

THE UNION AND THE MILITARY, 1801–c.1830

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WHEN writing his monumental history of the British army, Sir John Fortescue devoted just two paragraphs to the military implications of the Union. He noted that Union greatly simplified British military affairs in general and that this was an excellent thing for historians, driven to distraction by the confusing archival situation produced by the pre-Union military relationship of the two countries.¹ The Irish military historian, Sir Henry McAnally, was equally succinct, merely remarking that ‘military matters had not bulked largely in the Union debates’.² In ways they were both right. Although none of the eight articles of the Union refer to the army, it was understood that the assimilation principle, which regulated other branches of the public service and the church, would apply to the army. Yet, beneath and perhaps because of the delusive brevity of these bare facts, lies a seriously under-researched subject with wider ramifications, both in the short and longer term. Before these issues can be developed, it is first necessary to set the context by describing the pre-Union military background Ireland and then outlining the formal changes wrought by the Union.

The Irish military system in the eighteenth century

The origins of the eighteenth-century Irish military system go back to the Nine Years War (1689–97) between England and her allies and France. The scale of this conflict made it necessary to retain some of the army in peacetime. Following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, such a suggestion was bound to raise objections from whigs who equated a large standing army with European absolutists rather than with English liberty and limited monarchy. A compromise between ideology and military strategy was reached and Ireland chosen as a

¹ Sir John Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, (13 volumes, 1899–1930), iv, 886–7.

² Sir Henry McAnally, *The Irish Militia, 1793–1816*, (Dublin and London, 1949), 159.

natural garrison for the peacetime standing army. In 1699 an English act of parliament set the limits of this peacetime force at 12,000 troops.³ Given the turbulent history of Ireland in the seventeenth century, this force was seen as having a more important internal peacekeeping role than its British counterpart.⁴ Although financed from Irish revenues, the Irish parliament had no authority to vary troop numbers which were set by the English legislation. This Irish establishment also functioned as a strategic reserve for Britain and the Empire and could be increased when the demands of overseas war required it.⁵ Britain's imperial expansion meant more men were needed overseas and an augmentation in 1769 increased the Irish establishment to over 15,000, with the guarantee that 12,000 would always remain for home defence. The demands of warfare were ever increasing though and the Irish parliament accepted additional men going abroad during the American war.⁶

This dual role of wartime reserve and peacetime garrison meant that Ireland could be left with a seriously depleted garrison whenever overseas war or, as during the 1745 rebellion, domestic British crisis, required units to move. From 1715 this deficiency was supposed to be counterbalanced by the arraying of an Irish militia. However, although this force was mobilised during the various Jacobite and invasion scares, as it was financed by the respective counties, it was seldom adequately equipped. It continued in statutory existence up to 1775, but in practice fell into neglect from mid-century.⁷ The militia legislation had lapsed by the time of the American war and was not renewed. When France entered the war in 1778, the demands on the Irish establishment were so severe that only 8,500 regular troops were left in Ireland.⁸ This serious shortfall was made up by the voluntary service of citizens organised in independent Volunteer corps, the famous Irish Volunteers whose interference in politics helped obtain 'legislative independence' for the Irish parliament in 1782.

From 1701 it was decreed that neither Catholic or Protestant Irishmen could serve in the ranks, though Protestants could become officers. This was both a legacy of the conflicts of the previous century and an attempt to further increase the Protestant interest, as the regiments on

³K.P. Ferguson, 'The Army in Ireland from the restoration to the Act of Union, (Ph. D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1980), 54–5, 60; 10 William III, c. 1.

⁴S.J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992), 200.

⁵Alan Guy, 'The Irish Military Establishment, 1660–1776', in *A Military History of Ireland*, ed. Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (Cambridge, 1996), 216.

⁶Ferguson, 'The Army in Ireland', 62.

⁷Jim O'Donovan, 'The Militia in Munster, 1775–78', in *Parliament, Politics and People: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Irish History*, ed. G. O'Brien, (Dublin, 1989), 31–47.

⁸Guy, 'Irish Military Establishment', 229.

the Irish establishment recruited English Protestants. However, here too the increasing pace of eighteenth century warfare rendered such restrictions potentially self defeating and the embargo on Irish Protestants was relaxed.⁹ During the Seven Years' War (1756–63) though Catholic enlistment was still technically illegal under the penal laws, there is evidence that the authorities were prepared to wink at officers who recruited Irish Catholics where the regiment was to go abroad.¹⁰ Irish Catholic manpower represented a potentially enormous recruitment resource, but there were strings attached. Their assistance in the war effort could be represented as a demonstration of loyalty by those pushing for relaxation of the penal code. In 1762, the Catholic aristocrat, Lord Trimleston, sent an address to the lord-lieutenant noting that the hierarchy had instructed prayers to be said for British success and offered to raise Catholic soldiers.¹¹ A legal loophole was suggested, in that the Catholic soldiers could have enlisted in the service of Portugal, Britain's ally. Though the Irish parliament refused, the fact that such a proposal was seriously considered was a significant straw in the wind. The relief bills which passed the British and Irish parliaments in 1778 were intended to secure Catholic, particularly Irish Catholic support and manpower for the American war.¹²

The conflict which started with revolutionary France in 1793 was warfare on an unprecedented scale in manpower terms. France set the standard. The pre-revolutionary French army totaled around 150,000, but Carnot's 1793 *Levee en Masse* raised half a million 'citizen soldiers'.¹³ This had implications in Britain where militia, fencibles¹⁴ and volunteer infantry and mounted yeomanry corps were raised to help boost Britain's home defences and free up the regular army. In Ireland Hobart's Catholic relief act was passed in 1793 which, *inter alia*, permitted Catholic service in the army on the Irish establishment and allowed them to hold officer's commissions up to the rank of general. This was complemented by the raising of a new Irish militia which was mostly Catholic in its ranks but largely Protestant at officer level, despite the relief act. A further home service force, the Irish yeomanry, was raised in late 1796. In contrast with the militia, the yeomanry was predominantly Protestant in all ranks.

⁹ Guy, *ibid.*, 218–9.

¹⁰ Thomas Bartlett, 'A weapon of war as yet untried: Irish Catholics and the armed forces of the Crown, 1760–1830', in *Men, Women and War*, ed. T.G. Fraser and Keith Jeffrey (Dublin, 1993), 60.

¹¹ Petworth House Archive, West Sussex Record Office, PHA/1270/1, Viscount Trimleston to Lord Egremont, 5 March 1762.

¹² Bartlett, 'A weapon of war as yet untried', 70–71.

¹³ Major-General J.F.C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1798–1961*, (1972), 31.

¹⁴ Author's note: fencibles were full-time soldiers raised for home defence for the duration of the war. They were confined to service within the British Isles.

Increases in manpower notwithstanding, Ireland by 1796 was facing a deepening security crisis caused by the insurrectionary plans of the United Irishmen backed by France's promise of military assistance. British ministers had for some time been worried about the potential strategic dangers of an Irish parliament which, since its 'independence' of 1782, could now legally determine how many troops it would vote for the war. Although in practice there had not been any official reticence by the Irish parliament the dangerous potential inherent in a divided authority played on Pitt's mind. When the long-dreaded insurrection came in 1798, it had the effect of overturning the logic upon which the eighteenth-century Irish military system was based. Instead of functioning as a strategic reserve for Britain and the Empire, Ireland became a drain on British manpower and a danger to her security. The diversion of thousands troops to help with the suppression of the 1798 rebellion was one of the major factors influencing Pitt's final decision in June 1798 to create a Union.

Despite this strategic imperative, actual military issues featured little in the debates in either the British or the Irish parliaments. Government spokesmen frequently claimed that Ireland, as it stood, with an 'independent' parliament, and a partly disaffected population rank with religious faction was a weak link in the war. Opponents of Union did utilise more specifically military arguments, though they were anything but coherent. The British opposition claimed weakly that the post-rebellion reinforcements were kept in Ireland to impose Union, with Sheridan ridiculously proclaiming: 'You should not publish the banns of such a marriage by the trumpets of your 40,000 men'. Lord Moira, a serving general, more practically reminded Grenville that 'there was no such thing as a separate Irish regular army' and that in reality the military establishments of Britain and Ireland were so interdependent that formal Union was superfluous.¹⁵ In Ireland, anti-Unionist military arguments were taken rather more seriously, not so much for logic, but because they could and were intended to re-activate proud memories of the Volunteers. Indeed the example of the Volunteers' political intervention in 1782 featured both in and out of parliament and in the pamphlet literature.¹⁶ The wealthy anti-Union magnate Lord Downshire tried to use his militia regiment as a platform for his political views, while key Dublin figures like William Saurin, who led the influential Dublin Lawyer's yeomanry corps, held that as native forces suppressed the worst of the rebellion before reinforcements arrived, Ireland could

¹⁵ *The Parliamentary History of England, 1780–1803* (hereafter: *Parliamentary History*), xxxiv, 217, 223–4, 689.

¹⁶ Robert Holmes [pseud. 'Eunomous'], *An Argument to the yeomanry of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1800).

still defend herself without being a drain on Britain. The government had to address these arguments and commissioned the civil under-secretary, Edward Cooke, to write a pamphlet arguing that Union would achieve the same end as the Volunteers of 1782 aimed at: namely Ireland's prosperity and happiness.¹⁷ Pitt himself was well aware of the emotive handle that could be made of the military exertions of Irish loyalists, both in the Volunteers of 1782 and the yeomanry in 1798, and tried spike the anti-Unionists' guns by tactfully recognising yeomanry service during the rebellion, which he linked to the British voluntary military effort, calling the loyalists 'the brethren of Britons'.¹⁸

The immediate military implications of Union

The actual changes in military organisation wrought by the Union can be summarised quickly. Under the assimilation principle the Irish military establishment was merged with the British and the Irish ordnance and artillery were amalgamated with their British counterparts. The post of Irish commander-in-chief was suppressed and replaced by a commander-of-the-forces. With the demise of a separate Irish military establishment, the lord lieutenant lost most of his military patronage to the British commander-in-chief, retaining only the 'small change' of issuing commissions for ensigns and cornets. This essay will first examine the immediate impact of this military assimilation in the period up to 1803 and then consider some longer term military implications of the fact that Union passed without Catholic emancipation.

Military assimilation overlaid a context of ongoing re-definition of civil-military relationships in both Britain and Ireland. In Ireland there was a background of periodically strained relations between the civil and military hierarchies. For most of the eighteenth century, Irish commanders-in-chief were decidedly subservient to the lord lieutenant who had extensive military powers and patronage. Eighteenth-century lord lieutenants would select a Board of General Officers from the commander-in-chief and the staff to provide advice to help determine the more important aspects of military policy. The lord lieutenant's primacy was such that the Irish establishment's efficiency could suffer as many incumbents had little military experience.¹⁹ In the 1750s, the

¹⁷ E. Cooke, *Arguments for and against an Union ... considered* (Dublin, 1799), 7, 48.

¹⁸ *Parliamentary History*, xxxiv, 269.

¹⁹ Guy, 'The Irish Military Establishment', 224.

reforming ideas of the then British commander-in-chief, the duke of Cumberland, were largely thwarted by Dublin Castle's reticence to forward military information to London.²⁰ Up to the 1770s most military administration was the lord lieutenant's responsibility. His chief secretary, as well as having civil duties, was the functional equivalent to the British secretary at war. From this time, however, Irish commanders in chief began to reside at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham where they gradually began to develop a parallel administration. The Castle regained its position in 1777 when the chief secretary's office was divided into civil and military branches, the latter known as the Irish War Office. The development of Kilmainham encouraged Irish commanders-in-chief to assert their independence and tension developed on several occasions.²¹ In Britain similar developments were ongoing since 1795 when the duke of York replaced the aged Lord Amhurst and quickly saw that the whole military system needed professionalisation in its administration and training.²² Here too these reforms led to tension between the respective civil and military hierarchies based at the War Office and the Horse Guards.

In addition to this difficulty, military assimilation also impacted on a wider developments as the political fall out from Union cast an ominous cloud over Dublin Castle, where the powers of the lord lieutenantcy were left exceedingly vague. This problem, like so much else, had not been addressed by the framers of the Union. The fact that Cornwallis, the lord lieutenant who oversaw the passing of Union, was, uniquely, joint viceroy and commander-in-chief, while it undoubtedly helped him concentrate on crushing the rebellion, also allowed the issue of viceregal powers to be swept under the carpet of expediency. The first post-Union lord lieutenant the earl of Hardwicke, in an early version of political correctness, took up post on Saint Patrick's day 1801. However he walked into a situation that was dangerously vague regarding his authority. Hardwicke's consistent line regarding the relationship between the lord lieutenant and the army was that the pre-Union division of power was inherent in the office. He had known from February that the army patronage would go to the duke of York, but the situation regarding the actual command of the army was far from resolved when he arrived in Dublin.²³ Indeed there was no military commander at all until the appointment on 8 May 1801 of Sir William Medows, after the first choice, Lord Howe, had perhaps wisely turned

²⁰ Alan Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline: Officership and Administration in the British Army, 1714–63*, (Manchester, 1985), 36–7.

²¹ Ferguson, 'The Army in Ireland', 64–66.

²² P. J. Haythornthwaite, *The Armies of Wellington* (1994), 14–15.

²³ *The Diary and Correspondence of Lord Colchester*, ed. Lord Colchester, (3 vols.), 1, 254.

it down.²⁴ Medows's military powers in relation to the lord lieutenant remained ill defined to the extent that he initially did not even have an official title. This embarrassing situation had implications for Hardwicke's task governing post-Union Ireland. His military under-secretary, Colonel Littlehales, warned him that 'the anti-Unionists would rejoice to see their idea realised of a government without power and splendour and an army without a commander-in-chief.'²⁵

Hardwicke complained to his brother Charles Yorke, Addington's secretary for war, about the position of the new military supremo. He was told that the old title of commander-in-chief was withheld because it was now Union policy to consider the British army as the same army with one commander-in-chief, and that in consequence the Irish commander could not have the same title. Medows's title therefore was to be commander-of-the-forces.²⁶ Charles Yorke reassured Hardwicke that his viceregal position as head of the army in Ireland would be the same as his predecessors, except for the loss of military patronage. On 8 July Hardwicke's chief secretary Charles Abbot met the home secretary Thomas Pelham to discuss the problem of division of post Union military power. Matters seem to have been smoothed over. On 17 July Charles Yorke optimistically told his brother he was 'glad ... that many things which threatened difficulty have turned out so well ... I allude particularly to the affair of Kilmainham.'²⁷ However events arising from ongoing political and military developments in Britain would soon prove his optimism misplaced as Union meant Ireland became less insulated from events in the sister kingdom. Two parallel developments in London had particular significance for Hardwicke in Dublin.

Firstly the tension between the Horse Guards and the War Office over the duke of York's reforms had, since 1799, been resolved in favour of the former. The military shake up in Ireland following Union gave the duke opportunities for further centralisation. The second development was at the Home Office. In the late eighteenth century, Ireland had been the responsibility of this department. The same arrangement continued after Union but Addington's home secretary, Thomas Pelham, wanted to build up the powers of his office. With the position of the Irish lord lieutenant left vague after Union, he saw loaves and fishes up for grabs in much the same way as the duke of

²⁴ *Colchester Correspondence*, 1, 265–8.

²⁵ British Library (hereafter B.L), Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35701, Hardwicke to Yorke, 13 June 1801.

²⁶ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), Hardwicke papers, T3451/6, Yorke to Hardwicke, 16 June 1801.

²⁷ *Colchester Correspondence*, 1, 274; PRONI, Hardwicke papers, T3451/8, Yorke to Hardwicke, 17 July 1801.

York did. In short Pelham wanted the Home Office to directly assume much of the Irish lord lieutenant's power and reduce him to the status of an English county lord lieutenant. Pelham advocated that the lord lieutenant's patent be altered in all details but 'especially in military concerns' and argued that, with Union assimilation, 'the duties which a distinct military establishment created, should leave the viceroy', leaving him only the power of ordering the troops for domestic peacekeeping.

Hardwicke resolutely contested this, complaining to Addington that he simply could not govern Ireland if 'the lord lieutenant is reduced to a mere superintendent of police'. In September and October 1801 Pelham and Hardwicke drew up papers outlining their opinions on what the status of the lord lieutenancy should be and Littlehales was sent over to London to negotiate. In the event, Addington determined in favour of Hardwicke and Pelham's invasion of Ireland was halted. Charles Abbot noted in a memo at the end of the year that 'Sir William Medows [was] cordially cooperating with the lord lieutenant.'²⁸ However Pelham's ambitions remained undiminished and he waited another opportunity.

This came in 1802 when the Peace of Amiens led to reductions in the armed forces. These cuts had particular implications for the auxiliary forces in both countries which were raised only for wartime: the volunteers, yeomanry and militia. An increasingly acrimonious correspondence began between Dublin Castle and Whitehall which shows that the Irish yeomanry became a bone of contention between Hardwicke and Pelham. From Pelham's perspective, aside from financial retrenchment, he had departmental reasons to press for the full disbandment of the force. As the Castle's full control of the Irish yeomanry and its patronage remained intact after Union, Pelham's arguments for disbandment can be interpreted as a continuation of his earlier attempts to asset-strip the Irish lord lieutenancy. Hardwicke, on the other hand, fought hard to retain as much of the yeomanry force in peacetime as he could. Although some cuts were inevitable, Hardwicke, along with Wickham and Littlehales kept suggesting ways to keep parts of the force intact, even forwarding the kind of local magistrate's state of the country reports to Whitehall that at other times would have been dismissed in Dublin as alarmist. Hardwicke needed proof that domestic disaffection meant that the yeomanry had to be maintained at some level.

There was another dimension to Hardwicke's struggle against yeomanry disbandment. Since taking up office, he had had to deal with a substantial residue of Protestant opinion, which still resented the loss

²⁸ *Colchester Correspondence*, 1, 287, 303–330.

of their parliament. Anti-Union Dublin yeomen, led by the influential lawyer William Saurin, had threatened mutiny in 1800. Hardwicke knew little of Ireland before his arrival and the gentry-raised, gentry commanded yeomanry were a link to both pro-and anti-Union opinion, because of their associations with Irish Protestants, particularly since 1798. Soon after his arrival Hardwicke made every effort to conciliate them by taking every opportunity to treat the yeomen well and even creating occasions, such as the lavish banquet he threw in July 1801 for 96 yeomanry captains, to celebrate the year of their inception 1796.²⁹ Therefore the retention of pre-Union yeomanry patronage, allied to the fact that the yeomanry could function as a ready-made instrument to build political bridges, made them an important component in the governance of post-Union Ireland.

Addington again came down on Hardwicke's side and he succeeded in retaining the best of the yeomanry. Legislation was passed in both countries allowing for the continuation of some voluntary service, but the Irish legislation gave Hardwicke crucial additional controls, with discretion for any reductions and authority to continue yeomanry pay. The renewal of war in May 1803 obviated the need for reductions and stimulated a huge increase of offers for yeomanry and volunteer service in both countries. May 1803 also saw a renewal of 'the affair of Kilmainham' with the arrival of a new commander-of-the-forces to replace Medows. Given the background of political tension and functional ambiguity surrounding this post, problems were again likely, come the man, come the moment. The man General Henry Edward Fox arrived on 28 May, selected after much combing of the army lists. The moment came in Thomas Street, Dublin on the evening of Saturday 23 July 1803 when Robert Emmet's insurrection suddenly flared.

Although Hardwicke and Wickham were both initially enthusiastic about General Fox,³⁰ given the background of civil and military difficulties since Union, in reality he had all the credentials to be a disaster in Ireland. He was Charles James Fox's brother and a relative of the duke of Leinster. Some Irish eyebrows were raised about these perceived opposition connections, though Hardwicke blithely reassured himself that consanguinity did not necessarily mean political association.³¹ However, Fox had another influential connection which was soon to cause Hardwicke consternation: he was a personal favourite of the duke of York. When trouble came, it came not from Holland House or even Leinster House but from the Horse Guards.

²⁹BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35701, Hardwicke to Yorke, 31 July 1801.

³⁰Hampshire Record Office (hereafter HRO), Wickham papers, 38M.49/1/46, Wickham to Addington, 29 Jan. 1803.

³¹BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35772, 28 May 1803.

After the initial difficulties under Medows, the civil and military hierarchies had developed a pragmatic cooperation, even though the duke of York had significantly refused to reply to Hardwicke's suggestions to set this on an official footing.³² Matters took a sudden and dramatic turn under General Fox. Hardwicke's objections notwithstanding, instructions were issued to make the commander-of-the-forces independent of the Irish government, and Fox's behaviour soon made it obvious that he was not going to answer to the Castle.³³ Whenever cooperation with the civil government was unavoidable, he made things as difficult as possible. Alexander Marsden, the civil under-secretary, told Castlereagh that almost from the day of Fox's arrival, 'we at the Castle could not get a couple of soldiers to escort a prisoner 100 yards without a letter to the Royal Hospital, and orders going from [there] to [the garrison commander] General Sir Charles Asgill in Rutland Square and [then] back again to General Dunne at the Barracks.' He markedly contrasted this with the more relaxed situation which had developed under Medows when 'a note from one of the secretaries procured us what we wanted.'³⁴ This communication breakdown and the power struggle which drove it was brought to a head when Robert Emmet's followers staged their insurrection on 23 July 1803. Without going into a full re-construction of Emmet's rising, it is sufficient to say that neither the Castle or Fox were without blame.

The fact that some of Emmet's powder exploded prematurely in Patrick Street on 16 July points to a defect in the Castle's intelligence system; though Hardwicke insisted that he had written to Fox, who later claimed to have missed the letter.³⁵ The Irish government stated that, although they knew an outbreak was coming, they did not know exactly when. Marsden claimed that they only discovered on the evening of Friday 22 July that the insurrection was planned for the following day, and that Fox was summoned to the Castle at 2 o'clock on the Saturday, and told the rising was imminent. Hardwicke saw this as tantamount to giving him orders – which of course was the crucial point.³⁶ Fox delayed taking action till nine-thirty in the evening, and when he did so, he summoned the garrison commanders to Kilmainham to receive orders and almost had them killed when they passed Thomas Street on their return to barracks. Word of the turmoil spread like

³² HRO, Wickham papers, 38M.49/1/55, Hardwicke to Charles Yorke, n.d. [autumn 1803].

³³ PRONI, Redesdale papers, T3030/7/7, Redesdale to Spencer Perceval, 16 August 1803.

³⁴ PRONI, Castlereagh papers, D3030/1841, Marsden to Castlereagh, 22 Nov. 1803.

³⁵ PRONI, Castlereagh papers, D3030/1799/1, Précis of correspondence on General Fox, 23 Sept. 1803.

³⁶ PRONI, Castlereagh Papers, D3030/1840, Marsden to Castlereagh, 14 Nov. 1803.

wildfire and the Dublin yeomen hurried to the Castle to get their arms, several of them being killed on their way. Wickham caustically noted that ‘there was not a cartridge at the Castle’.³⁷ Fox, without communication with the lord lieutenant, had ordered all yeomanry arms to be removed to the Ordnance department which, since Union, was outside the Castle’s control.

The Emmet affair had wide repercussions and led to the Irish government’s capability being questioned in parliament. Castlereagh publicly defended Hardwicke in the Commons, but privately believed that there was also negligence on the Irish government’s part.³⁸ The fact was that Hardwicke had ultimate authority over the yeomanry, including the power to call them out on permanent duty. This could easily have been done, given that he had intelligence of the insurrection the night before the outbreak. It was rather weakly claimed that the Castle did not want to create panic by the public step of calling out the yeomanry, but given the total breakdown in civil-military relations, a much more likely explanation is that yeomanry, when called out on permanent duty, were under full military law and therefore under the sole authority of General Fox.³⁹

Whatever way it is examined, the response to Emmet’s insurrection is redolent of a catastrophic break-down in communications. For two dangerous hours, the gap between the Castle and Kilmainham was occupied by Emmet’s insurgents. Fox was blamed, but surely the real blame for what Hardwicke euphemistically dubbed this ‘dangerous misunderstanding’ must reside with those who had so far failed to tie up the loose ends left by military and political Union. Although Emmet’s rising was jocularly dismissed as ‘the affair in Thomas Street’, he intended to attack the Castle, the centre of government. Coups d’état do not require field armies, but they do need the unpreparedness of the authorities. With substantial disaffection lingering in Dublin and the surrounding counties, and with French invasion a serious possibility, the consequences of such a symbolic gesture, even if it failed, could have been drastic.

Fox’s Dublin days were numbered. There was speculation that Cornwallis would return as commander-of-the forces. Lady Hardwicke told Abbot’s wife that ‘the undefined situation of lord lieutenant and commander of the forces, would never have been at odds with such temperate men as Lord Cornwallis and Lord Hardwicke.’⁴⁰ However, personality alone could never overcome the difficulties created by the

³⁷ *Colchester Correspondence*, Wickham to Abbot, 12 Aug. 1803, 1, 438.

³⁸ A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster*, (Oxford, 1978), 440.

³⁹ Unsigned memorandum on the state of Ireland from 1798 to 23 July 1803, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Home Office (hereafter HO) papers, 100/115/ff. 134–58.

⁴⁰ *Colchester Correspondence*, Lady Hardwicke to Mrs. Abbot, 10 Sept. 1803, 1, 440.

ill-defined post-Union situation. Cornwallis was ruled out. Although Hardwicke wanted him, and reckoned he would be acceptable in a solely military capacity, his support of emancipation and his sour relations with the yeomanry after the 1798 rebellion and Union were important factors.⁴¹ After consideration, a Scot William Schaw Cathcart was appointed. The omens were not good. Edward Cooke remarked on Cathcart's reputedly hot temper, saying he would not be surprised 'if the Castle and the Hospital shall still be like Protestants and papists.'⁴²

Cathcart arrived in early October and when his instructions from the duke of York were known, another unholy row erupted. These instructions appeared to underwrite Fox's approach, assuming that the army in Ireland was independent of the Castle. Hardwicke and Wickham felt that Cathcart's orders, if implemented, would make it 'impossible for the lord lieutenant to be responsible for the peace and safety of the country'. He consulted Irish lord chancellor, Redesdale, for an opinion on the legal standing of the lord lieutenant since the Union and whether the duke of York's instructions infringed Hardwicke's royal patent. Redesdale felt they did and, with typical hyperbole, branded them 'grossly insulting ... illegal and unconstitutional' and claimed that Cathcart would be technically guilty of high treason if he implemented his instructions to the letter. Redesdale criticised the duke of York saying that when he first became commander-in-chief, he knew the limits of his authority, but now assumed 'a great deal which does not belong to his department.'⁴³ Hardwicke sent a confidential memorandum for Charles Yorke setting out the legalities of his viceregal position. Like his eighteenth-century predecessors, Hardwicke considered the viceregal office to have complete responsibility for Ireland's internal and external security and 'supreme powers' in the king's name, which meant in consequence that 'the military force must necessarily be obedient to him.'⁴⁴ At one stage, Charles Yorke actually advised his brother to resign the viceregency and apply to be re-instated as joint civil and military governor.

We have to remind ourselves that while this acrimonious wrangling was going on, the danger of French invasion was never more acute. Wickham sounded the clarion note of reality in December 1803 saying

⁴¹BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35703, Hardwicke to Yorke, 24 Aug. 1803.

⁴²Centre for Kentish Studies, Pratt papers, U840/C/104/5, Cooke to Camden, 13 Sept. 1803.

⁴³PRONI, Redesdale papers, T3030/5/19, Redesdale to [?Addington], 14 Oct. 1803; T3030/7/9, Redesdale to Spencer Perceval, 20 Oct. 1803; PRO HO100/114/f. 89, Hardwicke to Yorke, 'Private', 18 Oct. 1803; *Colchester Correspondence*, Wickham to Abbot, 25 Dec. 1803, I, 473.

⁴⁴HRO, Wickham papers, 38M.49/1/55, Hardwicke to Charles Yorke, n.d. [autumn 1803].

that ‘with the enemy at our gates, we ought not to be fighting among ourselves.’⁴⁵ Eventually Hardwicke again got his way. Assurances were received from both Addington and Charles Yorke that neither Cathcart nor the duke of York intended to supersede Hardwicke’s authority. Ruffled egos were soothed as the affair was represented as a mistake arising from the stupidity of war office clerks who completely misunderstood the constitutional position of the lord-lieutenant.⁴⁶ It was determined that the relationship of the Irish commander-of-the-forces and the lord lieutenant was to be the same as that of the British commander-in-chief with the king. Matters improved after this; a situation symbolised in June 1804 by a joint review of yeomanry and regular army in the Phoenix Park presided over by Cathcart himself. The ostensible reason for the review was to celebrate the king’s birthday; however, given the background the real meaning had more to do with the Royal Hospital than with royalty. General Fox had once spared himself the political embarrassment of a yeomanry review, excusing himself on the militarily dubious grounds of having a boil on his thigh. By 1805, the chief secretary Charles Long, commenting on the reconciliation between the Castle and Kilmainham, said, ‘I hear on all sides it was very bad, it is now excellent.’⁴⁷

Perhaps it had taken Robert Emmet to focus minds on the reality that these power struggles meant a dilution or misdirection of actual military power. Union did not cause these clashes of authority, they would have happened anyway given the ebb and flow of power inherent in the ongoing administrative developments and military reforms in both countries. However the fact that Union left so much ill-defined in military affairs, as it did in legal and ecclesiastical matters, created a battle-ground for these conflicts to be fought out on. The crowning irony was the dangers of divided authority had been one of the major grounds on which Union measure was promoted in the first place.

The question of religion in the armed forces after Union

One thing the Union arrangements did not hinder was the flow of Irishmen, both Protestant and Catholic, into the various branches of

⁴⁵ *Colchester Correspondence*, Wickham to Abbot, 25 Dec. 1803, 1, 473.

⁴⁶ PRONI, Redesdale papers, T3030/3/13, Addington to Redesdale, 23 Oct. 1803; T3030/6/10, Eldon to Redesdale, n.d. [pre-January 1804].

⁴⁷ BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35702, Hardwicke to Yorke, 11 Aug. 1803; PRO, HO100/128/f. 313, Long to King, 1 Dec. 1805.

the armed services. Given that Union passed without emancipation, and that religious questions had featured prominently in the pro-Union arguments,⁴⁸ what impact had this issue for the military in the longer term? Historians have examined this question both at the level of the military policy of governments and the actual experience of the men under arms. Thomas Bartlett has convincingly demonstrated the linkages between Irish Catholic relief and Britain's growing military needs from as early as 1760. He has also argued that 'militarisation' – the various home defence levies between the American and the Napoleonic wars was a crucial element in 'politicisation'. Focusing on the home service experience of Catholics in the militia and Protestants in the yeomanry, Bartlett argues that this led to the politicising of each group by the 1820s during the final struggle for emancipation, as their prior military experience had exposed them to Ireland's residual sectarianism. He concludes that 'the yeomanry and the militia can best be regarded as the military expression of two rival "nations" that emerged in Ireland in the years after 1800'.⁴⁹

John Cookson's excellent study of mass mobilisation also examines the 'armed nation'. Like Bartlett, Cookson stresses the connection between Irish Catholic relief and Pitt's war policy. He detects a change of emphasis when Addington replaced Pitt in 1801. In Cookson's view, Pittites and Addingtonians both agree on the necessity of drastically increasing Britain's military capability, but differ as to means. Pittites believe volunteering helps the war effort by inculcating loyal service and hatred of the French. Addingtonians, on the other hand, see political and military danger in arming the English volunteers, many of whom come from the new industrial working classes and enjoy considerable local independence from central authority. They prefer militia to volunteers as the former are under military control and can also provide recruits for the regular army. Cookson extends this interpretation to Ireland, where it is cut across by the religious question. He notes the Pittite policy of using Catholic relief to encourage Catholic loyalty and recruitment, a policy epitomised in the Irish militia of 1793. However, when Union passes without emancipation and Pitt resigns, the incoming Addingtonians, pledged against relief, suspect the Irish militia because they are largely Catholic. In this perspective, Ireland becomes an Addingtonian looking-glass world where the militia appear as the English volunteers, politically dangerous and militarily dubious. On the other hand, there is what he calls 'an equally strong affirmation

⁴⁸ Cooke, *Arguments for and against an Union*, 23–4; *Parliamentary History*, xxxiv, 273–4.

⁴⁹ T. Bartlett, 'A weapon of war as yet untried.'; 'Militarisation and Politicisation in Ireland, 1780–1820', *Culture et Pratiques Politiques en France et en Irlande*, (Paris, 1988), 135.

of the Irish yeomanry as indispensable for the defence of the Protestant Ascendancy and British sovereignty over Ireland.⁵⁰

In many respects both historian's views fit with what we know of post-Union Ireland. At the level of military policy, the Irish yeomanry seem custom-made to address Addingtonian opposition to emancipation and fear of uncontrolled volunteering. Hardwicke once admitted, 'although it is desirable to have a Protestant yeomanry, the least said about it the better.'⁵¹ The yeomanry were indeed predominantly Protestant by 1801 and the yeomanry system, pragmatically devised in 1798, offered military integration and safeguards through a system of brigade majors which the English volunteer system did not at this stage possess. To turn to the militia, there certainly were several occasions during Addington's administration when interchange between the Irish and English militias was advocated on the grounds of the perceived untrustworthiness of Catholic militiamen.⁵² Cookson's thesis of the alternating Pittite-Addingtonian responses to the armed nation can be applied to Grenville's 'Ministry of all the Talents' which revived the Pittite notion of Catholic relief benefiting recruitment. Indeed it was the Catholic issue in another form which toppled the 'Talents' in 1807. Grenville had attempted to resolve yet another post-Union military anomaly by trying to extend to Britain the provisions of the Irish relief act of 1793, which permitted Catholics to hold commissions up to the rank of general and allowed Catholic soldiers to practice their religion.⁵³ Portland's incoming 'no popery' administration can be seen as resurrecting the 'Addingtonian' approach. Portland's Irish lord lieutenant, Richmond, the northern yeomanry's military utility with their Protestant spirit.⁵⁴

Similarly, at the level of service in the ranks, evidence of 'politicisation' in both yeomanry and militia, is not hard to find. In 1811, when the Catholic Board were raising the temperature in the push for emancipation, the interchange of British and Irish militia was seen as removing from the Board 'a strength on which they much depended.'⁵⁵ At the same time, the Catholic activist, Denys Scully, criticised the government's use of the yeomanry, claiming 'the yeomanry were on

⁵⁰ J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, (Oxford, 1997), 167.

⁵¹ HRO, Wickham papers, 38M49/5/10/90, Hardwicke to Wickham, 12 Nov. 1802.

⁵² BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35771, Hardwicke to Pelham, 7 April 1802; *The Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, ed. C. Vane (4 vols., 1848–53), Wickham to Castlereagh, 19 Nov. 1802; Wickham to Castlereagh, 14 Aug. 1803, iv, 296–8, 244–6.

⁵³ P.J. Jupp, *Lord Grenville, 1759–1834* (Oxford, 1985), 401–12.

⁵⁴ *The Supplementary Despatches, Letters and Memoranda of Arthur Wellesley, first Duke of Wellington*, (5 vols., 1860), Richmond to Wellesley, 5 Jan. 1808, v, 283–4.

⁵⁵ PRO, HO100/163/ff. 319–20, W.W. Pole to Richard Ryder, 27 May 1811.

duty and the Protestants every day receiving assurances that something would be done for them.⁵⁶

However, there are important aspects, at both policy and actual service levels, in which these overarching theories do not fit. As we have seen, official attitudes to the Irish yeomanry during the Peace of Amiens had more to do with post-Union administrative power-struggles than with resisting emancipation, which only re-emerged as a major issue with the 1805 petition. Hardwicke's dealings with the Irish yeomanry had more to say about the practicalities of governing post-Union Ireland than about emancipation. Moreover, religion or politics aside, the yeomanry had practical uses as a wartime alternative to regulars. Though Grenville's government certainly resurrected the Pittite Catholic relief-Catholic service paradigm, his Irish lord lieutenant, Bedford, also used yeomanry permanent duty against the 'Threshers'⁵⁷ in Connaught in late 1806. Indeed yeomanry numbers reached 82,000 under the 'Talents', the third highest total of their institutional life of almost 40 years.⁵⁸ Indeed the yeomanry policy of successive Irish governments goes well beyond gesture politics to Protestants. The retention of yeomanry patronage assumes great significance when set in the context of the loss of military patronage with the Union.

It is not fully appreciated just how severely this loss impacted upon landed families who had traditionally looked to Dublin Castle for military advancement for younger sons. A recent study of the political use of military patronage during Wellesley's chief secretaryship sees the patronage deficit as emanating from the lavish use rewards to secure the passage of Union, both by the creation of honours or the tying up of future vacancies through Union 'engagements'.⁵⁹ The decimation of military patronage at Union is not mentioned, yet convincing evidence exists that this was sorely missed by both the Irish government and the gentry. The haemorrhage of governing power it entailed extended beyond the actual issuing of commissions. Even the lord lieutenant's recommendations for commissions were ignored at the Horse Guards. Hardwicke told his brother he was 'greatly mortified' at the duke of York's total neglect, which meant that 'the office is wonderfully lowered and degraded when the lord lieutenant has not

⁵⁶ *The Catholic Question in Ireland and England, 1798–1822: the Papers of Denys Scully*, ed. B. MacDermott, Worcester, 1988), P. Hussey to Scully, 31 March 1813, 128.

⁵⁷ Author's note: Threshers were an agrarian secret society directed against tithes, priests' fees, and the exploitation of large farmers.

⁵⁸ A. F. Blackstock, *An Ascendancy Army, the Irish Yeomanry, 1796–1834* (Dublin, 1998), 114.

⁵⁹ K. Robson, 'Military Patronage for Political Purposes: the Case of Sir Arthur Wellesley as Chief Secretary for Ireland', in ed. C.M. Woolgar, *Wellington Studies I* (Southampton, 1996), 115–38.

the same chance of being attended to as . . . Messrs. Cox and Greenwood [presumably army agents].⁶⁰ Wickham received a letter from the younger son of a government supporter and large Tipperary landowner, Colonel Bagwell, which reflects the disgust felt by landed families. Young Bagwell complained that there 'did not appear the remotest prospect of finding employment for an officer of his rank'. Wickham told the prime minister that it was 'very material, tho' the patronage of the army is taken from the lord lieutenant, that the gentlemen of this country should be taught to make their applications for preferment and employment through the king's government and that the same attention should be paid to them at the Horse Guards as . . . English gentlemen of equal rank. . .'. In 1803 Wickham noted that Colonel Archdall had been passed over in a promotion of brigadiers and that 'though resident in Ireland he could not serve with his own regiment though stationed here'. This time he bluntly spelled out the political implications. 'His family has been very friendly to this government. His connexions are extensive, and his voice, if given against us, might at this moment be particularly hurtful. . .'. Hardwicke himself remarked that if a stringent letter he received from the marquess of Sligo's brother, Denis Browne, 'could have convinced the duke of York and the ministers by urging the same arguments, he would have done some service, [as] at present the Irish gentlemen have certainly reason to complain that [illegible] and the military service are hardly open to them'.⁶¹

The grievance was highlighted when the Army of Reserve was levied in 1803.⁶² Many Irish gentlemen objected to it on the understandable grounds that, as the selection of officers was no longer mediated through the Castle, their traditional authority in their own localities was undermined. Wickham told Addington of the problem. 'Obstacles have been thrown in the way of our levy here which I foresaw when in London, and pointed out to the secretary at war who transmitted my letter . . . to the duke of York, but unfortunately it was not attended to.'⁶³ Hardwicke significantly noted that unreconciled anti-Unionists were exploiting this to prove 'that the removal of the Irish parliament had lessened the chance of promotion for Irish families in the regular army'.⁶⁴ With yeomanry patronage still in the gift of Dublin Castle,

⁶⁰BL, Hardwicke papers, add. mss. 35701f. 164–5, Hardwicke, Dublin to Yorke, 13 Nov. 1801.

⁶¹HRO, Wickham papers, 38 M.49/1/46, Wickham to Addington, 5 Dec 1802; 22 Aug. 1803; 38 M.49/5/30, Hardwicke to Wickham, 5 Oct. 1803.

⁶²Author's note: A reserve force to be raised by ballot with quotas set for each part of the United Kingdom.

⁶³HRO, Wickham papers, 38 M.49/1/46, Wickham to Addington, 22 Aug. 1803.

⁶⁴PRO, HO100/112/f. 248, Hardwicke to Pelham, 17 Aug. 1803.

some key Irish magnates saw in this, if not a total solution, at least a means of saving face locally. The marquess of Abercorn decided to raise large bodies of yeomen as a 'supplementary legion' in Tyrone and Donegal, which he believed would shield him from the disgrace to his standing with his own tenants. It is notable that Hardwicke, notwithstanding Addingtonian fears of plebeian armament,⁶⁵ fully backed Abercorn.⁶⁶

The lack of military patronage was a long term problem. In 1806 it was contemplated that Bedford should regain the Irish military patronage, but eventually rejected on the grounds that he would be overwhelmed with applications. On the eve of the 1807 general election, and battling to strengthen the government interest, Wellesley tried to claw back some influence by asking the duke of York to be allowed to mediate by filtering commission applications through the Castle before forwarding them to the Horse Guards. He met with a ambivalent reply, and a caustic reminder of the profligacy of pre-Union lord lieutenants.⁶⁷ Despite this, and possibly because Wellesley was a soldier, there was some amelioration during the period 1807–8.⁶⁸ However, there was no reversion to the pre-Union position. In 1815 a War Office memorandum confirmed that since the Union no lists for commissions, promotions or exchanges were received from Dublin Castle, and that the accepted practice was for notifications for all commissions, regardless of their origin, to issue direct from the Horse Guards to the War Office from where they went to the secretary of state.⁶⁹

Wickham had admitted that the yeomanry system 'was full of job' and the potential rewards so alluring that a wary eye was always kept open for fraud.⁷⁰ Given its lucrative and mutually beneficial nature, it is not surprising that yeomanry patronage remained important in the long term. Unlike British auxiliary forces, the Irish yeomanry were retained after the end of the Napoleonic war, though with some rationalisation. Following the announcement that county brigade majors were to be reduced by half, Robert Peel, as chief secretary, was inundated with requests by county magnates either wanting their

⁶⁵ Author's note: Supplementaries were an un-uniformed, largely untrained reserve for the 'regular' yeomanry who undertook to do duty during emergencies.

⁶⁶ PRONI, Abercorn papers, D623/A/81/68, Abercorn to Littlehales, 2 Sept. 1803; D623/A/82/14, Abercorn to Hardwicke, 25 Feb. 1804; PRO, HO100/111/f. 166, Hardwicke to C. Yorke, 2 Sept. 1803.

⁶⁷ *Wellington, Supplementary Despatches*, Wellesley to Gordon, 9 May 1807, v, 39–40.

⁶⁸ Robson, 'Military Patronage', 135.

⁶⁹ PRO, HO100/183/f. 184, 'Opinion of War Office', 18 Jan. 1815.

⁷⁰ HRO, Wickham papers 38M.49/5/3/10, Wickham to Lord Liverpool, 13 Dec. 1802; PRONI, Castlereagh Papers, D3030/1432, Sir George Shee, Treasury Chambers to Castlereagh, 22 Aug. 1800.

nominees retained or granted fat pensions.⁷¹ Apart from commissions and places, yeomanry pay was important. Pay was issued from Dublin to the yeomanry captains in virtually every barony and town in Ireland to distribute to their men. In the days before the development of local government bureaucracy, the pay system supplemented direct patronage by creating a channel from the centre to the localities, a political conduit along which the complimentary tides of patronage and indebtedness could flow. Surviving yeomanry pay books show that paternalist landlord-captains could arrange loans to their tenants to be offset against future pay, or even dock the pay of those who misbehaved.⁷² The controls such a patronage system gave cannot be divorced from the Catholic question, particularly after growth of Catholic electoral interests in some counties from 1807. Nonetheless, as Hardwicke had shown with the Dublin anti-Unionists in 1801, this complex net which the Castle could cast out over the country surely had a wider political and governing utility than simple resistance to emancipation.

To turn from policy to the question of yeomanry service and the ‘politicisation’ of lower-class Protestants, here too matters are less than straightforward. Bartlett argues that politicisation originated, empirically and spontaneously, in the militarisation of Irish society, and that, although it is less well-known than the Catholic experience, Protestant Ireland, by participating in this process, also shared in the mobilisation and politicisation of the 1820s.⁷³ This question of popular Protestant political awareness is indeed an intriguing one which can be examined from various perspectives. A comparison between yeomanry pay lists and the membership lists of Brunswick Clubs, the Protestant equivalent to O’Connell’s Catholic Association, may shed some light on this issue. However, given the strong traditional paternalism in the yeomanry, such a comparison would not reveal whether the motivation sprung from service experience or landlord direction. Viewed through the lens of the ordinary yeoman’s service, it could be argued could be made that their understanding of this experience was very different than from the politicisation Bartlett describes.

The terms of service of the yeomanry and militia were very different. Unlike the latter, which served outside their home county, the yeomanry was essentially a static force, the corps taking their names from the area they were raised in. Whereas militiamen were full-timers, yeomen served part-time who lived and worked in their home district. Their service was restricted to their own or adjoining baronies and, although

⁷¹ BL, Peel papers, add. mss. 40291 f. 112, Peel to the Earl of Enniskillen, 16 July 1816.

⁷² PRONI, Morrow papers, D3696/A/4/1, Lurgan Yeomanry Detail Book, 9 Sept. 1801.

⁷³ Bartlett, ‘Militarisation and Politicisation’, 126.

they could and did volunteer wider service during emergencies, most duty was strictly local. It is a moot point whether such service, even when it brought conflict with Catholic groups like the Ribbonmen, translated into the very 'modern' phenomenon of proletarian political mobilisation. An alternative argument could be advanced that such local service, rather than impel its participants towards democracy, actually threw them back into a pre-democratic interpretation of Protestant-Catholic relations. The Orange Order, to which many yeomen belonged, helped inculcate interpretations of organisations like the Ribbonmen and even the Catholic Board which represented them as being unrelated to contemporary politics. Instead they were represented in a completely different context. Everything, whether political organisation or rural incendiarism, was traced back to the 1798 rising, which itself was seen as another manifestation of the Catholic plots, conspiracies and rebellions of the seventeenth century.⁷⁴ Moreover local service itself may well have underwritten such regressive interpretations. In some parts of Ulster the first yeomanry corps were raised on the basis of much earlier proletarian Protestant groups based on parish or townlands, who had traditions of faction fighting and tenuous gentry links. As sectarian tensions rose in parts of Tyrone in the 1820s, when the government had severely curtailed yeomanry duty, it is perhaps significant that similar groups spontaneously appeared, carrying arms but without gentry leadership.⁷⁵ In terms of their aims and methods and lack of structure, such inchoate, atavistic proletarian groups were polar opposites from both the Catholic Association and the Brunswick Clubs.

Other qualifications can be advanced for Catholic politicisation in the militia. Inevitably, with the sources naturally biased in favour of the exceptional, the ordinary soldier's experience is going to be hard to access. Given that various 'state of the country reports', form the central core of the historian's source material, it is not difficult to find evidence of Catholic militiamen being involved in sectarian incidents with both civilians and other soldiers. However, the ordinary routine existence of a Catholic militia private – the men were often accompanied by their families on their peregrinations around Ireland⁷⁶ – is less visible precisely because it was unexceptional. Moreover, where there were violent incidents, one wonders what role regimental clannishness played. In 1806 an incident between militiamen and soldiers of the King's German Legion began when one of the Germans snatched a switch or

⁷⁴ *Resolutions of the Honourable, the Protestant Loyal Society of County Down*, (North Shields, 1813).

⁷⁵ PRO, HO100/214/ff. 38–9, Egerton to Goulburn, 1 Jan. 1825.

⁷⁶ McAnally, *Irish Militia*, 265–77.

stick from the Monaghan militia's drummer boy. From this apparently trivial incident a full-scale riot developed in which each party attacked the other with musket and bayonet causing one death and many injuries.⁷⁷ If the obviously symbolic switch had been a political ribbon the incident could be interpreted as a 'politicising' experience. However the fact that the familiar pattern of collective insult and retaliation occurred in an apolitical incident, and the fact that the militiamen were light company detachments from the Monaghan, Sligo, Londonderry and Limerick regiments, a mixture which from their counties of origin would mean Protestant and Catholics serving together, at least raises qualifications about militarisation and politicisation. Such incidents do not diminish the impact of the sectarian clashes and attitudes that some Catholic militiamen undoubtedly faced, but they do at least caution against assuming that militia units were religiously homogenous entities, a qualification which, in spite of their overall Protestant and orange composition, could also be applied to the yeomanry in some southern and western counties. Nor indeed can we discount regimental, group or regional loyalties which, if challenged by outsiders of any ilk, would be seized as a pretext for a fight.

To turn briefly to the impact of religion on the thousands of Irishmen who served as regular soldiers in the post-Union British army, again we find a vexed question full of contradictions. One can speculate on how Irish religious divisions, when carried overseas in the British army, impacted on the lives and consciousness of these servicemen both when abroad and, more importantly, when they returned. John Cookson recognises the difficulty of definitive statements, noting that the heaviest recruiting areas were those most troubled by sectarianism, yet he also astutely raises the possibility that a combination of communal solidarity in Irish regiments, serving against a common enemy along with English and Scottish soldiers, plus a decline in religious observance on campaign may have led to an Irish regimental identity superseding religious divisions.⁷⁸ The scattered evidence about returned veterans is equally contradictory. In the early 1820s the government were prepared to raise veteran battalions in the south to boost the regular garrison and help them cope with disturbances amongst the Catholic peasantry of Munster. Yet, during the 1828 Clare election campaign, the authorities stopped military pensions being distributed at a central point in the county as so many pensioners were gathering that the Catholic Association were mobilising the crowd for electoral purposes. Even the pro-Catholic lord lieutenant, Anglesey, told the commander-of-the-forces, that he had received 'some official reports and many vague rumours

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 199–200.

⁷⁸ Cookson, *Armed Nation*, 170–1.

... that the Roman Catholic soldiers of the army are not to be depended upon' and noted that though he had been in the habit of dismissing such claims until recently, he now credited them 'such is the power of the priests'.⁷⁹ Obviously, for each category of Irish serviceman, yeoman, militiaman or regular soldier, further research is necessary before the post Union impacts of the issue of religion can be further refined.

Conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from this examination of the immediate and longer term military implications of Union? Certainly in the short term, the decision to let military assimilation evolve in practice was potentially disastrous. It created instability, not because leaving things to evolve is necessarily a bad thing, but rather because it left important aspects of the governing of Ireland at the mercy of ongoing British military and governmental developments. Given that Napoleon was preparing an invasion fleet, this cannot be seen as anything other than dangerous neglect. Although the clash of civil and military authorities was resolved, echoes were still discernible years later and the position of Irish commander-of-the-forces remained a sensitive one. On two occasions, in 1816 and 1819, General George Nugent, was considered for the post. Nugent had a high reputation as a soldier, was high in the confidence of the duke of York and had experience in serving in Ireland in 1798 when he won praise for his handling of the northern rebellion and his ability to work with the yeomen. Militarily, he was undoubtedly the man for the job. However, on both occasions, he was passed over because he privately supported emancipation.

With the passage of Union without emancipation, the question of religion in the armed forces is an important issue in the longer term. However, from the perspective of Dublin Castle's policy on the yeomanry, there is evidence that it is not the only, and at times not the major, determining factor. With the loss of military patronage after Union, yeomanry patronage and pay assume great importance as a substitute political cement to binding the centre to the localities. Contradictions abound when we consider the politicising effect of the experience of military service between the Union and emancipation for the large numbers of Irishmen, Protestant and Catholic, who enlisted in the yeomanry, militia and regular army. The very pervasiveness of

⁷⁹PRONI, Anglesey papers, D619/26/C/67-8, Memo transmitted [by Anglesey] to Sir John Byng, 21 July 1828.

these contradictions perhaps points to an ultimate reality that the relationship between military experience and Ireland's religious divisions cannot be generalised and fluctuated according to the contexts of time and place. The quicksilver nature of these contractions was dramatically illustrated in 1831, when Anglesey re-armed the yeomanry, moribund for years, and used them in the 'tithe war'. The effect was explosive, literally. One yeomanry corps fired on Catholic protesters in Newtownbarry killing about 14 people. As petitions rained into parliament, Anglesey explained himself by saying he had wanted to stop some northern yeomen and orangemen, disgusted after emancipation, from joining with Catholics to support O'Connell's campaign for repeal of the Union.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ PRONI, Anglesey papers, D619/27B/26–7, Anglesey to Holland, 4 July 1831; I am grateful to the following individuals and institutions for permission to publish from material in their keeping: The Deputy keeper of the records, PRONI; the British Library; the Hampshire Record Office; the Centre for Kentish Studies. The Home Office papers are Crown copyright.