Northern Ireland Correspondence Coding Manual

Adee Weller[1], Danielle Villa[2], Emily Gade[3], and Sarah Dreier[4]

[1]Emory University
[2]Independent Scholar
[3]University of Oregon
[4]University of New Mexico

Pro-government militias (PGMs) actively participate in conflicts around the world. Yet governments respond to these militant groups in very distinct ways. States openly support some PGMs, maintain covert links with some, and ignore or suppress others. We examine this variation in how governments respond to PGMs, both across and within groups. This project analyzes 8,430 recently declassified documents from the United Kingdom Prime Ministers' security-based Correspondence Files (1969-1974), which detail the British government's internal attitudes and behaviors toward these groups in the context of Britain's "Troubles in Northern Ireland." We evaluate five of the predominant theoretical explanations that describe how governments understand PGMs: as representing costs to the government; benefits to the government; ideological allies to the government; locally popular forces; or forces the government cannot constrain.

1 coder_initials (text)

Enter the coder's initials. Check to make sure that there are not the same initials as someone else on the project. Multiple coder initials will be separated by semicolons.

2 folder_name (text)

Enter the labeled name of the folder from which the document images were derived. Keep in mind that multiple images of documents can come from the same folder.

3 img_number (numeric)

Enter the labeled number of the image in which the document is visible. Keep in mind that multiple rows of relevant text as it relates to a particular document can come from the same image.

4 date (numeric)

Enter the specific date of the event that the document outlines to the best ability in the (MM/DD/YYYY) format. If a range is present, enter the last date of the range as the entry.

For example:

If the document starts with "NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION REPORT 180700 TO 1900700 HRS OCTOBER 1972", enter 10/19/1972. If the document starts with "HEADQUARTERS NORTHERN IRELAND OPERATIONAL SUMMARY FOR THE WEEK ENDING 25 OCTOBER 1972", enter 10/25/1972. This is all provided that no other dates are specified within the relevant text.

5 location (text)

Enter the location in which the relevant text is taking place. If a specific city/town/village is mentioned, use the list at the bottom of this document to match that named location with its relevant county. If there is no specific city but the county is listed as a document header (e.g., "Londonderry" or "Border and Rural Areas") enter that as the location. If no location is provided and there are no further pieces of evidence (e.g., "the UDR was evident today around the [unspecified] country", enter "Unknown". The cities and corresponding counties are shown in Table E.1.

6 event_id (numeric)

Enter the unique numerical identifier for each claim of event. This works in sequence – starting from 1 and ending in the number of events ultimately coded. When there are observations in which multiple PGMs are related to one another and/or are taking actions together, the event IDs are split into decimals. For example, if the UDR and UDA are described as jointly patrolling an area by the British government, then that line of text and its relevant justifications would be identified as, let's say, 3.1 and 3.2 instead of just 3 as the event_id had it not been a joint operation.

7 document_type (categorical)

Enter the type of document that is being read; found in the document header (the top line). Categories include:

- SitRep - Situation Reports (including the annexes of Situation Reports and Situation Reports that span longer than a day in summary but are daily in breakdown)
- OpSum - Operational Summary (typically spans about a week)
- MeetingNotes - Notes of a meeting (will typically be described as such, e.g., "Notes of a Meeting of the Northern Ireland Office, At Noon on Friday 27 October")

- Forecast Letter - Letters from individual politicians or groups of politicians to others (e.g., letters from the prime minister)

8 pgm_name (categorical)

Enter the name of the PGM that the document is referencing (each document does at least once). Only one PGM should be entered per row – that means if a document mentions multiple PGMs or selected text includes PGMs jointly working together, these must be separated into different rows (with their event_ids being split into decimals). Note that "SF" (often seen in documents) stands for Security Forces and represents the British government.

The list of options (with more commonly mentioned PGMs highlighted) includes:

- Ulster Volunteer Force - UVF
- Ulster Freedom Fighters - UFF
- Ulster Defence Association - UDA
- Loyalist Defence Volunteers- LDV
- Vanguard Service Corps - VSC
- Orange Volunteers - OV
- Loyalist Association of Workers - LAW
- Ulster Defence Regiment - UDR
- Ulster Special Constabulary - USC, B-Specials, or B-Men
- Ulster Vanguard Rally
- Red Hand Commandos
- Territorial and Army Volunteer Reserve - TAVR
- Ulster Protestant Volunteers - UPV
- Protestant Terrorist/Extremist/Other

Note that "Vanguard" references will be entered as UVR.

9 relevant_text (text)

Enter select copied and pasted text that is relevant to the identified PGM after reading the document in its entirety. If a PGM is referenced, for example, across three sentences, but two sentences refer to one tag (e.g., Popularity, Local) and the other refers to a separate tag (e.g., Cost-Violence), then use two rows to analyze that particular PGM. Two questions need to be posed whenever reading a document: does the selected text in mind identify a PGM and does it showcase a relationship between the PGM and the British government? If so, enter the relevant text and move to the next step – using deduction within the tag columns to pick which category applies to said relationship. Note that (especially if the document does not have much else to offer), select text can be entered that simply identifies and describes a PGM without diving into the details of its thoughts about or activities with the government. If that becomes the case, the relevant text would still be entered although marked as "Neutral" within the tag columns.

10 tag1 (categorical)

Enter the tag (composed of a category and sub-categories) of the relationship that is occurring. Here, a coder must answer why it is (whether a cost or a benefit) that the British government would pursue a certain relationship with a PGM within the described context, date, and location. Note that the document does not need to explicitly have the British government discussing the, let's say, benefits of a PGM doing patrol work. Instead, we are also accepting a justified, explainable deduction from our coders. We evaluate five of the predominant theoretical explanations that describe how governments understand PGMs: as benefits to the government; as representing costs to the government; ideological allies to the government; locally popular forces; or forces the government cannot constrain. These represent our categories. With this in mind, our sub-categories are as follows:

- State Benefit
- PGM Security
- PGM Violence
- PGM Intelligence
- State Cost
- State Legitimacy
- State Capacity
- State Control
- PGM Ideology
- PGM Conflict

- PGM Polity
- PGM Territory
- PGM Popularity
- Local
- Diaspora
- State Capacity
- No-Go Zones

Other Categories:

- Neutral
- Other

Tags are composed of both categories and sub-categories. Our tags – the options that can be entered within the spreadsheet – can be found here with more explanation.

11 tag2 (categorical)

Enter the second tag here if more than one category of cost, benefit, or otherwise is referenced.

12 tag3 (categorical)

Enter the third tag here if more than two categories of cost, benefit, or otherwise are referenced.

13 tag4 (categorical)

Enter the fourth tag here if more than three categories of cost, benefit, or otherwise are referenced. Note that if more than four tags exist for one observation, manually add in another tag column and tell a lead coder or manager.

14 questions (text)

Enter any questions that may need to be posed to a larger body or a different source for input and understanding.

15 notes (text)

Enter any relevant information that does not fit within a particular variable, including irregularities in the case, difficulties in coding, a rare or exceptional event, etc. When in doubt, enter comments and concerns here.

16 Tags

Benefit-Security

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing the utility of PGM security-provision (including negative utility if it is not present, such as a need to not disrupt such goods, etc.). Such tasks can include patrols, breaking up gangs or crowds, and more. Benefit-Violence

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing the utility of PGM violence, including limiting or deterring anti-state operations, allowing the state to blame the PGM for additional violence, or providing political cover.

Benefit-Intelligence

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing the need for PGM intelligence or the utility of PGM intelligence.

Benefit-Other

This includes but is not limited to: instances in which the PGM obeys state orders, indicating that they are willing to cooperate with the state.

This does not include "dispersing" when the state did not explicitly ask or request for the PGM members to go home (e.g., if they do something of their own accord while the state simply observers it)

What counts as explicitly asking or requesting?

E.g., "dispersed after persuasion"

E.g., "dispersed upon request"

Cost-Legitimacy

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing concerns that the presence or actions of a PGM may prompt external or local concerns over the democratic nature of the government, human rights respect by the government, and/or legality of the actions of the government. Or the proper functioning of a government. Gets at instances in which the government is seen as or accused of failing its responsibility as a functioning, legitimate government.

Cost-Capacity

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing concerns that a PGM may prompt perceptions of state weakness, instability - including lack of a united front.

Cost-Control

Conflict costs related to control describe the ways in which the British government or SF must allocate conflict resources (soldiers, weapons, time, money, etc.) to battling the PGMs rather than the IRA/Provos; the British mandate is not to fight the PGMs but rather to halt IRA activity; as such, any cost invoked by the PGMs is a resource that cannot go towards the campaign against the IRA.

This is about the day-to-day conflict decisions/costs; Capacity costs are about the ability of the government to function as a polity/reflect on it as a state.

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing that the presence or actions of a PGM takes away from, distracts, or weakens the SF control over the conflict or ability to engage in conflict against the anti-state group.

Cost-Other

Ideo-Conflict

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing how the PGM conceives of and acts toward other PGMs, the IRA groups (or the State), or civilians as a rationale for the treatment of that group. This also includes descriptions of the methodologies or tactics that they use against combatants (e.g., are they taking additional strides or especially violent means of combating the IRA and/or the SF) or civilians (e.g., how extreme is their violence against civilians? What tactics are they taking and are they using them to differentiate themselves from other groups?) For example, a document might describe a certain PGM as more inclusive; willing to consider paroling or protecting Catholics as well as protestants, or all protestants rather than only certain protestants. Text could also describe symbolic violence (such as church burning), unique or especially violent methods (such as bombing campaigns or kidnapping), or using weapons or militant tactics to display military strength (e.g., carrying cudgels or drilling/parading in public).

This also includes descriptions of military norms and procedures that a group engages in that demonstrate organization or culture - especially if it is in a public setting. This would include drilling with military gear or equipment and/or in a manner that suggests readiness for fighting or security provision (as described above) and funeral procession activities such as volleying shots over the coffin or procession marches in uniform.

Note that the key factor here is not the size of the group but rather the activities of the group. If 6 UDA men are engaged in a drill with uniforms on, that would be tagged as Ideo-Conflict; this would also be the case if 600 UDA men are engaged in a drill with uniforms. On the flip side, a "parade" of 300 UDA men is not sufficient to get this tag as there is no information if the parade, which is a common group activity in this context beyond PGMs, is military in nature.

Ideo-Polity

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing or considering what the PGM is looking for on the political stage - especially references to power-sharing, limiting Catholic rights/political access, or any other reference from the SF regarding how the PGM in question considers/advocates for post-conflict governance/peace agreements. Most references to PGM-delivered propaganda are also considered here. This also includes references to inter-group dynamics as it relates to the formation of political parties/the beliefs of those political parties (that are in line or formed from PGMs).

Ideo-Terr

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing whether the PGM seeks to hold territory, whether it is currently holding territory, whether it seeks to create Protestant strongholds/bases of support that are ethnically homogeneous, etc. This includes descriptions of PGMs patrolling, building roadblocks, etc.

Ideo-Other

Pop-Local

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing concerns over a local (NI) political or conflict backlash if a PGM is removed, or that the presence or actions of a PGM are contributing to the lack of a local backlash. Text could also describe discussions of amount of the local support of a PGM. Text could also include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing the need to support/allow for the PGM to function in order to appease or placate demands from local Protestants.

This can also capture instances when the SF notes a lack of popularity of a PGM.

Local popularity refers to concerns about their standing or reputation from people in Northern Ireland. This includes instances in which there is a PGM member funeral and there is an extreme number of attendees.

Pop-Diaspora

Text could include the SF explicitly or implicitly discussing concerns over a political backlash in England if a PGM is removed. Diaspora popularity refers to concerns about their standing or reputation from people outside of Northern Ireland, e.g., Catholics/Protestants in England, and Catholics in America; what do they think about this?

Pop-Other

Cap-NoGo

Text here could include discussions of a need to rely on PGMs to gather information, operate against the IRA, or project anti-rebel sentiment within the No-Go areas of Derry. Likewise, text could describe an acceptance of No-Go areas because of the ability to use PGMs.

Cap-Other

Neutral

PGMs are referenced without an indication as to what activities they are engaging in, or otherwise fitting into a category.

Other

Use this only if no other categories fit.

E.1 Table of Cities and Corresponding Counties for Coding

City Name	**County**
1 - Ballycastle	Antrim
2- Cushendall	Antrim
3 - Ballymena	Antrim
4 - Larne	Antrim
5 - Atrim	Antrim
6- Carrickfergus	Antrim
7 - Bangor	Down
8 - Newtownards	Down
9 - Holywood	Down
10 - Belfast	Down and Antrim
11 - West Belfast	Antrim
12 - North Belfast	Antrim
13 - East Belfast	Down

14 - South Belfast	Antrim
15 - Lurgan	Armagh
16 -Lisburn	Down and Antrim
17 - Comber	Down
18- Strangford Lough	Down
19 - Dromore	Down
20 - Ballynahinch	Down
21 - Downpatrick	Down
22 - Banbridge	Down
23 - Newry	Down and Antrim
24 - Newcastle	Down
25 -Kilkeel	Down
26 - Carlingford	Other (Ireland)
27 - Warrenpoint	Down
28 - Dundalk	Other (Ireland)
29 - Crossmaglen	Armagh
30 -Newtownhamilton	Armagh
31 -Bessbrook	Armagh
32 - Darkley	Armagh
33 - Keady	Armagh
34 - Armagh	Armagh
35 -West Armagh	Armagh
36 - North Armagh	Armagh
37 - East Armagh	Armagh
38 - South Armagh	Armagh
39 - Portadown	Armagh
40 - Craigavon	Craigavon
41 - Castleblaney	Other (near Armagh, in Ireland)
42 - Monaghan	Other (near Armagh, in Ireland)
43 - Clones	Other (near Armagh, in Ireland)
44 - Newtownbutler	Fermanagh
45 -Upper Lough Erne	Fermanagh
46 - Fermanagh	Fermanagh
47 - Enniskillen	Fermanagh
48 - Lower Lough Erne	FermanaghUnited
49 - Bundoran	Other (Ireland)
50 - Dungannon	Tyrone
51 - Coalisland	Tyrone
52 - Cookstown	Tyrone
53 - Omagh	Tyrone
54 - Castlederg	Tyrone
55 - Strabane	Tyrone
56 - Donegal	Other (Ireland)
57 - Ballyshannon	Other (Ireland)
58 - Lifford	Other (Ireland)

59 - Letterkenny	Other (Ireland)
60 - Buncrana	Other (Ireland)
61 - Lough Foyle	Londonderry and Other (Ireland)
62 - Portrush	Antrim
63 - Coleraine	Londonderry
64 - Derry	Londonderry
65 - West Derry	Londonderry
66 -North Derry	Londonderry
67 - East Derry	Londonderry
68 - South Derry	Londonderry
69 - Limavady	Londonderry
70 - Dungiven	Londonderry
71 - Maghera	Londonderry
72 - Magherafelt	Londonderry
73 - London	Other (England)
74 - Other	

17 Depth of Collusion

Each coded statement corresponds to a single comment made during Cabinet meetings. Statements should be coded in their full context, considering surrounding discussions for implicit meanings. At least two independent coders should apply the rules to a sample of statements to ensure consistency. Each statement should be assigned to only one category, with preference given to the highest level of collusion indicated. If a statement is unclear, coders should default to the most conservative (lower-collusion) interpretation unless corroborating context suggests otherwise.

Coding Categories for Depth of Collusion

The depth of collusion of each individual event is coded on a scale from 0 – direct clashes – to 6, meaning planned and integrated, long-term collusion. The level of collusion is defined as follows. Coders should refer to this section when assigning a depth of collusion for each activity as is relevant in the text.

0 - Direct Clashes Between Security Forces (SF) and Paramilitaries

- The statement describes direct confrontations, arrests, or violent engagements between SF and Loyalist paramilitaries.
- **Example:** "The UDA engaged in a firefight with security forces in East Belfast last night."

1 - Tacit Acknowledgment of a Group's Existence

- The statement neutrally acknowledges the presence or actions of a paramilitary group without explicit approval or disapproval.
- **Example:** "The UDA erected barricades in Belfast last night."

2 - Approval of Paramilitary Actions

- The statement expresses a positive assessment of paramilitary activities, implying legitimacy or alignment with government interests.
- **Example:** "The UDA erected barricades in Belfast last night, and the men appeared well disciplined and behaved."

3 - Recognition of Paramilitary Autonomy but Willingness to Follow Orders

- The statement acknowledges paramilitary actions as independent but indicates a willingness to comply with directives from SF or the government.
- **Example:** "The UDA erected barricades in Belfast last night but took them down following discussions with SF."

4 - Paramilitaries Acting Autonomously but Cooperating When Asked

- The statement describes paramilitaries engaging in independent actions but responding cooperatively when prompted by SF.
- **Example:** "The UDA erected barricades in Belfast last night, but took them down with the help of SF."

5 - Collaborative, Planned Acts Between SF and Paramilitaries

- The statement indicates direct coordination between paramilitaries and SF in organizing security-related activities.
- **Example:** "The UDA and SF negotiated when and where the UDA can erect barricades across Belfast in the coming week."

6 - High-Level Collusion: Provision of Resources, Training, or Intelligence

- The statement provides evidence of the British government or SF supplying paramilitaries with intelligence, arms, or logistical support.

- **Example:** "SF provided intelligence and arms to the UDA ahead of Operation Motorman."

Additional Considerations

Coders should consider the implications of the text and look for potential euphemisms to flag for group discussion. If a statement implies collusion without direct mention (e.g., "security arrangements were discussed with key community actors"), coders should assess contextual evidence before classifying. Statements from higher-ranking officials (e.g., Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) may carry greater weight, but all statements should be coded based on content rather than speaker identity. Where possible, statements should be cross-checked with external historical records to validate their meaning.