the consideration of militias as the spoilers of the peace process. The paramilitary organizations of Northern Ireland succeeded in disrupting the peace process because of many purposes and external factors such as material benefits obtained from illegal activities such as robbery and drug trade, and political consideration.

The external links such as the support of the Republican of Ireland to the republicans also contributed to weaken the negotiations and their outcomes. The main finding of this article is that dissident groups and their external links constitute an obstacle of peace-building in societies affected by political and military conflicts. Fortunately, the international community understood the fact that external actors must be taken into account in the process of peace-building in societies affected by these conflicts. This consideration of external factors influenced the negotiators of Good Friday Agreement of 1998 to design it as a multi-party agreement, including the governments of the United Kingdom, that of the Republic of Ireland and the political

parties of Northern Ireland. This agreement has lasted longer than the other peace treaties related to Northern Ireland conflict that had been signed in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Nowadays, there is no open military confrontation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. The power-sharing between both communities had solved the problems of discrimination in education, public accommodations and employments. However, political dissensions between Catholics and Protestants are current. These disagreements are the cause of the frequent suspensions of Northern Ireland Assembly. For instance, from January 2017 to October 2019, the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) asserted that one of the main points of disagreement was the Sinn Féin demand for an Irish Language Act; whereas the Unionist Democratic Party opposed this point of view (online). The question which remains without any answer stands as follows: is it possible to put a definite end to militias?

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