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# Overstating and Misjudging the Prospects of Civil War: The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers in the Home Rule Crisis, 1912-1914

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**Overstating and Misjudging the Prospects of Civil War:  
The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers in the Home Rule Crisis,  
1912-1914**

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## **Abstract**

In 1914, as Europe marched towards war, the British government focused on internal issues in Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act 1914 passed the House of Commons and would have allowed for a limited power parliament in Dublin to control Irish issues. Militias formed in Ireland in reaction to the bill. The Irish Volunteers, in favor of the bill, swore to uphold the law, while the Ulster Volunteer Force vowed to stop the law at any cost. The British government feared both of these paramilitaries. This thesis explores the threat posed by these militias and their effects on Britain's entry into World War I.

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## Introduction

In the summer of 1914 as the threat of war loomed over the continent of Europe, a struggle over identity in the British Isles threatened to flow over into violence. As the major powers of Europe tottered closer to the Great War, men all over Ireland were forming militias for an entirely different purpose. The British government focused its attention on the northern province of Ireland rather than on the powers across the Channel as a Government of Ireland Act 1914, that would allow Ireland a modicum of freedom from the United Kingdom (UK) was due to come into effect in 1914. In Ulster, a province encompassing the nine counties of Northern Ireland, Unionists were martialing a force to oppose the implementation of home rule. In the south, Nationalists were gathering their forces to make sure home rule came to pass. At the time of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination, British Prime Minister Asquith was more concerned with the problems in Ulster than with the brewing troubles on the continent. Even as late as the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, his correspondence concentrated on failed negotiations in Ulster and only briefly mentioned the looming threat of war. "Not until the cabinet meeting of 24 July, after long and difficult discussions on the minutiae of local government boundaries in Ulster, did [Lord Grey] raise the issue of British policy on the [European] crisis."<sup>1</sup> As PM Asquith's foreign secretary, Lord Grey was responsible for recommending what the British do about the issues on the continent. Unionists and Conservative MPs supported Britain's entry into the war in no small part because it would delay home rule. It would also put off the possibility of a civil war in Ireland that many believed was fast approaching.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 493.

<sup>2</sup> Information in this paragraph drawn from Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, 490-493; 545.

To government officials and much of the public, violence between the Unionists, who wanted Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, and the Nationalists, who wanted an independent Ireland, appeared imminent. The passage of the Government of Ireland Act 1914, also called commonly called the Home Rule Bill, had caused an escalation of rhetoric and a rush to arms within Ireland. The bill would have placed a parliament with limited power and autonomy in Dublin as of 1914. Nationalists strongly supported the measure as a first step toward independence from Britain and Unionists feared it for the same reason. Each side formed paramilitary organizations that were ready to defend their ideals with militant force. In Irish and British history, the time from late 1913 to late 1914 became known alternatively as the Ulster crisis or the home rule crisis.

The home rule crisis forms an integral part of the story of Irish independence and plays a crucial role in the pivotal year of 1914. While several different organizations existed on both the Nationalist and Unionist sides, this thesis will focus on those that formed specifically in response to the Government of Ireland Act 1914 and that gained the most support among the population towards that end. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), the unionist group, operated in and around Belfast in County Antrim. The Irish Volunteers (IV)<sup>3</sup>, serving the nationalist cause, made their headquarters in Dublin. While the UVF was concentrated in Ulster and the IV encompassed the rest of the country, both had regiments of volunteers in each other's areas of strength. Neither the UVF nor the IV was an existential threat to the UK. The effect these organizations had on the outcome of Britain's entry into the war far outsized their might. The military capacity of both militias has been far overstated in the historical record.

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<sup>3</sup> Called the Irish Volunteer Force (IVF) in some contemporary sources.

## Background

The conflict between the Nationalists and the Unionists has deep roots in Irish history. By the early twentieth century, Ireland had been under the control of Britain for approximately eight hundred years. A policy known as the Plantation of Ulster allowed Scots to settle into Ulster in the fifteenth century. These settlers were Protestant and loyal to the Crown, leading in part to the continued loyalty to the Union demonstrated in 1914 and beyond. For much of British rule, a Protestant and British minority ruled over a Catholic and Irish majority. This religious distinction introduced profound animosity. Penal laws and required oaths to the Anglican Church of Ireland kept Catholics out of the government until Catholic emancipation in 1829<sup>4</sup> and blocked upward mobility of Catholics,<sup>5</sup> creating an even greater divide between the Catholic lower classes and the Protestant upper class. The Unionists tended to be Protestant while the Nationalists tended to be Catholic but this was not generally the deciding factor in determining which side of the issue of Irish independence any given individual would choose.

Throughout the long period of British rule different groups of Irish people resisted, often violently, the rule of the Crown. Violent revolts nearly succeeded several times under early English control. Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone in Ulster, and his allies acted as a thorn in the Tudors' side for nine years before their loss to the Crown in March 1603. After the earls surrendered, King James I promulgated the Plantation of Ulster in order to prevent further uprisings in the area. The defeat of James II at the hand of William of Orange in 1689 provoked outrage and resistance across Ireland. While it may have been considered a bloodless revolution in Great Britain, it was marked by violence and bloodshed in Ireland. Violence again swept

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<sup>4</sup> Susan K. Kent, *A New History of Britain Since 1688: Four Nations and An Empire*. (New York: Oxford University Press 2017), 186.

<sup>5</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998: War Peace and Beyond*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20010), 28.

through the countryside in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in the form of the Whiteboy movement. Catholic peasants targeted Protestant landlords and tithe collectors to protest unfair rents and other issues faced by tenants. One of the largest rebellions against the British took place in 1798. The 1798 rebellion, like those that preceded it, was put down with violent suppression. An estimated 10,000 people were killed over the course of four months before the British were able to suppress the revolt. In 1858, the Fenians, also called the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), were formed with a mission to free Ireland from British rule. In December 1867, they blew up part of Clerkenwell Prison to free one of their leaders, killing a dozen British citizens and injuring a considerable number of others in the process. This exploit not only brought Irish issues to public attention but also cast Irish Catholics as bloodthirsty villains in the English popular imagination. The Nationalists used the hundredth anniversary of the 1798 rebellion propagandistically as a movement for freedom for all of Ireland. Violent uprisings were a part of the collective Irish memory. By the turn of the twentieth century, the British had put down many of them.<sup>6</sup>

After the 1867 Feinian Rising, Nationalists turned their attempts for Irish freedom to parliament, working within the law. For the four decades prior to the passage of the Home Rule Bill, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) had been an organized force expressly working for home rule in the House of Commons. The Land League supported the IPP, which fought for tenant rights and sought the end of the landlords in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Irish land reform and nationalist requests went hand in hand in parliament. The fight for home rule and Irish independence became known as the “Irish Question” in Westminster and it became a frustrating and stalling issue. Three

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<sup>6</sup> Information in this paragraph drawn from Kent, *A New History*, 186; 243; 278. and Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, 19

<sup>7</sup> Kent, *A New History*, 278.

versions of the home rule bill were brought before parliament in 1886, 1893, and 1912. Each bill had slight variations in terms. The Liberal Prime Minister, William Gladstone, introduced the 1886 bill. Gladstone's bill had the effect of splitting a group off the liberal party. This new group became known as the Liberal Unionists, who sought above all to keep Ireland in the Union with Great Britain. Gladstone had gotten next to no input from Irish MPs on the 1886 bill and even members of the IPP were hesitant to vote for it. It failed to pass the House of Commons. Gladstone's second attempt in 1893 was more successful and passed the House of Commons, only to be killed in the more conservative House of Lords. In the early 1910s, the Liberal Party under the leadership of Herbert Henry Asquith attempted to pass the People's Budget, a proto-welfare state provision that would provide for the unemployed and sick.<sup>8</sup> He would not have the requisite number of votes without the support of the IPP, so Asquith agreed to support home rule in exchange for the IPP's backing of the budget. The Government of Ireland Act 1914 passed only because a change in the rules of parliament prevented the House of Lords from vetoing legislation for more than three years; now they could only delay it. The bill as it was passed would have allowed for very limited control: the parliament in Dublin would not have been able to make laws regarding "the Crown; war and peace; defense; treaties; titles of honor; treason, alienage or naturalization; trade, navigation; coinage... establishment of religion; and religious belief or ceremony as a condition of marriage."<sup>9</sup> This would have left only a few domestic issues under the control of the Irish parliament. The lord lieutenant, a representative of the Crown, had the ability to suggest and veto legislation.<sup>10</sup> Many in the IPP and hardline nationalists in Ireland protested the terms as inadequate. Under the leadership of John Redmond, the IPP lost much of

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<sup>8</sup> Kent, *A New History* 312.

<sup>9</sup> "A Comparison of Irish Home Rule Bills" in *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800*. Ed. Alan O'Day and John Stevenson. Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books: 1992, 153-154.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 154.

its widespread popular support, and internal factionalism over the bill caused even more fading of support.<sup>11</sup> It was against this backdrop that the home rule crisis occurred.

### Historiography

Historians have taken the imminence of civil war in Ireland as a given for as long as histories have been written about Ireland in 1914. Prime Minister Asquith, among many others, believed that Ireland was about to dissolve into war over the passage of home rule and that his control of parliament in Westminster was also near collapse. Historians base their claims on the rhetoric of threatened violence and supposed strength of the militias that grew up in the wake of the passage of the Home Rule Bill. While historians believe that civil war was near, they have not made the military capacity of either the UVF or that of the IV the focus of major research.<sup>12</sup> Historians have written plenty about most aspects of the Irish Question, especially the political history of the Home Rule movement. They have generally ignored however, the militia formation that arose in reaction to the Government of Ireland Act 1914, except as it relates to the Irish War of Independence and tangentially the much later Troubles. Until recently few studied the UVF in part because those involved with the organization did not want to record their experiences in the years that followed in the same way Nationalists did.<sup>13</sup> However, the centenary of the events of 1914 has stimulated new work on the home rule crisis and the two militias formed during it.

The Unionist side of things is easier grasp in the secondary literature than the Nationalist's. Alvin Jackson's article on Unionist remembrance of the home rule crisis describes

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<sup>11</sup> Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, 161.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Bartlett, "When Histories Collide: The Third Home Rule Bill of Ireland," in *The Home Rule Crisis 1912-14*, edited by Gabriel Doherty (Cork: Mercier Press, 2014), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy Bowman, *Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1.

how Unionists came to see the Larne gun running and formation of the volunteers in 1914 as heroic acts in defense of the Union.<sup>14</sup> Both at the time and in later years, Unionists claimed that in forming a militia they were defending King and country from people bent on tearing the Union apart.<sup>15</sup> These strong claims and posturing on both sides of the Irish Question could be some explanation of the strong and persistent belief that civil war was as imminent as many believed. According to Jackson, “By the summer of 1914 the deadlock within British politics over Home Rule, and in particular over Ulster’s opposition to it, was so complete that a civil war seemed to offer the only path towards resolution.”<sup>16</sup> The willingness and preparedness for war are implicit in Jackson’s argument without a thorough investigation into their capabilities. However, Jackson’s focus is on politics rather than militia formation. Timothy Bowman’s *Carson’s Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22*, covers the UVF in great detail. While he does address some of the capacity of the UVF, his research is more focused on the command structure rather than the UVF’s capability to carry out its stated mission. He also only obliquely addresses the effect that the UVF had on the British. His book does provide a good springboard into the more defined focus of this paper and is currently the definitive work on the UVF prior to the outbreak of World War I. Bowman’s analysis does not show the UVF as a strongly capable paramilitary force. He demonstrates that commanders had a hard time making their men show up for training. Some men seem to have treated the UVF as a social club rather than a paramilitary organization that required their time and energy. Bowman compiled a table showing how few of the officers

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<sup>14</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History 1800-2000*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and Alvin Jackson, “Unionist Myths 1912-1985” *Past & Present* 136 (1992):164-185.

<sup>15</sup> Jackson, “Unionist Myths” 169.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, *Home Rule*, 4.

in the UVF held a post in the British army, which is useful to the argument of this paper.<sup>17</sup> These secondary sources start to build a picture of how the UVF operated and what its limitations were.

Not many histories of the UVF were written immediately following the crisis, analyses of the UVF have generally been written only recently. Only three memoirs written by members of the UVF exist, and these memoirs have largely drifted into obscurity. It is unclear why exactly members of the UVF hesitated to record their memories and experiences in the organization. It could have something to do with the Nationalists having more success with the creation of the Irish Free State in the wake of the First World War. However, the Unionists did win a key victory in 1921, leaving Northern Ireland within the UK when the island was partitioned, rather than being made to separate from Britain. The dearth of early source material has led to a lack of interest in the group. Despite violence that rocked Northern Ireland from the 1960s through to the 1998 Good Friday accords, the Unionist forces from the pre-war era have been largely ignored. Instead historical favor has fallen on the better-documented and longer-standing Irish Republican Army (IRA), a nationalist group, and the problems they caused throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. While outright violence almost completely stopped in 1998, the tensions between Unionists and Nationalists that were exacerbated in the Troubles are still very much active today. The underlying issues started in the Plantation of Ulster have not been resolved. This has led to some reluctance to write controversial histories on the topic because it could upset the balance of things in Northern Ireland.<sup>18</sup>

The IV is harder to place in the secondary literature than the UVF, despite the availability of primary sources in the National Library of Ireland. Secondary works on the IV prior to WWI are sparse. A split occurred in the group around the start of the war adding to the complexity of

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<sup>17</sup> Bowman, *Carson's Army*, 88-95.

<sup>18</sup> Information in this paragraph drawn from introductions of Bowman, *Carson's Army*.

studying it; this has contributed to the lack of attention paid to the group. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), an older, more secretive nationalist organization, took over the more militant branch that came out of the IV split from the inside, further obscuring the historical record of the organization.<sup>19</sup> According to Peter Brown, in its early days the IV was a mix of the various Nationalist groups and it initially emerged in response to the UVF. The IV is generally referred to as a responsorial organization in the majority of the secondary literature. Owing to its genesis being more nebulous, the IV has not been covered in as great a level of detail as the UVF. Brown argues that the IV's manifesto was strongly anti-English but vague in many other areas, including the use of force for political ends. The organization was considered a defense force for the implementation of home rule, not a force for attacking the UVF.<sup>20</sup> The various nationalist groups splintering and reforming throughout 1914 made it hard to track the volunteer movement among the Nationalists. Historians have focused on other nationalist groups like Sinn Fein, which rose to prominence out of the Easter Rising, and the IRA, formed out of the end of the Irish War of Independence from 1919 to 1921. Works written on extralegal Nationalist movements tend to focus on the IRA. While the IV is one of the parent organizations of the IRA, books on the IRA do not focus on militia formation before the Easter Rising of 1916. The nationalist groups were more obviously splintered and disparate than the unionists. When a full-fledged civil war occurred in Ireland in 1921-1922, it was between factions of Nationalists, not between the Nationalists and Unionists. In spite of the more fractured nature of the Nationalists, secondary sources focused on the Nationalists do assume the same eventuality of civil war had

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<sup>19</sup> Matthew Kelly. "The Irish Volunteers: A Machiavellian Moment?" In *The Ulster Crisis: 1885-1921*, edited by D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 66.

<sup>20</sup> Peter Brown, "How Revolutionary Were the Irish Volunteers?" *History Ireland* 21 no.6 (2013): 33-36.

the Great War not occurred. The narrative set out in the secondary literature is that the home rule crisis brought Ireland, and as a consequence the United Kingdom, to the brink of civil war. The rhetoric of the time began this assumption, which has not been strongly contested since. This thesis challenges the narrative of the imminence of civil war in Ireland in 1914.

### Outline

The argument of this paper is broken into several sections. The first chapter covers creation and rise to influence of the Ulster Volunteer Force. The UVF's structure was much more robust than that of the IV's and the UVF membership records are more complete. Despite this structure they still lacked the capabilities and arms of a well-trained paramilitary force. Chapter two focuses on the formation of the Irish Volunteers' in response to the UVF and will treat the IV's struggles with funding their activities and developing and maintaining competent leadership. Chapter three analyses British reactions to the crisis in Ireland and as well as the implications of the issue in the broader world context. It shows how the IV and UVF interacted with each other, addresses the concerns of Prime Minister Asquith, and investigates the involvement of outside actors in the home rule crisis. The concluding section will tie together all the previous analysis, discuss the significance of the thesis, and provide possible directions for expanded research.

## Chapter One: The Ulster Volunteer Force

On 28 September 1912, a crowd of people gathered at City Hall in Belfast, County Antrim. Sir Edward Carson, a staunch unionist and a Liberal Unionist MP, gave a rousing speech to the throng. On that day, just fewer than half a million people signed a document that became known as Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant. Carson signed the covenant first, famously with a silver-inked pen. By signing the document men pledged to "...stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland."<sup>21</sup> A modified version for women asserted that they felt "...a desire to associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the home rule bill now before Parliament..."<sup>22</sup> Even as early as 1912, when the realistic passage of home rule became a clear threat, the Unionists claimed they would do whatever it took to remain a part of the United Kingdom. While the UVF centered in Ulster, where the majority of Unionists were concentrated, some Unionists also lived scattered across the country, especially in Cork. Unionists all around Ireland wanted the whole island to remain in the UK; they did not expect the country to be split. Unionist opposition efforts focused on Ulster because that is where they held the majority.

The Ulster Covenant was only a first step in Unionist opposition. Carson, along with Bonar Law and other Unionist leaders, formed the UVF in January of 1913. While other Unionist clubs existed prior to this date, the UVF was seen as taking over the more militant parts

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<sup>21</sup> "Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant, Saturday, 28 September 1912." In *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800*. Ed. Alan O'Day and John Stevenson. Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books: 1992, 149.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

of those organizations to form a more cohesive force.<sup>23</sup> Carson represented the organization as its political and public face throughout the home rule crisis. Born in Dublin to a wealthy Anglican family, Carson served as a MP for the Liberal Unionist party and also as a barrister.<sup>24</sup> Politically astute and highly educated, he made an odd leader for a paramilitary organization. When the UVF began, as well as throughout the crisis, men who wanted join were required to sign the Ulster Covenant, as Carson had, as well as an additional agreement. This pact read, “I, the undersigned hereby declare that I signed “The Ulster Covenant” at [blank] and that I agree to Serve in the above force throughout the crisis created by the passage into law of the home rule bill at present before Parliament, or in any previous emergency for the mutual protection of all Loyalists, and generally to keep the Peace. This agreement shall hold good until I notify my resignation to my Superior Officer in writing. GOD SAVE THE KING.”<sup>25</sup> This contract made the object of the organization to defend unionist interests, not to offensively attack nationalist interests. This is only a slight distinction, but an important one. The UVF did not set out to create a violent conflict with the Nationalists. Instead the UVF opposed the law that the government passed and the impending enforcement of that law. Unionists mobilized in response to this threat with the creation of a militarily organized armed force.

While the media debated the exact number of members in the organization, UVF records not only showed the number of men but also several similar characteristics among them. The media speculated a great deal about the exact membership of the UVF throughout the crisis. They had a hard time pinning down the total membership and the count varied wildly depending

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<sup>23</sup> Bowman, *Carson's Army*, 22-24.

<sup>24</sup> D. George Boyce, “Carson, Edward Henry, Baron Carson (1854–1935)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford University Press: 2004; online edn, May 2014) <http://www.oxforddnb.com/colorado.idm.oclc.org/view/article/32310>, accessed 30 January 2017.

<sup>25</sup> *Chart of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions UVF Co. Fermanagh*. Handwritten Document. July 1914. PRONI, Miscellaneous Papers and Documents, D1402/3/3.

on the source. In September 1913, a *New York Times* article stated that “The Ulster Army is said to be thoroughly organized and already to have attained the strength of 100,000 men...”<sup>26</sup>

Records that battalion commanders sent to UVF headquarters, dating from August through October of 1913, place the number at 48,660 active members. The enrollment of the UVF was less than half of *New York Times* estimate during the same time. The number of active members ebbed and flowed significantly through the Ulster crisis. However, people who joined the UVF did have some similar characteristics beyond being unionists. A registration role of 271 people from January 31, 1913 in the Lisburn locality, County Antrim demonstrated the patterns in men registering for the UVF. Many men who joined together appeared to be family members, having shared the same last names. Frequently, the men who signed up had the same occupations: farmer, laborer, or shopkeeper. Neighborhoods joined en mass with people from several adjacent addresses registering simultaneously.<sup>27</sup> Members of Unionist clubs and Orange Societies also enlisted in the UVF. Young recruits composed the majority of members, another common characteristic across the organization. In a group of 110 registration forms from late 1913 into early 1914, 62 of the new members were under the age of 25.<sup>28</sup> The youth of such members had an impact on the overall military experience of the organization. The Boer War, the last major combat situation for British troops which ended more than a decade before the Ulster crisis, transpired before any of the volunteers under 25 reached their teenage years. Of 110 registrants above, only 39 of them could have possibly served in the Boer war, assuming an eighteen-year age limit on entry into the military. The men who joined the UVF for the most part lacked combat experience. While the young recruits provided energy and enthusiasm for the cause, they

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<sup>26</sup> “ ‘Army’ of 100,000 Ready in Ulster” *New York Times*, Sept. 17 1913.

<sup>27</sup> *Forms filled out by members*. Typescript and handwritten. UVF, 1913. PRONI, Lisburn UVF records, D845/5.

<sup>28</sup> *Chart Co. Fermanagh*. PRONI, D1402/3/3.

lacked military discipline and a basic understanding of military structure, which the organization desperately needed. Despite this lack of experience, each area of Ulster created its own regiments and battalions following orders from central command in Belfast. The UVF commanders took stock of what skills and useful objects the men joining brought with them. The officers did this through a form that asked whether each man had: guns, ammunition, bicycles, cars, the ability to ride a horse, knowledge of signaling or first aid.<sup>29</sup> Eleven of these forms, filled out in 1913, show only one bicycle, two people who could ride horses, one signaler, and two men trained in first aid. With such a small number of forms, this is likely unrepresentative; however, it is interesting that not even one of the men had a gun or even any ammunition. While the unionists who joined the UVF appeared unprepared for a war, the commanders of the UVF moved forward to make them part of the military-like structure of the UVF after their skills and material assets had been considered.

The UVF had an organizational structure similar to the British military by late 1913. A central headquarters issued regular orders to the battalions and regiments scattered across Ulster. These printed dispatches covered basic military training, requests for information, and even what to do in case the British government arrested the UVF leaders.<sup>30</sup> The UVF involved women in the organization through its mail service used to transmit orders and other communications.<sup>31</sup> The organization used a playfair cypher, a strong encoding mechanism before the invention of computers, to send written communications and trained all officers to use it.<sup>32</sup> The leaders of the

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<sup>29</sup> *Forms filled out.* PRONI, D845/5.

<sup>30</sup> Arthur O'Neil, *Papers relating to the North Antrim Regiment of the Ulster Volunteer Force.* 1914. PRONI, D1238

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Venie Barr. *Large, leather bound, scrapbook.* Newspaper clippings, Photographs, Handwritten notes. 1912-1914. Sarah Venie Barr Papers, PRONI, D4492/1.

<sup>32</sup> *Bundle of copy forms relating to the UVF.* 1914. PRONI, Irwin family and Ulster Volunteer Force papers, T3855/A/2.

UVF attempted to create a shadow version of the British military. UVF headquarters published a series of strict organizational charts for local commanders to use. According to their rulebooks, two squads built into a section, two sections built into a half company, and two half companies built into a company. Companies ideally should have been composed of a total of 103 members: 96 men, four section leaders, two subcommanders, and one commander.<sup>33</sup> The actual records of the Fermanagh battalions demonstrate a different reality. Fermanagh companies ranged from 45 to 242 individuals; none of them consisted of the ideal 103 men.<sup>34</sup> One combined company between two smaller areas had even 336 men. The actual structure of the companies and commands did not strictly follow the guidelines laid out in the UVF's manuals. The UVF leaders used the broad outlines in building from a squad to a battalion; the essence of the structure was apparent. While the UVF attempted to follow many of the structural elements of a military force, they did not have discipline, training, or arms comparable to the British military machine.

For all the appearances of military organization and discipline, the UVF could not transform its volunteers into an effective force. Even towards the beginning of the movement, the officers had problems with keeping men focused on drilling and training. Commanders taught military discipline and troop movements through drilling. Men joined and attended drill sessions for the first few weeks then slowly their attendance faded away. The UVF role books even went so far as to delineate between effective and non-effective members based on attendance to drill sessions. One such book for J company in the 4<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Tyrone Regiment listed a total

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<sup>33</sup> *Printed booklet about Ulster Volunteer Force*. Print. 1912. PRONI, Private papers of Col. F.H. Crawford, D640/24/1.

<sup>34</sup> *Register of County Fermanagh UVF*. Handwritten book. July 1914. PRONI, Miscellaneous Papers and Documents, D1402/3/1.

of 386 members and showed that the commander considered eighty-one of them non-effective.<sup>35</sup> Despite the problems with member attendance at drill, the UVF considered drilling to be of the utmost importance. The majority of the orders issued by UVF headquarters had to do with drilling and the level of proficiency the men should have achieved.<sup>36</sup> In spite of this focus on drilling, the member book of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Tyrone Regiment showed only 481 members passed drilling tests and only 359 passed musketry tests out of 1,930 total members.<sup>37</sup> These numbers, taken in November 1913, showed only twenty-five percent of members achieved competence in drilling and only nineteen percent shot firearms proficiently. While an efficient volunteer had to pass drill tests per the guidelines, if the officers of a squad vouched for an individual, command did not require them to pass the drill tests.<sup>38</sup> This allowance for officers left room for cronyism and ineffective men to enter the organization if they knew the right people. While drilling was a cornerstone of UVF activities, commanders seemed to view proficiency with firearms as a secondary consideration. By May of 1914, leaders ordered “It is now necessary that every Volunteer should be fully instructed in the use of the rifle...”<sup>39</sup> The order implies that prior to this time the command of the UVF believed that not every man needed to be trained with a rifle. The UVF formed to halt the implementation of home rule; UVF headquarters not requiring every volunteer to acquire skills with a firearm was inconsistent with their organization’s goals. The lack of regular attendance and proficiency in drill and firearms did not indicate a highly threatening organization. The UVF did not have the capability to mount a

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<sup>35</sup> *Lists and rolls of "J" Company*. Handwritten records. 1913-1914. PRONI, Ulster Volunteer Force: Cookstown area, D1132/6/2.

<sup>36</sup> O’Neil, *Papers*, PRONI, D1238

<sup>37</sup> *Lists and rolls of "J" Company*. PRONI, D1132/6/2.

<sup>38</sup> *Book of Standard Tests*. Pamphlet. January 1914. PRONI, Papers of Savage-Armstrong family, D938/14/1

<sup>39</sup> *J. N. Adair to Commander, North Antrim Regiment*. Handwritten letter. 31 May 1914. PRONI, Arthur O’Neil Papers, D1238/155

traditional campaign against the British military with any hope of success. However a successful military operation by the UVF could have been a possibility even with the lack of trained men, if they had had a well-trained officer corps.

The UVF lacked British trained officers or military trained men as a general rule. A chart compiled by Bowman of officers that served in or had retired from the British army listed only 132 officers in the UVF. Of those 132, 106 of them were ranked Major and below. The UVF largely did not have officers or members with a high rank in the British military and even these experienced men were distributed unevenly across the organization. While two of the three British major generals in the UVF operated as divisional commanders for entire counties, the third served only as a company commander in Greyabbey. This wide discrepancy meant that even if a volunteer had military experience it did not mean that they were ideally placed to use the experience. In the registration books, the majority of the members were farmers or other laborers. Men who were made officers, especially in the rural areas, tended to be gentlemen or solicitors. While these upper class men had been educated, many would not have possessed knowledge of military tactics. They simply had high social status in their localities with little experience in military matters. No one trained most of the men leading the companies, or even some of the battalions, professionally for their jobs. It is unlikely that many of them would have understood basic military strategy had the conflict come to the point civil war or outright revolt against the British administration. The British officers they did have often served in multiple areas or in multiple Unionist organizations. Many maintained full time positions within the British military and had the conflict come to a head, they would have had to choose between the British and the UVF. These officers split their attention and they could not have given the necessary effort to the UVF, had a civil war arisen, without resigning from the military. Had

even a few of these officers chosen to remain in the British army, the results would have been disastrous for the UVF command structure. The UVF did not have many men with military training.<sup>40</sup>

By the summer of 1914, the force had an even larger issue with attendance and discipline. Headquarters ordered Battalion commanders to compile a list of "...the names of all men who seldom, if ever, attend parades or drills, or who through bad attendance are not proficient unless such men have a reasonable excuse or are doing useful work in in other ways."<sup>41</sup> Clearly command felt an organization-wide issue existed with its members actually participating in drills, a vitally important component of an effective force. The UVF's all-voluntary nature made it more difficult for officers to enforce behavior expectations. They screened prospective members less than the British military could for their prospective recruits. The UVF took members up to the age of 60,<sup>42</sup> well above the typical age for military field troops. Owing to the UVF's need for every willing man they could get, the leaders could not be very selective with whom they allowed to join. Additionally, commanders had extremely limited options for disciplining troops once they had enrolled. Nearly the only recourse for officers when dealing with a disobedient volunteer was to kick them out. However even this option was restricted, command ordered officers that "...men may not be dismissed as punishment from the Force without the authority of the Divisional Commander."<sup>43</sup> The exception to this restriction had to do with alcohol, if a commanding officer caught a volunteer drinking or with alcohol during parades

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<sup>40</sup> Information in this paragraph drawn from Bowman, *Carson's Army*, 95-97. and *Register of County Fermanagh UVF*, Registration book, PRONI D1402/3/1 and *Chart Co. Fermanagh*. PRONI, D1402/3/3.

<sup>41</sup> *Battalion Orders of 2nd Battalion North Derry*. Typescript. 1913. PRONI, North Derry Regiment Papers, D304/1.

<sup>42</sup> *Printed booklet*, PRONI, D640/24/1.

<sup>43</sup> *J. N. Adair Memo*. Handwritten. 9 June 1914. PRONI, Arthur O'Neil Papers, D1238/157

or while on watch the volunteer was to "...be summarily dismissed from the Force and his badge will be forfeited."<sup>44</sup> Members of the corps volunteered for their positions, therefore the UVF could not throw an unruly recruit in jail or otherwise hinder their day-to-day life, which could be done in the British military. Demoting men who misbehaved was a possibility only when the member had attained a position from which an officer could demote them. However, given the lack of trained officers, commanders would have had low incentives to demote men with any military training. Officers also had no recourse to make non-effective members return to drilling, even when those members had been issued a gun. Commanders could do little to change the circumstance once an individual chose not to actively participate in UVF activities. Some of the problems with attendance among members arose due to the lack of arms and ammunition the UVF possessed.

The UVF never mustered enough guns and ammunition to competently arm their men. On January 6, 1914, the County Antrim UVF Committee complained that they did not have enough guns. While headquarters had issued them 150 additional guns fairly recently, the County Antrim UVF only had a total of 300 guns for 10,700 men. However, they had "only ammunition for about 180 of these rifles i.e. one for every 39 men" under their control.<sup>45</sup> Throughout the UVF, regiments similarly lacked guns and ammunition. In order to arm their men more efficiently, the UVF paid for a ship to illegally smuggle guns into Larne, County Antrim in April of 1914. However, even after this shipment the organization did not have enough arms to arm their men. In May of 1914, headquarters ordered company commanders to only use

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<sup>44</sup> *Battalion Orders*, PRONI, D304/1.

<sup>45</sup> Pain, Col. G. Hackett. *Circular re a meeting*. Typescript. 1914. PRONI, Arthur O'Neil Papers, D1238/108

five rounds of ammunition per rifle for practice.<sup>46</sup> Given that most companies did not possess enough rifles for every man, commanders would have either split those five rounds between multiple men or some men would not get to practice shooting at all in a practice session. Five rounds of ammunition would have barely covered sighting in a rifle, let alone provided for a man to become proficient with it. SC Clarke, an adjutant in the UVF, sent out an order requesting that all rifles be inspected, counted, and the number reported to him immediately.<sup>47</sup> The UVF headquarters did not know how many weapons the organization controlled. In the summer of 1914, the results of the requested count reported a total of 30,202 firearms in the whole organization.<sup>48</sup> Even taking the mid 1913 numbers, after which the UVF continued to grow, the UVF had far too few guns for the number of men registered. Had the tensions risen to the point civil war, the paramilitary simply did not have enough guns and ammunition or men trained to use them to make an offensive strike against the Nationalists. The UVF had even less of a chance of doing serious damage to any British force sent to put them down. On August 1, 1914, headquarters issued an order that “All orders restricting enrolment are hereby cancelled, & forms may be sent in for all suitable men. Care must be taken to impress upon all recruits that they will probably never be armed.”<sup>49</sup> The leaders had come to the realization that they would not be able to arm the force and were willing to admit as much to potential members. This order came just three days prior to Britain’s entry into the Great War. Clearly threat of an impending war had not changed considerations for the UVF. They continued to try to grow membership and threaten the British government about implementing home rule. It appears that the leaders

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<sup>46</sup> 29 May 1914. *Battalion Orders*, PRONI, D304/1.

<sup>47</sup> *Role Book Enniskillen Horse*. Handwritten. 1914. PRONI, Co. Fermanagh papers, T2615/12.

<sup>48</sup> *File containing details of UVF ammunition*. Handwritten. 1914. PRONI, Ulster Unionist Council (UUC), D1327/4/13.

<sup>49</sup> *W. T. Adair Memo*. Typescript. 1 August 1914. PRONI, Arthur O’Neil Papers, D1238/198.

believed that the crisis approached a tipping point in mid-1914 and that they would need as many men as possible to deal with it.

Once Britain entered the war, however, leaders of the UVF encouraged their volunteers to join the British war effort. Edward Carson stated that men of age to be called upon to fight and participated in UVF were "...requested to answer IMMEDIATELY His Majesty's call, as our first duty as Loyal subjects is the King."<sup>50</sup> Despite headquarters' earlier orders to shoot police if they got in the way of drilling, these men viewed themselves as loyal members of the United Kingdom. Leaders and allies of the UVF who had influence in the British administration attempted to have Ulster specific regiments in the British army created for members of the UVF. These men would become part of Kitchener's army, an eventually conscripted contingent of the British army in the war. Despite the pleas of Carson to have all able men join in the war effort, the UVF continued operations after the war had begun. By October of 1914, command ordered that new recruits "in order to show that their intentions are bona-fide will be required to put in 15 drills before enrolment."<sup>51</sup> This order reversed the one given in August, as the war commenced. The UVF only taking recruits that demonstrated a willingness to maintain an active role in the organization showed that the leaders believed that the UVF's fight would continue during and after the war. The Unionist's continued vigilance throughout the Great War likely developed from the unabated activity of the Nationalists to the south. The UVF was distinctly aware of the UVF's continued organization and effort in resistance to the government. In July 1914, headquarters ordered officers to keep an eye on the Nationalists and see if they posed an actual

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<sup>50</sup> 2 circulars from Capt. Frank Hall. Print. 4 August 1914. PRONI, Farren Connell Papers, D3835/e/10/2.

<sup>51</sup> September 2, 1914, *Battalion Orders*, PRONI, D304/1

threat. In light of the fears the Nationalists caused, the UVF's continuing operations despite the war made tactical sense.<sup>52</sup>

In spite of the UVF's appearance as a threatening force, it did not pose an existential threat to with the British government or the Nationalist's organizations. While the UVF did have the broad structural elements of a military force, the organization did not adhere to its own guidelines for regimental structure. The commanders of regiments largely had little or no military experience to speak of and those that did split their time between different groups or concurrently served in the British military. The men they commanded did not have the training to be an effective force. Young farmers, who comprised the majority of UVF, had no chance for combat experience prior to the First World War. The voluntary nature of the UVF made it hard to enforce discipline and keep members actively training. This led to problems with attendance and military precision within the militia. The UVF also could not adequately arm their force, lacking guns, ammunition, and men capable of competently using firearms. When World War I broke out, the UVF's attention focused on the issue of home rule and a continued effort to add members rather than the war on the continent. Despite their espoused support of the United Kingdom, the UVF continued to drill and recruit members throughout the war.

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<sup>52</sup> Information in this paragraph drawn from *Circular re the organization of Irish Nationalist*. Typescript. 22 June 1914. PRONI, Arthur O'Neil Papers, D1238/164, O'Neil, *Papers*, PRONI, D1238/1,

## Chapter Two: The Irish Volunteers

Late on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1914, the pleasure yacht *Asgard* landed just north of Dublin, Ireland in Howth Harbor. She housed highly illegal cargo in her hold, 1,500 Mauser Rifles and 45,000 rounds of ammunition.<sup>53</sup> The guns had come from Germany and it took considerable effort to get the boat around British patrols. The IV had bought the guns and despite government attempts to stop them from reaching the island, the IV successfully brought the guns into Dublin, from which they distributed them. This episode happened at the height of tensions within Ireland, as the threat of the First World War loomed over Europe. While the IV viewed the action as a great success, many on the island viewed it as unnecessary aggression against the British.

The organized gun running aboard the *Asgard* was one of the few successful militant operations by the IV before the start of the Great War. The disparate ideas and groups on the nationalist side created a rift within the IV. This split within the IV in late 1914 makes tracking the organization especially difficult. Formed as a response to the UVF and the Home Rule Bill, the IV also did not have as strong an internal reason for existence as the UVF. Upon formation the main focus of the IV was to ensure that home rule succeeded, even if that meant resorting to violence. While it was a paramilitary organization, the IV lacked some of the militarism and precision that was apparent in the UVF. The IV was also significantly underfunded and lacked experienced leaders. In written correspondence, the leaders of the organization often lamented the deficiency in funding and competent personnel in the organization. The organization's men were undertrained and under armed for enforcing home rule and defying the British administration. All of these factors taken together show a weaker organization than that often presented in the historical narrative.

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<sup>53</sup>Jackson, *Home Rule*, 135.

The disorganization of the IV makes it more difficult to study than the UVF. Not a cohesively organized group, the nationalist movement for home rule consisted of an extremely multifaceted range of ideologies. Of the two militias considered in this paper, the IV formed in more nebulous conditions. The IV began as an opposition force to the UVF and was the result of several nationalist groups attempting to band together.<sup>54</sup> The cause of Irish independence unified the Nationalists and little else tied them together politically. Ireland as a whole suffered from a lack of unity. While the Unionists made up the majority of the population in Ulster, the Nationalists comprised the majority across the rest of the island. However, some people did not take an active stance on either side of the issue of independence. The depth and fervor of nationalist intentions varied extensively across the nationalist supporters. Beliefs on how to gain independence differed widely between nationalists, from near pacifism to heavy violence against any and all Britons. While militant groups existed well prior to the Ulster crisis, this time saw a flowering of and greater membership in paramilitary organizations, including the IV. Several different powerful nationalist groups existed simultaneously with the IV. Some of these other groups included the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), and Sinn Féin. Many people, especially those of lower ranks, became members of several groups. They divided the time that they could spend on nationalist activities between multiple entities.<sup>55</sup> Roger Casement, a leader of the IV, complained about sharing men with other organizations.<sup>56</sup> All of these militant organizations marked a departure from the previous four decades of Nationalist parliamentary efforts and a return to the revolutionary ideals of 1798, despite the Nationalists creation of the IV to defend a parliamentary act. In late 1914, the IV split into two groups over

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<sup>54</sup> Brown, "How Revolutionary?" 33.

<sup>55</sup> *Extracts from Irish Volunteer*. Print. 1914-1915. NLI, Eamon Martin Papers, MS 49,485/5.

<sup>56</sup> Casement, Roger. *Letters regarding the Irish Volunteers*. Typescript. 1914. NLI, Alice Stopford Green, MS 43,262/1. 4 May 1914.

leadership and issues about the support for the British war effort. John Redmond, leader of the IPP, took over leadership of the IV without a vote of the Central Committee, which had tried to keep the IV separate from the political sphere.<sup>57</sup> After taking over, Redmond called for the IV's members to join in the British war effort, which caused the split. Redmond ended up controlling the majority of the group, some 158,000 men, which became known as the National Irish Volunteers or National Volunteers. Many of the Dublin regiments and most of the arms and ammunition remained with the original leaders of the IV, which officially became the Irish Volunteer Force (IVF).<sup>58</sup> Extreme nationalists circulated propaganda to discourage members of both sides of the split volunteers from joining in the war effort.<sup>59</sup> The split of the IV and the other contemporary nationalist organizations make getting the full picture of the Nationalist's paramilitary activities a monumental task.

Initially, the IV formed in reaction to the already organized UVF. The IV's express purpose was to protect home rule upon its implementation and ensure the parliament in Dublin continued to function. Nationalist leaders believed that when the new parliament was set up in Dublin the Unionists would have a violent reaction and would move to stop it from happening. The UVF had violent resistance to home rule as a cornerstone of its mission, giving credence to the fears of the nationalists. Irish nationalists assumed that the British government would do little to nothing to uphold and protect the newly created parliament and that it would be up to the IV to do so. For all that it would have limited powers and could be rescinded by the British state at any time, the parliament was still a concession towards Irish independence. Most British people

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<sup>57</sup> Hobson, Bulmer. *John Redmond and the Irish Volunteers*. 5 November 1947. Typescript. Bureau of Military History. <http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/reels/bmh/BMH.WS0050.pdf>, Accessed 26 October 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, 167

<sup>59</sup> *Documents relating to the Irish Volunteers*. Typescript. 1913-1918. NLI, Piaras Béaslaí Papers, 1895-1965, MS 33,912/1.

opposed Irish independence, so the Nationalists willing took what they could get from the government in Westminster. According to a recruiting flyer distributed shortly after the first organizational meeting, the duties of an Irish Volunteer were "...defensive and protective, and they will not contemplate either aggression or domination."<sup>60</sup> While the leaders of the IV wrote these words, the de facto meaning beneath them may have conveyed a different connotation to prospective members. However, the leaders claimed these duties and this mission when seeking recruits. The flyer does not say anywhere that they are specifically against Ulster Unionists or the UVF. The manifesto of the Volunteers is directed at an unnamed political party not at a group of Irishmen or a paramilitary.<sup>61</sup> The IV focused its anger on the British government and the belief that the administration would fail to protect home rule, leaving the IV to do so. At least this was the purpose of the IV initially; by the time of the Easter Rising this defensive position had changed to offensive violence against British rule.

Despite being a paramilitary organization, the IV lacked military structure and the large membership base necessary to maintain such a structure. In the organizational documents for the corps, the leaders paid more attention to the specifics of bicycle scouts than officer elections or musketry training programs. Given that many of the regiments of the IV were focused in and near Dublin, bicycle scouts would have been strategically important in the city but less useful in rural areas. Bicycle scouts would also not prove particularly useful without a command structure in place to report to. The IV endeavored to cover the whole island, however, the countryside had far fewer regiments, smaller numbers within extant groups, and the regiments participated less actively. IV Central Committee members from Dublin traveled around the country setting up

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<sup>60</sup> Irish Volunteers. *Recruiting handbill and advertisement for a public meeting in the Rotunda, Nov. 25th 1913*. Print, Dublin: Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916. NLI, LO P 114/87.

<sup>61</sup> Irish Volunteers. *Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers*. Print. June 1914. NLI, William J. Gogan Collection, MS 49,671/7/1.

regiments of volunteers and trying to collect funds to support the already existing regiments in the organization. The Irish people had to be galvanized into action; it was not a completely self-proliferating movement despite the long history of resistance in Ireland. This was at least partly due to the higher poverty rate in the rural areas of Ireland; people simply did not have the money or the time to set up and maintain a militia unit. While this was somewhat the case in Ulster, far more people created groups without the urging of UVF headquarters. The island's population was still on the rebound from the potato famine and its aftermath, making rural areas even more sparsely populated. The memory of that time still strongly affected the populace of rural Ireland. Many of the people who had left during the famine as well as their families in other parts of the world supported the Nationalist cause owing to the blame they laid on the British for the famine.

Financial support for the IV and the lack of military commanders deeply concerned the organization's leaders. In a series of letters sent from Roger Casement to Maurice Moore, he bemoaned the lack of funds and adequate leaders. Roger Casement served on the Central Committee of the IV and helped author the organization's manifesto. He spent much of late 1913 and early 1914 traveling around Ireland promoting the IV. In February of 1914, he wrote a letter full of excitement about the possibilities of what the Volunteers could do and expressed his faith in the organization. Casement wrote the letter just before the first edition of *The Irish Volunteer* was set to come out. He also traveled around the United States gathering funds and later organized the later Howth gun running. Maurice Moore was the military organizer for the IV. Moore served in the British army in several combat positions, including several major battles in the Boer War. His long tenure in the military made him an ideal commander to train troops. The Central Committee charged Casement and Moore with most of the recruitment and the military efficiency of the IV and Casement's letters serve as an important insight into the true strength of

the organization. Casement demonstrated trepidation about the progress of the organization and its ability to meet its aims. By June 1914, Casement even went as far as to say, “if we had ten men like you and £10,000 we could do more than you could imagine” to Moore.<sup>62</sup> That sum would be worth over £1,000,000 in today’s currency. This considerable sum is what he believed they needed to make a difference. The small number of men he considered necessary for their leadership contrast sharply with the monetary amount. Casement revealed a lack of adequate personnel to lead the group. That even ten more men of Moore’s caliber could make an equal difference as over a million pounds is testament either to Casement’s flattery of Moore’s capabilities or to the utter deficiency of leaders they possessed. Casement, a decorated member of the British military himself, possessed at least some idea of what was necessary to lead a group of men. His comments to Moore likely were not simple flattery. A few days after the letter about money and men, Casement admitted, “I know that we should not have an army that is a dream.”<sup>63</sup> This is a deep contrast to the letter in February. The passage of a few months led to such a different level of belief in the IV’s abilities. The lack of money and adequate leaders made the IV a much weaker force than they were purported to be.<sup>64</sup>

In order for a paramilitary organization to be effective its men must be competently trained. The IV left little evidence of highly trained men. The IV faced a similar situation to the UVF with the majority of their men lacking combat experiences. Moore and Casement had

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<sup>62</sup> Casement, *Letters*, 1 June 1914. NLI, MS 43,262/1.

<sup>63</sup> Casement, *Letters*, 2 June 1914 NLI MS 43,262/1.

<sup>64</sup> Information drawn from: 1 June 1914 and 2 June 1914 in Casement, *Letters*, NLI, MS 43,262/1. And Casement, Roger. *Letter to his Cousin Gertrude Bannister*. Handwritten. 1 February 1914. NLI, Roger Casement Papers (2012 Release), MS 49,154/7/4. and D. George Boyce, “Casement, Roger David (1864–1916).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2011. And Marie Coleman, “Moore, Maurice George”, in James McGuire and James Quinn (ed), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*. (Cambridge, 2009), accessed 25 January 2017.

military experience but very few of the general members of the IV did. The majority of members worked as farmers or factory workers in Dublin. The IV did not have the resources to train these young, single and untested men for a war. The organization had a problem disciplining their men. As a wholly volunteer organization, the Central Committee found it hard to make men regularly participate without a realistic way to threaten them. In the British army a disobedient soldier could be court marshaled and jailed or dishonorably discharged. The IV, just like the UVF, could not hold members against their will. The IV struggled to dispel troublemakers. One company commander bemoaned the fact that a man kicked out of one company of volunteers would simply join another.<sup>65</sup> Getting volunteers to attend regular drilling posed an additional problem in the organization. Drilling and parades comprised much of the group's activity and absence from them would have made a volunteer essentially useless. In contrast with the UVF where training nights and even weeklong training camps were common, the documents that exist from the IV rarely reference training. It is unclear whether this lack of documentation is simply because the training did not happen as often, or due to the documents of these events being lost, or the training never got recorded. In a report in December 1914 on one company's activities, the leaders stated that musketry practice "...is now the regular feature of every company of that is worth its salt."<sup>66</sup> This implies that practice previously had not been a regular part of activities for many companies of volunteers even after WWI had begun. A note from headquarters in March of 1915 stated that through the purchasing and drilling of arms "we shall be in a real sense a

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<sup>65</sup> Lawless, J. *Letter Regarding Expulsion of Two Members*. 8 September 1914. NLI, MS 41,652/1.

<sup>66</sup> 15 December 1914, *Bound Copies of The Irish Volunteer*. Print. December 1914-April 1916. NLI, Eamon Martin Papers, MS 42,131.

force of volunteers and shall be in a position to intervene with effect.”<sup>67</sup> The leaders believed the IV was not previously an effective force and they knew this well. Lackluster training and military discipline made the IV a non-effective force. The complete lack of money contributed to the IV’s inability to achieve a competent level of training.

The danger the IV posed to the British or the UVF could not be credible when the paramilitary could not pay their own bills. The IV struggled to pay the most basic bills. In a series of over fifty invoices to the IV headquarters, many businesses sent overdue notices or requests for payment for services rendered. In August of 1914, the IV became delinquent in paying their electricity bill for headquarters, a sum significantly smaller than the cost of the rifles needed to arm the group. They could not afford to pay for newspapers; both those they printed and those they received.<sup>68</sup> The IV could not cover the very basics of running an organization; starting a civil war with the UVF would have been impossible. The amount of money the IV would have needed to facilitate their mission is unclear, however it is clear that they did not have enough. Roger Casement’s dream of £10,000 spoke volumes about how much cash the IV needed. According to a catalogue for guns, held by the IV headquarters, a rifle cost somewhere between £2 and £7.<sup>69</sup> Using even £2 price point for the guns, £10,000 would only buy 5,000 guns and no ammunition. With more than 150,000 volunteers estimated in the organization, this number of guns would be far from sufficient for arming even a fraction of the members of the IV. In desperation for money, the IV’s leaders turned to their members to raise more funds. The IV had a rent to own program on the guns they bought in order to fund the purchase of additional

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<sup>67</sup> 20 March 1915, *Bound Copies of The Irish Volunteer*. Print. December 1914-April 1916. NLI, Eamon Martin Papers, MS 42,131.

<sup>68</sup> *Invoices addressed to the Irish Volunteers*, Handwritten Documents. 1914. NLI, Ceannt and O'Brennan Papers, 1851-1953, MS 13,049/40/3.

<sup>69</sup> Jon Lawler & Son. *Catalogue from John Lawler & Son*. Dublin: ca. 1914. NLI, Documents relating to the Irish Volunteers, 1914-1915, MS 50,152/10.

arms. The organization even held concerts in order to fundraise.<sup>70</sup> Money clearly created a huge problem for the IV in their efforts to ensure the implementation of home rule.

The IV lacked the arms and ammunition to be a competent force. In May of 1914, detachments of the IV in America made threats that they would disband if the leaders in Ireland did not do something about the lack of arms.<sup>71</sup> Even with American branches supporting work in Ireland, the IV could not get the necessary guns to complete their aims. The American's willingness to disband over the issue highlights how highly they valued arming the IV. As stated above, buying arms and ammunition was a very expensive proposition. The expense would have made the support from America all the more important to the IV; the Americans had more money to give than most people could hope for in Ireland. In the series of invoices mentioned above, the IV bought mostly items like flags and uniforms with only one order for guns. In this order, the IV requested practice guns, not for use in the real field of war. The landing at Howth was the largest amount of arms and ammunition that organization had received. Prior to it the IV purchased guns in small batches of two or three at a time with a small amount of ammunition. Even as late December 1914, leaders pushed to have regiments use all their money to buy arms.<sup>72</sup> A well-organized and funded militia would have been able to arm and organize quickly. However, under British rule, which feared an outbreak of violence in Ireland, getting arms clearly challenged the IV and the IV could not rise to successfully arm their volunteers.

The Irish Volunteers posed no existential threat to the British, and did not present much of a danger to the UVF either. An armed rebellion lead by the IV likely would have been

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<sup>70</sup> *Documents relating to the Irish Volunteers*. Typescript. 1913-1918. NLI, Piaras Béaslaí Papers, 1895-1965, MS 33,912/1.

<sup>71</sup> W. Tobin. *Letter informing that his local club plans to disband*. Handwritten. 19 May 1914. NLI, John Devoy Papers, MS 18,013/3/10

<sup>72</sup> 15 December 1914, *Invoices addressed to the Irish Volunteers*, Handwritten Documents. 1914. NLI, Ceannt and O'Brennan Papers, 1851-1953, MS 13,049/40/3.

tremendously easy for the British army to put down. The IV's stated mission to defend home rule put many of the members of the IV more at odds with the British administration than the Ulster Unionists. The Nationalists were only loosely aligned ideologically. The paramilitary lacked militarism despite attempting many of the trappings of a military structure. The men of the IV and their leaders remained largely untrained in conventional military tactics and even less trained in guerrilla warfare, tactics that might have greatly benefited the organization. As a completely volunteer militia they lacked the capability to enforce the discipline necessary to succeed. The IV did not have money to arm and support their regiments. They struggled to pay for even basic bills to cover the costs of running a headquarters. The strict watch on the purchase of guns exacerbated the issues with funding in regards to arming the force. The British forced the IV to turn to illegal gun running to provide the largest amount of guns and the most ammunition that they acquired.

## Chapter Three: Larger Context

In Curragh, County Kildare on March 20, 1914, Sir Arthur Paget, commander-in-chief of Ireland, announced to his officers that they would soon be acting against Unionist leaders in Ulster. In what became known as the Curragh Incident, sometimes the Curragh Mutiny, 58 officers resigned and refused to participate in any offensive actions against the Unionists.<sup>73</sup> Their commanding officer had stated that he would allow such an action, without damage to their careers, if they felt they could not act in Ulster. While the men did not actually directly mutiny against orders, it became a rallying point for both Unionists and Nationalists. Nationalists saw it as confirmation that the British government would not step in to protect home rule. Unionists saw it as an attack on their ideals and their leadership. The mutiny caused split interpretations and deep divisions within the UK's populace and demonstrated the reactions created by the issue of home rule in 1914. The crisis enveloped the island of Ireland as well as Great Britain, enthralled the British Empire, and slightly affected other parts of the world.

The narrative of the home rule crisis has largely focused on the threat that the Nationalists and Unionists posed in a civil war. As discussed above, they were not a powerful military threat even to each other. The IV's and the UVF's goals were at cross-purposes, yet the organizations directed most of their anger at the British government rather than directly at each other. Their founding documents called out the British regime rather than the opposing group of Irishmen. The British's profound concerns about these groups made more sense in this light. Opposing groups in Ireland had a mutual hatred and distrust for the government, had they united against the government they would have posed more of a danger than they did separately. Both sides used the Curragh mutiny to cast the government as a villain. Nationalists claimed it was

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<sup>73</sup> Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, 235-236.

proof positive that the government would not hinder the Unionists in their opposition to home rule as the British administration implemented it. Unionists saw the mutiny as the threat of attack on their organization and in particular on their leaders. Both of these interpretations had a strong basis in the truth of the situation. Many British soldiers felt they could not act against the Unionists and the British government was attempting to reign in the leaders of the UVF. The British simply tried to maintain some level of control over the situation in Ireland. While the Nationalists and the Unionists would not have joined together, the situation meant that if the government pleased one in its actions it aggravated the other; or, as in the case of Curragh, antagonizing both paramilitaries.

While the political beliefs of the UVF and the IV were diametrically opposed to each other, on the ground relations between the two organizations may not have been quite so hostile. In the papers of the leaders of both paramilitaries, compelling sources challenge the narrative of potential civil war. Two of the most fascinating suggest the possibility of the IV and the UVF working together. Roger Casement wrote “To get Carson’s men linked up with ours (not an impossibility) is of far more vital worth to Ireland than anything the Imperial Govt. can do for (or against) us...The chief duty of Irishmen today is to try and win Ulstermen and I believe we can best do it through this Volunteer movement.”<sup>74</sup> He sent this letter privately and never meant it to be read by the public, therefore it was not a propagandist statement but instead an actual belief. Casement, at least, did not believe that the IV and the UVF completely opposed each other. He seemed to think that the Ulsterites could be brought around to support home rule. By mentioning “Carson’s men” in particular Casement was clearly focusing on the UVF and the Unionists, not just people in Ulster as a whole. His hope for cooperation may have been simple naivety on his

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<sup>74</sup> Casement, *Letters*, NLI, MS 43,262/1.

part and not an actionable kinship between the Unionists and the Nationalists. The violent confrontation in Ulster throughout the latter half of the twentieth century indicates that Unionists and Nationalists were never likely to cooperate. Casement did not have the benefit of the hindsight that makes such problems clear to the modern observer and historians. Bearing in mind Casement's position of leadership in the IV, it is unlikely that he was totally blind to the political realities between the IV and the UVF. Through this lens, his claims appear all the more intriguing and conflictual with the current historical narrative.

The UVF also had an entirely separate document that suggested more friendly relations between the militias than would be inferred from their political ideologies. On a scrap of paper an officer wrote an order that reads: "The commanding officer forbids "K" Company to work with the Irish National Volunteers on any Parades. If they meet them on marches or elsewhere, and the Nationalists salute the U.V.F. The Officer commanding the U.V.F. will return the salute, by ordering his men "Eyes Right" or "Eyes Left." The Salute must come first from the Nationalist as the U.V.F. are the senior force."<sup>75</sup> This order suggests that the commander had considerable trouble keeping the enrolled men from working with the IV on parades. The UVF and the IV used parades, generally the only public displays they had, to showcase their power. Parades were integral actions of the organization that all active members were expected to attend. If these two groups were really mere inches from civil war, cheerful interactions during such important moments should have been impossible. Organizing a joint parade would have been unthinkable. Meeting a potential enemy while on parade should have been far more likely to create an outburst of violence than a respectful salute. Yet, this respectful salute seems to be

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<sup>75</sup>R.H. *Copy Order*. 9 August 1914. PRONI, Hall Papers, D1540/3/92. The use of Irish National Volunteers references the Redmond branch of the IV, the National Irish Volunteers, after the split.

the problem that the commanding officer dealt with, so much so that he felt a written order was necessary. The men of this regiment clearly did not view the IV as their enemies. It must be taken into account that the above instances were only two sources and scattered ones at that. They could have been anomalies in what was actually a very tense and tumultuous relationship. However, if these documents were representative, they pose an enormous change in the concept of how these organizations interacted. If these forces did not see each other as enemies but rather both saw the British government as the enemy, it changes the tenor of the Ulster crisis. If Britain did push into World War I sooner because of fears over Ireland as Clark suggested then they may have done it based on mistaken fears of civil war.<sup>76</sup> These sources present such a possible reading of events rather than the typical narrative but they are not enough without further research and more sources to truly change the course of the discussion.

Neither the UVF nor the IV posed an existential threat to the British government. As outlined in the sections above, they simply didn't have the firepower or training to serve as a credible threat the British government in Ireland. The British continually put down uprisings in Ireland, resorting to violence when necessary. The UVF likely would have been willing to help put down the IV had the government requested it. In the vastness of the British Empire, rebellion on a small island should have been something they could handle. However, Ireland was in some ways both a colony of and a central part of Britain. It has often been called the laboratory of Empire. While many British citizens and members of parliament may have considered it an extension of Great Britain, the British administration fundamentally treated it as a colony when it came to policy. Considering Ireland as either a rebellious colony or a revolting province of the UK, the hesitation of the government to stop the militia formation in Ireland appears to have

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<sup>76</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, 490.

been a strange strategy. Leaving the IV and other Nationalist groups to fester allowed the Easter Rising to happen. The final decision about this kind of policy in Ireland would have fallen to the prime minister.

As Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith played a crucial role in the Ulster Crisis. His leadership, or lack thereof, deeply influenced the unfurling of the crisis. Prior to the passage of the home rule bill, the Liberal party needed the IPP's help to complete their agenda and in order to get the IPP they needed to offer the issue of home rule in parliament again. Asquith ended up backed into a corner needing to strongly support home rule and he introduced the bill to the floor of parliament. In the British system when a PM introduces a bill, unless their control is extremely weak, it should pass the House of Commons. Through the more than forty years of IPP MPs campaigning for home rule, it had been made clear that the Irish would not give up on a parliament in Dublin. Asquith's forced support for home rule made him look weak to the wider public and especially to his political rivals. As early as 1910, the public ridiculed the Liberal party for partnering with the IPP and supporting home rule.<sup>77</sup> After the passage of the bill the Irish Question was far from solved. The deepening crisis terrified Asquith and he particularly did not want to be remembered for presiding over a civil war.<sup>78</sup> He worked behind the scenes in negotiations with Nationalist and Unionist leaders to attempt to negotiate a solution to the rising tensions between the two factions and the government. Asquith kept the meetings and letters on the issues fairly quiet leading to widespread public criticism of his handling of the situation. His hesitation to get militarily involved in stopping the Irish militias also allowed both the UVF and IV to continue to grow and create a mirage of strength. Asquith considered giving Ulster the

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<sup>77</sup> "Home Rule and the Liberal Party." *Daily Mail* [London, England] 1 Jan. 1910: n.p. *Daily Mail Historical Archive*. Web. 9 Mar. 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, 492.

option to be out of the area covered by home rule as early as January 1914. The exclusion of Ulster from the home rule government would have been a step towards the partition of Ireland, the eventual resolution to the problem. Asquith wrote in a letter to Edward Carson that the suggestion was for the "...double purpose of giving the Ulster majority the substance of what they claim, while giving little violence as possible to Nationalist sentiment."<sup>79</sup> By excluding Ulster from the new parliament Asquith intended to please both parties as much as possible given the circumstances. However, Asquith mentions that neither Carson and nor Bonar Law "...could treat this part of my suggestion as a possible starting point for our present purpose."<sup>80</sup> Asquith was unable to even find an agreeable place to begin the process of negotiation. This was likely more of a reflection of the fundamentality of the disagreement between Unionists and Nationalists than on Asquith's ability as a negotiator. Asquith's inability to find a solution to the crisis made him appear weak. While Asquith played a pivotal role in the home rule crisis, the crisis had an effect on and was also affected by Britain as a whole.

Outside the island of Ireland, the Ulster Crisis had the largest impact on Britain itself. Much of the British public supported the Unionists, though not necessarily the violence the UVF threatened. Carson and Law organized massive rallies in Hyde Park in London in support of the Unionist cause.<sup>81</sup> Sir Edward Carson drew out large crowds to support the Unionists. Such displays in the capital of the Empire showed a different public opinion than the one that covered the majority of Ireland. Many of the British viewed Ireland not as a colony but as an extension of Britain itself. In 1910 a newspaper stated the home rule "...means dismembering the United

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<sup>79</sup> Henry Herbert Asquith. "Ulster exclusion from Home Rule Parliament, 1914", in *Irish Historical Documents Since 1800*. Ed. Alan O'Day and John Stevenson. Savage, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books: 1992, 151.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Barr, *Scrapbook*. PRONI, D4492/1.

Kingdom.”<sup>82</sup> Many citizens did not understand or accept part of the country requesting separation from the UK. Much of the British public viewed the IV and other Nationalist militias as terrorists rather than the freedom fighters and revolutionaries, as the IV viewed themselves. Taken from this viewpoint, the vehement belief in unionism by English people showed consistency and patriotism. The Crown, the government, and the country as a whole were also deeply invested in Ireland. The British administration had ruled Ireland, at least nominally, since the twelfth century. Additionally, maintaining a regime in Dublin cost the government a considerable amount of money in the twentieth century. However, many of the landlords of Ireland had been absentee English lords or at least Protestant Irish that held allegiance to the Union. This helps explain the House of Lords votes against the home rule bills. If Ireland gained more independence than that offered in home rule, then some lords stood the chance of losing their lands or even lordships in Ireland. The Nationalists viewed home rule as a slippery slope leading to independence and it is likely that many in the House of Lords did as well. The Ulster crisis’s effect extended beyond national politics and into the considerations for going to war in 1914.

The home rule crisis also had bearing on the British entry into World War I. While the Irish situation wasn’t the only consideration for the British entry into the war, it reinforced going into the war as a positive option. PM Asquith’s fear of presiding over a civil war and his inability to find a peaceful solution to the implementation of home rule likely had an effect on his desire to go to war.<sup>83</sup> A war on the continent would be better than an internal war, at least politically, for Asquith. He would likely gain in popularity as the nation rallied for a war effort whereas a civil war would make him look weak. While neither the UVF nor the IV could truly start a civil

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<sup>82</sup> "Home Rule and the Liberal Party." *Daily Mail*.

<sup>83</sup> Clark Sleepwalkers 492.

war in 1914, Asquith perceived that they would and this played heavily in the decisions he made. As he made the decision of whether to enter the fray, no one was predicting the horrors that would come out of the First World War. Most people believed it would be a quick war; more about who got there first with the biggest army than any actual fighting. In comparison to a civil war of unknown length, the war on the continent likely appeared the better option. Joining the fight also allowed Asquith to put off the implementation of home rule. He could argue that wartime was not ideal for the implementation of new controversial laws, and the excuse could be made that a new parliament could not or should not be formed under wartime conditions. Asquith could focus the people's attention on rallying for the British cause and direct Irish anger outside the empire at the Axis's forces. The war gave Asquith and the Liberals the perfect excuse to put off trying to solve the Irish problem at least a little bit longer, something that Parliament had been doing for nearly fifty years by the time of the July Crisis. While this tactic of putting off the problem during the war was initially successful, it did prove to be an issue later on. Nationalists tried to take advantage of the British preoccupation in the war when they staged the Easter Rising in 1916. They were moderately successful in the attempt and it took the British several days to subdue the Nationalist forces. While the Rising itself did not lead to Irish independence, it did pave the way for men like Michael Collins to lead successful guerrilla attacks on British forces in Ireland. The war as advisors presented it in the days before Britain joined the fray likely looked like the better option to Asquith as well as to others in the government, in comparison to the continuing issues in Ireland. Asquith also faced the possibility that if chose he not to go to war his government would fall. The conservatives would gain power, still go to war, and never implement home rule.<sup>84</sup> The issues in Ireland helped push Asquith's

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 492.

government toward the war. While the British would have gotten involved in the Great War without the issues in Ireland, it is unclear that the entry would have been as swift without the problems within the United Kingdom.

The Ulster Crisis reached far beyond Ireland and had an effect on major issues in 1914. Within Ireland, the UVF and the IV may not have been as antagonistic to each other as the rhetoric surrounding them made it seem. Casement believed that they could be brought together against the British government. The men of a UVF regiment had to be ordered not work on parades with the IV. These interactions broke the norms of what Prime Minister Asquith perceived to be the relationship between the organizations. He feared an oncoming civil war and attempted to dissuade both sides from violent behavior. He was unable to find a suitable solution. His public image was damaged by this effort. Much of the British public supported the Unionists and did not want the UK to be separated. During all of this, the First World War unfolded across Europe. Despite the actual weakness of the IV and the UVF, the instability in Ireland was a major contributing factor in the British decision to enter the war.

## Conclusions

Britain seemed to be on the edge of implosion in the months preceding the Empire's entry into World War I. Militias had formed throughout Ireland in the wake of the passage of the Government of Ireland Act 1914. The UVF and the IV both formed to oppose the British government and what it might do surrounding promulgation of the law. The UVF would not abide the implementation of home rule, while the IV would violently defend any parliament assembled in Dublin. PM Asquith attempted to craft a solution that would appease both groups but greatly feared failing and being forced to preside over a civil war. He directed his focus on Ireland rather than the impending violence in Europe, even late into July of 1914. The UVF and the IV formed in defense of two opposing ideals of Irish governance. These organizations have loomed larger than is their due in the historical record. The historiography continues to overstate the organizations' military prowess and the threat of civil war they created. Through the crisis, they had an outsized effect in the media on both sides of the Atlantic and on the British government in comparison to their might.

The UVF, while the more organized of the two groups considered in this paper, did not have the military capacity to be a threat to the British government. Their organizational structure was fairly strong but they lacked the discipline and training needed in military operations. Principally young men, untested in combat, became members of the UVF and few experienced British military officers joined the militia. Those officers who did volunteer split their time between either different organizations or the British military and the UVF. The organization did not have competently trained leaders. The voluntary nature of the UVF prevented officers from truly disciplining their men. The lack of arms and ammunition contributed to the issues the

paramilitary experienced with discipline and attendance. The UVF did not have the firepower, manpower or training to pose an existential threat to the British.

The IV posed even less of a threat to the British government than the UVF. The IV formed in response to the UVF and was a more factionalized group. The leaders in the IV could not adequately fund or find personnel for the organization. Unable to pay even basic bills, the IV struggled to obtain firearms for their men. Members of the Central Committee had to travel around the country to facilitate the creation of new groups of volunteers and try to fund already existing regiments. The IV's disorganized nature and the disparate ideologies within the organization casts doubt on its ability to be a combatant in a civil war, let alone pose a significant threat to the government.

Neither the UVF or nor the IV were prepared to go to war against each other. Neither had the military capacity to do so. Moreover, both of these organizations claimed to be against the British government rather than each other. Documents exist that suggest that on the ground the militias considered working together. This contradicts the narrative that has been discussed in the historiography since 1914. The irony of the current historical discussion is that it claims a country on the brink of self-destruction was able to suddenly pull back in order to send its men to fight in one of the worst wars in human history. In reality, the important effects the militias had were on the rest of the century of Irish and British history. The inability of the IV and the UVF to engage in civil war or to present a danger to the British administration does not diminish the importance of the home rule crisis. The militia formation in the crisis originated the extralegal forces that would operate on the island of Ireland throughout the twentieth century. The different nationalist groups that would perpetrate the Easter Rising, the Irish War of Independence, the Irish Civil War, and the Troubles all had their roots in the IV and the Nationalist's reactions to

the Government of Ireland Act 1914. The UVF would reform into and help produce the groups that caused the British to partition of Ireland and worked in direct opposition to the IRA throughout the Troubles. So while the leaders of the IV and the UVF did not create competent militia forces, they built the groundwork for the successful paramilitary organizations that followed.

### Significance

Considering the bearing that the Irish issue had on Britain's entry into the war, overlooking the true depth of the militias' power is a significant flaw in the current historiography. The most obvious applicability of this thesis is to those who study Home rule in Ireland. Given home rule's importance in Ireland's history, a relatively large cohort of Irish historians study it. This thesis also has implications for the study of Britain's entry into World War I, as their decision to enter the war was heavily influenced by the threat of violence and civil war in Ireland. The cohesive block of the Irish Parliamentary Party was a large enough group of votes to be able to cause significant problems in British politics throughout that latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, presiding over a civil war would have resulted in a political disaster for Prime Minister Asquith and by association the Liberal party. This was especially true considering that their support of the Home Rule Bill was the only reason it passed. Political historians of the Great War would be interested in the way the Irish Question influenced British politics in the early twentieth century. The military capacity of the UVF and the IV also has broad implications for the study of Irish history. Many Irish historians discuss the tendency towards armed rebellion in Ireland and the home rule crisis was an instance of that

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<sup>85</sup> Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, 490-493.

armed rebellion.<sup>86</sup> The IV's militancy set the stage for the later armed rebellions of the Easter Rising and the Irish War of Independence. Many of the groups that would go on to be part of the Troubles had their start in the home rule crisis. The IV and UVF are of relevance to any historian studying the Irish struggle for independence from Britain. Irish nationalism also had immense effects on the British Empire. The British government used the experiences from Ireland in policymaking and sent the men who served in Ireland as police and law enforcement throughout the rest of the empire. The Ulster Crisis also helped spur colonial interest in Irish nationalism. Irish nationalists inspired Indian nationalists in particular.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the Ulster Crisis is of some interest to both historians of India and the larger British Empire. Therefore, this thesis has significance for a fairly broad number of historians, despite the narrowness of the topic.

### Epilogue

Within the broader Empire, colonial nationalists and British officials viewed the Irish home rule struggle as a first attempt at decolonization. Ireland provided an example of techniques of resistance for other nationalist groups in the Empire. Many colonial revolutionaries watching in the periphery saw the home rule crisis as a step in the direction of freedom from British rule. Beyond a betrayal of trust for Irish nationalists, colonial nationalists viewed the British government not implementing Home rule as a reason to further distrust the British government. The entire nationalist movement, including the Ulster crisis, had a massive effect on the periphery of the Empire, particularly India. Government officials in 1936 noted that "For many years past the revolutionary elements in India have taken Ireland as their model..."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Bartlett, "When Histories Collide" 35.

<sup>87</sup> Kate O'Malley, "Ireland, India, and Empire: Indo-Irish Separatist Political Links and Perceived Threats to the British Empire," in *Ireland and India: Colonies, Culture and Empire*, edited by Tadhg Foley and Maureen O'Connor, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006) 229.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 225.

Indians connection to the Irish Nationalists would continue into the Irish Free State period.<sup>89</sup> The experience of the independence movement in Ireland didn't just affect other nationalists but British government officials as well. Men that would become influential decision makers in the colonies during the 1930s and 1940s had their formative years during the Ulster crisis and later Easter Rising. The home rule crisis laid bare the unbridgeable issues between Northern and Southern Ireland. The solution to these issues, leaders decided, was the partitioning of Ireland. The example of Irish partition would be used as an allegory in fashioning India and Pakistan and the creation of Israel and Palestine. The violence of the Irish War of Independence informed these same men in later campaigns in Palestine and India. In fact British leaders sent some of the Black and Tans, used to try and suppress the rebels in Ireland, to India to help with policing. These experiences in Ireland informed British policy in the larger empire for years after the Irish Question had finally been put to bed. Using partition would become their solution for sectarian and religious conflicts throughout the empire. The issues of the Ulster crisis reached beyond the borders of the Empire as well.

Although the home rule crisis's effects were largely an issue within the British Empire, it affected the world community to a lesser degree. Satellite organizations of the IV formed in the US as mentioned earlier in this paper. Many of the people who had fled the famine in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century had gone to America. The families of these immigrants were still closely connected to the island. These immigrants and their children rooted strong Nationalist sentiment in Boston and New York. The blame for the famine had fallen, mostly if not completely, on the British in the eyes of these refugees. Irish-Americans generally favored for a free Irish state, if they had an

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<sup>89</sup> Ní Bheacháin, "'Ireland a warning to India': Anti-imperialist Solidarity in the Irish Free State." in *Ireland and India: Colonies, Culture and Empire*, edited by Tadhg Foley and Maureen O'Connor, 268-278. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006.

opinion on the matter, and they influenced non-Irish American politicians to the same stance.<sup>90</sup> The continued legacy of this support is visible in the US's failure to classify the IRA as a terrorist organization during the Troubles. The IV groups in the US provided support not only morally and politically but also monetarily during the Ulster crisis. Groups in the US threatened to disband if the IV did not purchase guns and the loss of these groups would have created a serious danger to the already meager funding of the IV. Roger Casement and other Nationalist leaders went on fairly successful speaking tours in America to fundraise and gain political support.<sup>91</sup> Nationalists didn't just find support in America. On the eve of World War I, Germany also lent aid. The guns that were carried on the *Asgard* were purchased from Germany. The British feared an alliance between the Germans and the Irish nationalists, and leaders like Roger Casement fervently hoped for such an alliance. Casement's visit caused the Chancellor of Germany to believe "should the German Forces reach the shores of Ireland they would come not as conquerors but as friends."<sup>92</sup> Germany likely saw the Nationalists as a way to weaken the British, an enemy, and therefore was willing to lend their support. An alliance between Germany and the Nationalists would have been a classic example of the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Ulster crisis had a broad impact. While militias in Ireland did not enthrall the world, Germany and America at least were conscious of the movements there and tried to affect the outcomes. Immigrants in the US supported the IV financially and the Germans provided guns to the IV. Throughout the Empire, nationalists watched the proceedings of the Irish nationalists with more than academic interest. Indian nationalists in particular formed and maintained

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<sup>90</sup> Jackson, *Home Rule*, 41.

<sup>91</sup> Casement, *Letters*, 1 June 1914. NLI, MS 43,262/1

<sup>92</sup> Roger Casement, *A Crime Against Europe A Possible Outcome of the War of 1914*, (Public Domain: 1915) 2, Kindle.

connections to Ireland. While the UVF and the IV could not achieve their goals, they made a tremendous impact in 1914 and on the events of the twentieth century.

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