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UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL?:

Analysing the atomization of British society across World War I and the Covid-19

Pandemic.

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ABSTRACT

Wars and national crises often lead to structural changes in the social conditions of the countries involved. This paper examines two such events: World War I (1914-1918) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-present). It thematically analyses two British newspapers; The Times and The Guardian to understand how national and communal identities have evolved in response to the above events, particularly in relation to food.

The existing literature we accessed mainly covered societal changes during and after World War I (WWI). The reason for this is research on the impact of the COVID pandemic is still ongoing. Our research therefore is unique as it compares the impact across society during WWI and the pandemic through the perspective of food shortages. As food is a necessity of life, we have extrapolated opinions on food shortages and taken them as a proxy for public sentiment at the time.

Our analysis reveals three broad themes which changed across the two events:

1. The transition from prioritising national needs to prioritising individual needs.
2. The decreased support for national government intervention in daily lives.
3. The tangibility of a 'public enemy' in uniting or dividing the national population.

This paper concludes that these differences point toward the increasing individualisation or hyper-localisation of society, with greater emphasis placed on local or individual identities instead of a common national identity.

Keywords: society, food, individualisation. World War 1, COVID-19, crisis, shortage

INTRODUCTION

This paper uses qualitative research methods to study the structure of society in face of crisis through people's opinions on food management. The COVID-19 pandemic, as a health and socio-economic crisis, has amplified and worsened the challenges associated with vulnerable food systems, for food availability issues are rooted in culture and woven into the regulatory frameworks. Meanwhile, for historical comparison, this paper will focus exclusively on WWI since it was the first time Britain encountered a modern major food crisis which led to a significant shift in the acceptable role of the government intervention.

This paper uses thematic analysis in which quotations from two British newspapers (*The Guardian* and *The Times*) were coded and categorized into themes. There were three broad themes emerging across the two events, namely, the shift from prioritizing national needs to individual needs, the decline in support for national government intervention in daily life, and the tangible role of a public enemy in uniting or dividing the national population. This paper concludes that these distinctions point to the growing individualization in the society, and greater emphasis was put on the local or individual identities rather than a shared national identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aims to firstly, provide context regarding food management during World War I (WWI) and Covid. Secondly, to identify the gaps in literature and finally, to explain the motivations of this paper.

In the post-World War II (WWII) period, individualism has emerged as one of the dominating trends in British society as people were expressing greater desires for autonomy and self-determination.¹ This was in sharp contrast with the collectivist sentiments in society during WWI as people were more united. Food serves as an important case study as it is the fundamental precondition for human survival. Its importance was further reinforced by the unique position of British food supply during WWI, as the nation was heavily dependent on imported food.² A wide range of literature has been written on the matter of food management during WWI. Barnett and Lord Beveridge's works both provided an overview of the food policies, and the latter was particularly comprehensive given the author's position as the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Food after WWI while Benson's work focused exclusively on public opinions.³ However, few have attempted to compare societal changes in

¹ Emily Robinson, Camilla Schofield, Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, and Natalie Thomlinson. "Telling Stories about Post-war Britain: Popular Individualism and the 'Crisis' of the 1970s." *20th Century British History* 28, no. 2 (2017): 268.

² Ian Gazeley, The First World War and Working-class food consumption in Britain. *European Review of Economic History*, 2013. 71-94/

³ Nicholas Benson, Sweet Tea: The British Working Class, Food Controls, and the First World War. *Honors Theses*, 1963-2015. 2015; Margaret Barnett. *British Food Policy in the First World War*. Boston [Mass.]; London: Allen & Unwin, 1985; William Beveridge, *British Food Control*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928.

different times of food crisis. And thus, this paper attempts to fill the gap in literature and shed more light on how or if the British society has changed in times of crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified and worsened the problems regarding vulnerable food systems as problems with food availability was embedded in culture and woven into the regulatory frameworks.⁴ As a result, the ability to ensure food system resilience has become a key public and political concern.⁵ Agricultural policies, for example, were made by the UK government to improve the dietary intake in response to the crisis. Nevertheless, most of the policies did not aim at improving public health.⁶ Meanwhile, projects by the community and local food partnerships, like Community Supported Agriculture, are developed to ensure both the equitable access to food and a more democratic process to shape food systems.⁷ Therefore, the epidemic has boosted public positive appreciation of non-governmental organizations and food producers as crucial workers that contribute to the national resilience of the food system.⁸

This paper will focus exclusively on WWI for the historical comparison because it was the first time Britain faced a modern major food crisis and this led to a significant change in the

⁴ Sabine O'Hara, and Etienne C. Toussaint. "Food access in crisis: Food security and COVID-19." *Ecological Economics* 180 (2021): 106859.

⁵ Jones, Stephen, Anna Krzywoszynska, and Damian Maye. "Resilience and transformation: Lessons from the UK local food sector in the COVID-19 pandemic." *The Geographical Journal* 188, no. 2 (2022): 209-222.

⁶ Sarah Shanks, May CI Van Schalkwyk, and Martin McKee. "Covid-19 exposes the UK's broken food system." *bmj* 370 (2020).

⁷ Bellamy Sanderson, Angelina, Ella Furness, Poppy Nicol, Hannah Pitt, and Alice Taherzadeh. "Shaping more resilient and just food systems: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Ambio* 50, no. 4 (2021): 782-793.

⁸ Ibid.

acceptable role of the government intervention.⁹ The war also had crucial implications for the development of the welfare state three decades later as the wartime food policy marked the beginning of a progression bridging the social gap between the wealthy and the poor.¹⁰

⁹ Edith Tilton Penrose, and International Labour Office. Economic Statistical Section. *Food Control in Great Britain*. Series B (Economic Conditions) ; No.35. Montreal, Can : London: International Labour Office ; P. S. King & Staples, 1942. 17.

¹⁰ Nicholas Benson, Sweet Tea: The British Working Class, Food Controls, and the First World War. *Honors Theses*, 1963-2015. 2015. 4.

METHODOLOGY

Thematic analysis was used in this paper where quotes from newspaper articles were codified, then these codes were grouped into themes. Letters to the editor and news articles were used for both WWI and COVID-19. Furthermore, online comments on news articles were collected from articles written during the pandemic. Comparisons were then made between the different themes across two time periods to highlight the differences in British society's reaction to crises. The main sources used in this paper were *The Guardian* and *The Times* as they represented a relatively balanced view from differing levels of society. Historically, newspapers were an effective reflection of public opinion as they were the primary source of information at the time and there were few alternatives available.¹¹ *The Times* was used to examine middle and upper-class perspectives, as its editorials were the most popularly read in the country and written exclusively by members of that class¹². It was also often cited as a record of official announcements from the food controller (Minister for Food) in various literature¹³. This further strengthened its value as it was factual and served as a reflection of changes in government policy. *The Guardian*, in contrast, represented relatively left-wing opinions and had working-class readers.¹⁴ Looking at text from both working- and middle-class newspapers, a more wholistic picture of public attitudes is offered. In order to filter out irrelevant newspaper articles, keywords relating to food were used when searching for articles and thus the sources were

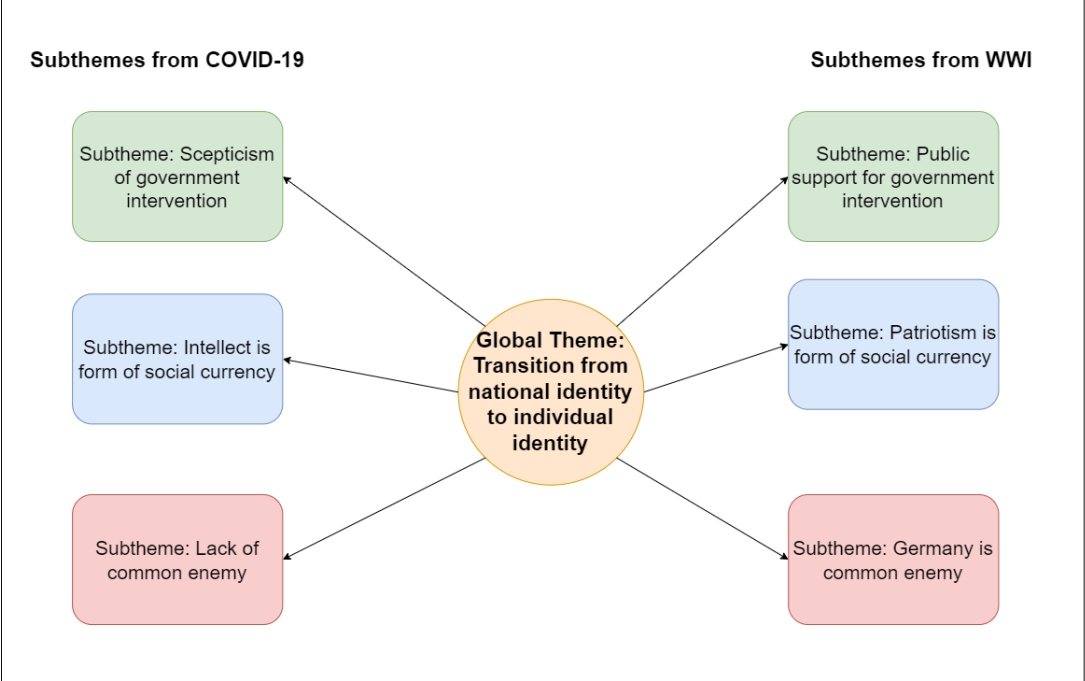
¹¹ Nicholas Benson, *Sweet Tea: The British Working Class, Food Controls, and the First World War. Honors Theses, 1963-2015.* 2015. 9.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ William Beveridge, *British Food Control*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928, 41.

¹⁴ Anna Islentyeva, "The Undesirable Migrant in the British Press." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 119, no. 2 (2018): 419.

limited to articles covering food management. Quotes were then collected and grouped into codes which represented people’s viewpoint for each theme. Refer to Appendices 1 and 2 for the same. Thus, by comparing the different codes for each theme in the two periods, the change from collectivism to individualism in British society could be observed.



THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THEME 1: PATRIOTISM VS INDIVIDUALISM

An overarching theme that emerges upon analysing articles from *The Times* and *The Guardian* during World War I is the heightened association of morality with patriotism. Food consumption, which had turned into a moral issue due to severe food shortages during the war, began to be viewed through a patriotic lens, with people who self-rationed, hailed as true patriots¹⁵ and hoarders characterised as unpatriotic.¹⁶ Sacrificing one's meals was perceived as "the most patriotic service those at home can render to their country"¹⁷ and "the very life of the nation"¹⁸. Interestingly, class divides did not affect people's responses to this crisis, with the working class¹⁹, middle class²⁰ and upper classes²¹ united in their condemnation of stockpiling and commending rationing.²² Moreover, citizens from diverse socio-economic backgrounds attempted to aid each other in reducing consumption by providing recipes which decreased the quantity of essential ingredients used or utilised alternate or widely available ingredients.⁷

Letters to the editors of the above publications were sent, expressing opinions on how citizens could take up activities like beekeeping to bolster Britain's food supply.⁸ Even

¹⁵ *The Guardian*. How Much Meat?.

¹⁶ *The Guardian*. Food Hoarders Warned.

¹⁷ *The Guardian*, Control of Food Prices.

¹⁸ *The Times*, Sacrifice And Service.

¹⁹ *The Guardian*, The Potato Shortage.

²⁰ *The Guardian*, Miscellany.

²¹ *The Guardian*, Compulsory Rationing Possible.

²² Nicholas Benson, Sweet Tea: The British Working Class, Food Controls, and the First World War. *Honors Theses*, 1963-2015. 2015. 42.

parliamentary debates invoked the ideas of patriotism to urge farmers to produce more, in an attempt to make Britain less reliant on food imports in-light of German U-boat attacks.²³ Furthermore, stockpilers and hoarders were vilified and cast as unpatriotic, with some citizens going so far as to suggest that they were “helping the German fleet do exactly what it wants do”.²⁴ Consequently, social status began to be interpreted by one’s degree of patriotism, which was measured by the amount of food one sacrificed (or produced, by farmers) for the nation. Thus, the fight for food security in World War I was perceived as a fight for Britain’s survival in which all classes had to perform their civic duty of rationing and share the burden of sacrifice.

Newspaper articles covering food shortages (caused due to supply chain disruptions and hoarding) during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate that the issue of food shortages had taken on a more individualistic tone - concepts of patriotism or civic duty were not mentioned at all. Instead, the notion of hoarding food supplies was inextricably linked to one’s intellect, as evidenced by the coinage of the term ‘covidiot’.²⁵ People who stockpiled food and medical supplies were ridiculed in the media as ‘rule-flouters’, ‘panickers’, ‘ramblers’ and ‘covidiot’.²⁶ Some opinion pieces even suggested that ‘there must be a special corner in Hell for someone who would stockpile while others die due to their scarcity’²⁷, illustrating the massive outrage felt by the ‘intellectually-superior’ populace. The so-called rule-followers or enforcers urged everyone to stay calm and emphasised the need to think about others from a humane standpoint,

²³ *The Times*. Farmers' Part In The War.

²⁴ *The Guardian*, The Non-Combatant. .

²⁵ *The Guardian*. From Covidiot to doomscrolling.

²⁶ *The Guardian*, Who needs a middle-aged woman screaming.

²⁷ *The Guardian*, I’ve got a better name for the ‘covidiot’ licking supermarket shelves.

insisting that there was ‘plenty of everything to go round if people would only shop normally.’²⁸ The tone of the articles and choice of vocabulary make it evident that hoarders were thought of as selfish and placing their own needs above those of their local communities. On the other hand, stockpilers justified their actions as ‘smart’²⁹, claiming that ‘the supermarkets were totally unprepared and unhelpful’³⁰. One hoarder even asked people ‘stop moaning’ and follow her example by ‘clearing shelves at Tesco’, claiming it was ‘stupid’ to shop ‘normally’¹⁶. It is evident from these articles that both sections of people, the rule-followers and the rule-flouters, were eager to highlight their respective intellectual superiorities and outsmart one another, with the debate around individual needs versus communal needs larger determined along these intellectual lines.

The differences between the language used and the tone of the articles relating to food shortages and hoarding across the two time periods are fascinating. Patriotism, an inherently nationalistic concept, was the primary social currency in World War I and consequently, by painting hoarding as unpatriotic and rationing as patriotic, the government and media were able to galvanise society into placing the needs of the nation above their own. On the other hand, during the pandemic, intellect, an individual trait, emerged as the primary social currency, and individuals decided to sacrifice their own needs or the needs of the community depending on which course of action they deemed to be smart. Social prestige, which was earlier determined by one’s love for the nation, is now determined by one’s intellect, which makes it more difficult to unite people under a banner of a common nation. Furthermore, during the pandemic, people

²⁸ *The Guardian*, Coronavirus: UK panic-buyers urged to think of frontline workers.

²⁹ *The Mirror*, I’ve stockpiled enough to last nine months - you’re stupid not to do the same.

³⁰ *The Guardian*, Everyone should prep: the Britons stocking up for hard times.

were to think about their local communities, as opposed to one's nation. This further highlights the emergence of people's local identities into the foreground, which has perhaps pushed their national identities to the background.

THEME 2: PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

A key theme discerned from the texts published during WWI was the sentiment that the government was too uninvolved in the supply and demand for food. The government maintained a non-interventionist policy in the first two years of the war, and nothing was done to ease the burden of rising food prices nor to ease the shipping shortage.³¹ Intervention only began when the food situation became fraught with problems in 1916 and local rationing was gradually introduced by the end of 1917.³² As a result, throughout the war, the public wanted the state to involve itself in both limiting the demand and increasing the supply of food. Five codes were observed in relation to the public's attitudes towards state intervention. There was a perception that the government should limit the demand of foodstuffs either through voluntary or mandatory rationing. This was coupled with a demand for market intervention to increase the supply of food from overseas. The public wasn't only forward-looking in its criticisms of government inaction: a code discerned from the text was that the government had been failing due to its inaction in the food market. Furthermore, market intervention by the state was identified with patriotism: "The nation will support them in their patriotic policy for increased food production".³³ From these codes emerges the theme that there was broadly public support in favour of state involvement

³¹ Julie Gordon Stark., and London School of Economics Political Science. Department of Economic History. *British Food Policy and Diet in the First World War*. 1985. 65.

³² *Ibid*, 118.

³³ *The Times*, Food Production

both in the economy at large, but also in the daily lives of citizens. Support for mandatory and voluntary rationing suggests that Britons were willing to accept restrictions on their daily lives to support the greater cause. Furthermore, the support for state policy to increase food supply shows that Britons expected government interference in the economy, which had previously been structured around a laissez-faire free market model.³⁴

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the discourse around food veered towards the theme of individual responsibility and freedom of choice, strengthened by a lack of trust of the state's capacity to positively impact change. This is reflected by the view that expansions of the government's role in the eating habits of its citizens would be an overreach by an already paternalistic state. In a *Times* opinion piece arguing for an expansion of free school lunches in England, one reader commented that: "It is the parents' role to feed their children, not the state".³⁵ Indeed, not only was individual responsibility seen as a normative end in itself, but the state was also seen as either incapable, or apathetic towards its citizens' difficulties. In the discourse, this means that citizens are left to devise their own means of coping during crises. One nurse stated that "Covid has shown that the government will largely leave us to it in times of crisis",³⁶ a view which led her to accumulate and grow food to protect herself in future crises. Instead of being framed as a failure of institutions, the issue of food poverty and obesity during the pandemic was blamed on individuals' laziness, with one *Times* commenter claiming that

³⁴ Ibid, 38.

³⁵ *The Guardian*, Free Meals

³⁶ *The Guardian*, Everyone should prep: the Britons stocking up for hard times.

“parents [...] are too lazy to shop for and cook healthy meals”, [and that high obesity rates among lower-income households has]: “nothing whatsoever to do with poverty”.³⁷

Comparing public attitudes towards state intervention in the economy and daily lives of individuals during WWI and the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that the public was more sceptical of government involvement into private life during the latter. Throughout WWI, the public was critical of state inaction in food supply and demand. During WWI, patriotism and duty were commonly linked to the sacrifices made by individuals compensating for the lack of government policy (e.g., through self-rationing). Furthermore, policies themselves were also labelled as being patriotic.³⁸ The public was asking its government for policies which arguably limited individual liberty and market freedom. This suggests that the British public found a sense of identity through the nation-state as opposed to ideals or principles. In contrast, the debate around government (in)action regarding food poverty during the pandemic revolved more around principles rather than the concept of a people or nation. This is reflected, for example, by the view of one *Times* commenter that: “Personal responsibility has been ignored and removed from public debate for too long”.³⁹ This reflects the general theme found in the texts, as the 21st-century crisis saw a larger amount of support for a more individualized approach to mitigating the crisis, as opposed to top-down policy across Britain.

³⁷ *The Times*, Healthy Eating.

³⁸ For example, a policy aiming to increase food production was deemed “patriotic” by one writer to *The Times*.

³⁹ *The Times*, Free Meals.

THEME 3: THE TANGIBILITY OF A COMMON ENEMY

Analysing the dialogue surrounding food shortages in WWI via newspaper articles in *The Times* and *The Guardian* reveals consistent references to ‘the enemy’. The British government would constantly compare conditions in Britain to Germany to make difficult policies like rationing more palatable. Politicians claimed that U.K. rations were ‘at least twice the compulsory ration allowed in Germany, where the cost of food was double’⁴⁰. Beyond politicians, civilian leaders also argued that the resilience, ‘pride, pluck and tenacity’⁴¹ of the British populace was far superior to the Germans, which would allow them to withstand the harsh war conditions. This rhetoric was clear even in the food sphere, with one Liverpool resident claiming that ‘the roast-beef spirit of Britain has vastly more vitality than the potato-bread spirit of Germany.’⁴² Officials asked the public to respond to the challenge of diminishing food supplies by making ‘sacrifices’⁴³ and ensure that ‘if famine was going to finish the war, Britain would not be the country going down’⁴⁴. Furthermore, all sections of the population were adamant to avoid displaying any overt signs of hardship or struggle, to ensure that ‘nothing will

⁴⁰ *The Guardian*, New Voluntary Rationing

⁴¹ *The Observer*, The Crisis: The Government And The Country "An Organised Opposition ." Submarines--Naval And Political The Premier's Great Manifesto Fundamental Issues An Election Or An Alternative Patriotism V. Party.

⁴² *The Manchester Guardian*, Correspondence: The Demand For Women Workers.

⁴³ *Times*, Food and Prices.

⁴⁴ *Times*, National Bread Taste.

encourage the enemy.’⁴⁵ Moreover, people were united in their ambition to secure the maximum probability of success for their armies by practicing ‘frugality at home’ to secure ‘unstinted provision’ for their soldiers and sailors.⁴⁶

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of a visible enemy could have contributed to an increased amount of infighting in British society. The government largely assumed the role of the antagonist for the crisis, with people blaming it for its ‘incompetence’⁴⁷ and ‘inability to work together and present a unified approach’⁴⁸ to tackle the pandemic. Criticism was also mounted on the government for its constant refusal to acknowledge its mistakes, with people arguing that “the thread running through the government’s handling of the pandemic is that whatever goes wrong is never its fault.”⁴⁹ The government, in turn, initiated a ‘blame game’ and attempted to shift the blame for the pandemic’s mismanagement onto other groups, including scientists⁵⁰, businesses⁵¹ and foreign countries⁵². Furthermore, there was a clear divide within the government itself, with ministers laying the blame on civil servants and public health experts for the inability to mitigate the pandemic’s effects⁵³. Some government officials even accused the

⁴⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, House Of Commons: The Control Of Food Supplies Mr. Churchill As Critic The Submarine Menace Exaggerated A Plea For Armed Merchantmen."

⁴⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, Voluntary Rations: Food Controller Fixes A Weekly Maximum Four Pounds Of Bread, 2 1/2 Meat, 1/2 Sugar

⁴⁷ *The Guardian*, Londoners' fury at Covid tier 4 rules

⁴⁸ *The Guardian*, Easing of the restrictions

⁴⁹ *The Guardian*, Blame game over the latest Covid restrictions

⁵⁰ *The Guardian*, Who might the government seek to blame

⁵¹ *The Times*, The great Brexit blame game

⁵² *The Guardian*, Failure to protect

⁵³ *The Guardian*, Who might the government seek to blame

poorer sections of being partially responsible for their own food poverty due to their inability to 'cook meals' and 'budget'.⁵⁴

Beyond the growing public-government divide, the pandemic also contributed to a heightened sense of mistrust amongst the civilian population. There was a rise of pandemic shaming, with people calling the police on neighbours who supposedly violated lockdown rules, forming social media groups to call out other violators and even naming and shaming their own family members for venturing out.⁵⁵ People were described as 'angry, confused and uncertain' which led to an outpouring of rage on social media against rule-flouters, increasing fractures in society.⁵⁶

On comparing the prevailing discourse regarding food shortages across the two events, we can observe that the presence of a tangible, physical enemy gives governments and leaders the leeway to get away with mismanagement of crises by shifting blame onto the enemy. The general public also becomes more tolerable towards harsh conditions such as food shortages, as they collectively resolve to make sacrifices to battle their enemies. The resulting effect is the creation of an 'us versus them' atmosphere which enables national unification. In the absence of a visible enemy, society attempts to fill the void of an antagonist in myriad ways, including blaming the government, academic experts and at times, even fellow citizens. Consequently, it is probable that the absence of a common enemy contributed to rising frictions in British society, catalysing the individualisation and hyper-localisation of society.

⁵⁴*The Guardian*, Tory MP blames food poverty

⁵⁵*The Guardian*, Police call for end to 'lockdown-shaming'

⁵⁶ *The Guardian*, Pandemic Shaming

LIMITATIONS

The main weakness of the methodology was the limited sample size. Given the sheer number of articles available at archives of *The Times* and *The Guardian*, not all articles were used when conducting keyword searches. This greatly reduced the scope of coverage of the sources which undermined the credibility of the findings. We only picked the articles most relevant to our project, as we did not have enough time to go through every single article.

Another weakness was that *The Guardian* did not fully represent the leftist viewpoint, given the fact that it was not affiliated with Socialism and thus its position on the political spectrum was and is somewhat moderate. Also, during the World War I, letters and mails were subject to war-time censorship. This means that the two newspapers combined might not necessarily represent the viewpoint of the whole of British society. Furthermore, the common limitation of qualitative research is that the results cannot be verified by researchers. Due to the open-ended nature of qualitative research, we had more control over the content of the collected data-quotes from newspapers and this hindered the objectivity of the comparison of findings to the situations indicated by the respondents.

CONCLUSION

Our thematic analysis of World War I and the COVID-19 pandemic leads to the conclusion that British society has potentially become more atomized over the past century. In the wake of food crises, mitigating responses and the rhetoric surrounding these issues have become more individualized or localised, pointing towards a greater emphasis being placed on local identities as opposed to national identities.

This finding has clear policy implications, as the transition from ‘national to local’ would imply the need for greater devolution of power in fiscal and administrative terms, as local communities should be given more power to govern themselves.

However, further substantial research is required to understand precisely how the social landscape of Britain has evolved in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Other potential research topics include analysing the change in public perception to government intervention post-COVID, inequality in the access to food in Britain and how food consumption patterns have changed in the aftermath of the pandemic.

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APPENDIX 1: CODE TABLES FOR WORLD WAR I ANALYSIS

Patriotism

Codes			
Sacrifice is the ultimate form of patriotism	Rationing is a civic duty	Raising food prices is helping the enemy	Hoarding food is unpatriotic
<p>“Lord Devonport’s announcement tonight that the nation has to put on its honour to ration itself is one of those appeals to England as a land of freedom which should specially move all liberals and trade unionists, to whom it is particularly a challenge, to the faith that is within them.”</p> <p>“Self-sacrifice is the order of the day, and all true patriots are facing risks.”</p> <p>“In that direction [reducing food consumption] lies the most patriotic service those at home can render to their country and the most effective aid we can give to our brave soldiers at the front.”</p> <p>“Saving of food is the saving of tonnage and saving of tonnage is the very life of the nation at the moment.”</p>	<p>“No decent and patriotic citizen will consume more than one pound of meat in a week.”</p> <p>“But as rice is an important food, how much more patriotic and economical would it be rather to avoid the waste of potatoes and use half the quantity?” - Woman correspondent</p> <p>“Sir Arthur - “I am receiving scores of letters from patriotic people urging the use of potatoes at every meal.””</p>	<p>“Anyone who lays in exceptionally large stores of food is helping to raise the prices of food”, “thus helping the German fleet do exactly what it wants to do” - Bernard Gilbert (London)</p>	<p>“But the same selfish citizen can be diverted from the same unpatriotic course” [hoarding]”</p> <p>“The most drastic treatment of this contemptible, unpatriotic and cruel practice [hoarding]”</p>

Perceptions of Government Intervention

Codes				
Government should have intervened	Government should intervene to increase supply	Government should act rather than talking	Government should intervene to decrease demand (rations)	Government increasing supply is patriotic
“the Government is at last taking steps to relieve the situation.”	“Dr. Marion Phillips urged that unless the milk supply for children was improved there would be heavy infantile mortality” “ <u>increase in home production is imperative</u> ” “Trade Unions ‘deplore the Government’s delay in dealing comprehensibly with food supplies and food prices”	“Mr. W. C. Anderson, M.P., asked for less talking by officials of the Food Ministry and more organization”	“The possibility of treating the disease at the root and reducing consumption does not seem to be seriously contemplated.”	“The nation will support them in their patriotic policy for increased food production”

Unity against a common enemy

Codes			
Comparing harsh conditions to Germany	British people have more resilience than Germans	Pride in the strong spirit of the British populace	Sacrifice at home to help soldiers win
“[ration] was at least twice the compulsory ration allowed in Germany, where the cost of food was double here.” “In this country, where food has been cheaper, wages are higher and the dwellings are far more wholesome, and the people much fonder of exercise than those in Germany”	“The roast-beef spirit of Britain has vastly more vitality than the potato-bread spirit of Germany.” “if famine was going to finish the war it would not be this country which was going down.” “It is both weak and stupid to fear that our masses when they understand the situation will be inferior to the Germans in pride, pluck and tenacity.”	“we can look with every satisfaction on what has been accomplished so far” “Our country made very great sacrifices, and it can look back now with amusement upon the rather foolish speech of the German Emperor”	““Frugality practised at home will ensure a sufficient supply of food for all, despite any effort of our enemy, and as hitherto, an unstinted provision for our soldiers and sailors.” “nothing done within our homes should defer the day of victory or render victory less complete.”

APPENDIX 2: CODE TABLES FOR THE COVID-19 ANALYSIS

Individualism in COVID-19

Codes				
Hoarding is unnecessary	We need to be more self-reliant/selfish	Hoarding is savvy and smart	Stockpiling is stupid	We need to protect our local community
<p>“Not so fast – once again, retailers are insisting wearily that stockpiling is unnecessary. There is plenty of everything to go round if people would only shop normally.”</p> <p>“At a news briefing, he urged people to “be responsible when you shop and think of others”.</p> <p>“There is more than enough food to go round and our food supply chain is able to expand production to cope with increased demand,” he said.”</p>	<p>Another wrote: “What happened to people being kind? People are definitely not thinking about others.”</p> <p>“The supermarkets were totally unprepared and unhelpful. I am severely disabled and without my hoarding I would have been completely stuck. Everyone should prep.”</p>	<p>“If you ask me I’m smart and it’s the people who are shopping ‘normally’ who are stupid. Don’t moan at me for clearing the shelves at Tesco, get down there and stock up yourself.”</p> <p>“Elgarf is also clear about why she is talking to me. “So come April and there’s no Epilim in the country, I’ll say: ‘Where’s that Guardian man?’ And you guys are going to be interested because this little child you saw in January now has no meds.” Nora has fallen asleep on her mum.”</p>	<p>“If you ever need to identify the stupidest person in the room, there is one sure fire way to find out. Simply ask who has ever stockpiled food after panic buying.”</p> <p>“Wish you could stand the “covidiot” in the corner and laugh at him? There are not enough dunces’ caps for all the covidiotics out there”</p> <p>“Much is made of the rule-flouters – the Frisbee-chuckers and the park pond-paddlers; we hear lots, too, about the ramblers and picnickers. My favourite “Covidiot” pictures, which I search out daily for light relief, are the Stasi-style pap shots of shoppers coming out of The Range.”</p> <p>“But there must be a special corner in Hell for someone who would stockpile in their mansion equipment they would probably never need to gather dust while others die due to their scarcity.”</p>	<p>“We are part of the community and beholden to each other now,” Alan Lane, the theatre’s artistic director, told me when I visited the food bank in June.</p> <p>“She says she is proud to be following the rules and feels it’s right to shame those who don’t. “We all have to protect one another,” she says. “We can only stay safe together if we do the right thing individually.”</p>

Perceptions of Government Intervention

Codes				
Individuals should choose	Personal responsibility outweighs societal responsibility	Healthcare workers don't need raises	The government doesn't care	Poor people are lazy
“The remedy to our situation is obvious: until there is a vaccine, or herd immunity is effective, we should lock down the vulnerable and let everyone else go about their business normally.”	“Personal responsibility has been ignored and removed from public debate for too long. It is the parents role to feed their children, not the state.”	“The public sector has had full pay and job security throughout the pandemic, and in the case of hospital staff lots of overtime. The private sector in contrast has lost jobs and income. The costs of the pandemic have to be paid for.”	“The future could be difficult, and Covid has shown that the government will largely leave us to it in times of crisis.” - Leeds Nurse”	“I am so tired of hearing excuses for the parents who are too lazy to shop for and cook healthy meals and instead send their children to the local chip shop. It is nothing whatsoever to do with poverty.”

Infighting

Codes		
People blame the government	Government blames others	People blame each other
<p>“One distressing aspect of the pandemic is the failure of UK leaders to work together.”</p> <p>It is the Conservative government that is to blame for the full extent of the cost-of-living crisis and the precarious state of the NHS and the care sector</p> <p>“The thread running through the government’s handling of the pandemic is that whatever goes wrong is never its fault.”</p> <p>“This is the most incompetent government I’ve seen in my lifetime.”</p>	<p>Last week, the blame game escalated when Treasury and Cabinet Office minister Lord Agnew accused businesses of taking a “head-in-the-sand approach”.</p> <p>During a speech last week, Johnson recounted the early weeks of the pandemic, when, as he put it, “parts of government ... seemed to respond so sluggishly that sometimes it seemed like that recurring bad dream when you are telling your feet to run and your feet won’t move”.</p> <p>When under pressure for a lack of testing in the UK, Michael Gove appeared to lay the blame for the UK’s lack of readiness for coronavirus upon China.</p> <p>She told Sky News: “If the science was wrong, advice at the time was wrong, I’m not surprised if people will then think we then made a wrong decision.”</p>	<p>“Some members of the public told the <i>Observer</i> that they had repeatedly called police about neighbours who appeared to be breaking lockdown rules or, in one instance, had “different lovers round”.</p> <p>Former paramedic Paul Goodwin, who earlier this month set up the Facebook group Covidiot UK for a few friends “to highlight some of the unbelievable behaviour of people” now has nearly 200 members.</p> <p>On the Mumsnet website, one user was considering naming and shaming her husband in the village Facebook group for “going out at least once a day” in his sports car.</p> <p>“In the vacuum of inaction and misaction, we are left angry, confused and uncertain about where to direct that rage. It simmers up in the oddest directions, molten-hot bile ready to crawl its way out as a 30-tweet thread.”</p>