The Home Rule Party

- The Home Rule Party (at various times known as The Home Rule League, The Home Government Association, The Irish Parliamentary Party) campaigned for 'Home Rule' for Ireland (an Irish Parliament in Dublin) since the 1870s
- It had about 80 MPs and if neither the Liberals or the Conservatives had a majority it could hold the 'balance of power' and determine which party formed the government
- It could offer its support in exchange for British granting Home Rule to Ireland
The Home Rule Party 1870 to 1914

- Parnell and Biggar used obstructionism
- Liberal PM William Gladstone agreed to give Ireland Home Rule in 1886
- But some of Gladstone's own party became 'Liberal Unionists' and the 1st Home Rule Bill was defeated in the House of Commons (by Conservatives, Irish Unionists and Liberal Unionists)
- A 2nd Home Rule Bill was put forward in 1893 and passed by the House of Commons but defeated in the House of Lords
The 'Parnell Split' 

• In 1890 the leader of the Home Rule Party, Charles Stewart Parnell was involved in a divorce case

• Gladstone distanced himself from Parnell and many in the party wanted Parnell to resign

• The party split on the issue and it remained divided until 1900 even though Parnell died in 1891
John Redmond

- Home Rule Party led by John Redmond from 1900
- Home Rule Party wasn’t looking for independence but an Irish Parliament in Dublin and a Prime Minister for Ireland
- But Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom of Britain and Ireland
- Precisely what powers a Home Rule parliament was up for discussion and negotiation
Home Rule and British Politics

- Since 1886 the Conservative Party had forged close links with the Irish Unionist Party.
- The Liberal Party was seen as being more open to Home Rule.
- A majority in the House of Lords opposed Home Rule and could 'veto' it (until 1911).
- In the early 1900s the Liberal Party was led by Herbert Asquith.
Liberal Party agree to Home Rule for Ireland

- In 1910 GB Prime Minister Asquith promised Redmond Home Rule (he needed their support in the House of Commons to form the government)
- But it was unlikely to get past the House of Lords
- In 1911 the House of Lords' veto was removed by the Parliament Act (because they had voted against Lloyd George's 1909 Budget)
The 3rd Home Rule Bill, 1912

- Home Rule Bill introduced 1912
- Passed by the House of Commons
- Defeated in the House of Lords
- But now House of Lords could only delay bills for 2 years rather than veto or stop them
- Home Rule due to start in 1914
Irish Unionist Reaction to the Home Rule Bill, 1912

- Irish unionists were furious at the prospect of Home Rule for Ireland
- 1/2m signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant
- The UVF (Ulster Volunteer Force) was set up to fight the introduction of Home Rule
Edward Carson and James Craig
WE WON'T HAVE HOME RULE.

ULSTER WILL FIGHT

AND ULSTER WILL BE RIGHT.

WE WILL NOT HAVE HOME RULE OR IRELAND.
Ulster's
Solemn League and Covenant.

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule
would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster
as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our
civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship and
perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are under-
written, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty
King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in
days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge
ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of
threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for
ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizen-
ship 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.

And in the event of
such a Parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and
mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority.

In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereto
subscribe our names.

And further, we individually declare
that we have not already signed this Covenant.

The above was signed by me at
"Ulster Day," Saturday, 28th September, 1912.

God Save the King.
In Sept. 1912, 500,000 unionists sign ‘Ulster Solemn League and Covenant’

Promise in Ulster Covenant to oppose HR by whatever means necessary
The UVF
Carson at a UVF rally 1913
Partition as an option

- Some Ulster Unionists began to feel that if they couldn't stop Home Rule completely they might be able to have Ulster excluded from any Home Rule arrangement.

- Carson was from Dublin but most unionists were from the North and this idea appealed to them more than being ruled by a Home Rule Parliament.
How would 'partition' work?

- Would all of Ulster be excluded from Home Rule?
- Would just the counties with unionist majorities be included?
- What about nationalists living in those areas?
- What about cities like Belfast?
Nationalist reaction to UVF, Ulster Covenant and the prospect of 'partition'

- Many nationalists were worried that the unionists would put pressure on the British government to either abandon Home-Rule for Ireland or reduce the powers of the Home Rule parliament or partition Ireland.
Irish National Volunteers

- Eoin McNeill wrote an article called 'The North Began'
- Organised a meeting in the Rotunda and the Irish Volunteers were formed to defend Home Rule
- Included Home Rule Party supporters but also IRB, Sinn Fein
- Later John Redmond became leader of the Irish Volunteers
John Redmond inspecting the Irish Volunteers
The Curragh Mutiny, 1914

- In 1914 the British Government told the army commanders in Ireland to prepare to move troops to Ulster in case violence broke out there.
- 57 out of 70 officers indicated they would rather resign than move against the Ulster Volunteers.
- The government backed down and withdrew the instructions to send the troops to Ulster.
- This was seen by nationalists as a sign of pro-unionist sympathies in the British army and government.
The Larne Gun Running

• UVF brought in arms at Larne (June 1914)
• Nationalist were angry because British authorities seemed to 'turn a blind eye' to UVF importing arms
The Howth Gun Running

• In July 1914 the Irish Volunteers imported a shipment of guns procured from Germany on Erskine Childer's yacht, the Asgard

• Some guns were landed in Howth

• That day British soldiers opened fire on a crowd killing 3 people
The Buckingham Palace Conference

- The British Government was concerned with tensions in Ireland between Nationalists and Unionists
- A special conference was organised in July to try and find a solution but no agreement was reached
A RESORT TO THE OBVIOUS.

Mr. Punch. "PERMIT ME, GENTLEMEN—I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW ONE ANOTHER: SIR EDWARD CARSON—MR. REDMOND. IT'S MORE THAN TIME YOU MET."

Punch Magazine: July 1914
World War I

• When war broke out with Germany in August 1914 the British government postponed the introduction of Home Rule until the war was over.

• Some people thought the war would only last a few months.