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A Forgotten Front? The Mediterranean Blockade in the First World War

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the First World War Allied blockade of the Mediterranean, a maritime blockade initiated by Britain and France, later assisted from 1915 by Italy and other Allied powers. It argues that this blockade raises major questions about the ways that the First World War became a 'total war', showing wartime radicalisation in the targeting of civilian non-combatants and how this became a war norm. It also argues that the Mediterranean blockade was actually multiple blockades carried out by a range of states, and therefore had a cumulative, wide reach in driving radicalisation, structured around diffuse, multilateral responsibility. This article examines the ways in which the blockade operated, before discussing how it illustrates wartime radicalisation by presenting two case studies on its diverse impact on hospital ships and upon civilians in Lebanon.

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Introduction

This article examines the First World War Allied blockade of the Mediterranean, a maritime blockade initiated by Britain and France, later assisted from 1915 by Italy and other Allied powers. It argues that this blockade raises major questions about the ways that the First World War became a 'total war', showing wartime radicalisation in the targeting of civilian non-combatants and how this became a war norm. It also argues that the Mediterranean blockade was actually multiple blockades carried out by a range of states, and therefore had a cumulative, wide reach in driving radicalisation, structured around diffuse, multilateral responsibility. The blockade was, for the most part, enforced by allies patrolling their different allocated zones of the Mediterranean, with national navies often acting largely autonomously under a nominal overall French command. True coalition operations were rare, with the exception of the Gallipoli campaign and several sorties in the Adriatic, although the introduction of the convoy system brought far more collaboration towards the end of the war. This article will, first, examine the fragmented nature of the existing historiographical landscape on the Allies' First World War Mediterranean blockade. Second, it will examine the ways in which the blockade operated, before concluding with a discussion of how it illustrates wartime radicalisation by presenting two case studies on its diverse impact on hospital ships and upon civilians in Lebanon.

It is important at the outset to state that blockade was a legal form of maritime warfare in 1914–1918, provided it was correctly declared and carried out in accordance with international

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law. By 1914, blockade had been codified in both the 1856 Declaration of Paris and the 1909 Declaration of London, which set out that to be legal a blockade must be effective: 'that is to say, it must be maintained by a force sufficient really to prevent access to the enemy coastline'.[1] As historian Mary Cox explains, the Declaration further stipulated that a blockade had to be 'announced before it was implemented, with its geographic reach and dates of commencement specified, and a set time frame given for neutrals to leave the specified area.'[2] In the case of the Mediterranean blockade, however, there were multiple breaches of international law by both the Allies and the Central Powers, including the Allies' interference with neutral shipping and extension of the category of contraband to include all maritime trade with the Central Powers, and the Central Powers' use of unrestricted submarine warfare in two separate phases of the war in 1915–16 and 1917–18. Given these breaches of international law, neither side was overly keen to commemorate blockade in the interwar period.

Historiography

Yet blockade was not only marginalised in commemorative terms. The role of blockade in the Mediterranean in the First World War has also been largely neglected by historians for the past century.[3] Most relevant to this article, there has been little examination of how maritime blockade might illustrate wartime radicalisation processes during the Great War, although, with regard to the Allies' blockade of Germany, Avner Offer has examined the relationship between blockade and 'total war' and Isabel Hull has considered what blockade reveals about the Allies' wartime views of international law and how it reshaped it.[4] Carolina García Sanz, drawing upon Hull's work, has suggested that the Mediterranean blockade too can offer insights into the breach and construction of international law during the war.[5] Although this article builds on their work, overall there is still little historical research available on how the Mediterranean blockade drove radicalisation in practice.

This neglect has been due to a number of factors. The privileging of the Western Front in the war's historiography was one key reason. This was later exacerbated by the Cold War's impact on research into other fronts, including the war-blockaded Balkan Mediterranean coastline, which after 1945 fell behind the iron curtain, making it difficult for Western researchers to access some archival material, although this did not preclude Eastern European studies. Even in the West, sensitivities around publicly discussing blockade operational practices, lest they be needed in future, led to silences, such as in Britain, where the publication of the 1937 official history of First World War blockade was delayed until the 1960s.[6] The dominance of the history of the war's land fronts over its naval history and the privileging of war combatant history over that of civilians, who were the main victims of blockade policies, also played a role. The racial hierarchies of the first half of the twentieth century that prioritised the war history of northern European populations over that of colonised populations of the eastern and south-eastern Mediterranean, and the fact that two of the key powers badly impacted by the Mediterranean blockade, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, collapsed at the end of the war, meaning that they were no longer in existence to sponsor the writing of their war history and the history of the Mediterranean blockade's impact upon them, also mattered. So too did the fact that after 1918, the British and French and their local allies in the eastern Mediterranean chose to downplay the impact of the Allies' blockade during the war and to solely blame Ottoman Empire policies for wartime food shortages in order to legitimise the new British and French colonial order in the region.

Of these multiple factors, two in particular stand out – the dominance of the Western Front and the colonised civilian status of the majority of Mediterranean blockade victims. After the end of the First World War, the Western Front dominated war commemoration and, where the naval war was discussed by historians, it was the war in the North Sea, seen as having a strategically important impact on German supplies and nutrition to the extent that the German Western Front army and home front were weakened enough to be defeated, that received attention.[7] Erroneously,

the blockade in the Mediterranean was seen as having had no effect on the outcome of the war, despite the fact that this blockade played a key role in creating the logistical conditions for Allied victory as crucial war supplies came through the Mediterranean. In particular, oil, vital to Allied dominance in the air and in motorised vehicle numbers on the Western Front by 1918, jute for sandbags, and coffee, vital to French morale, were transported through the Mediterranean. Above all, colonial troops and colonial labour from Eastern and South Eastern Asia and Australasia and from Egypt were shipped across the Mediterranean to the Western Front, along with hundreds of thousands of Chinese labourers. 163,700 troops passed through the Suez Canal to Europe in 1914 alone.[8] This gave the Allies a major manpower advantage over the Central Powers which was a key factor in their war victory.

Yet despite Allied control of the Mediterranean and its blockade of the Central Powers there playing a major role in Allied victory, this history has been largely ignored. The fact that the majority of those affected by the Mediterranean blockade were both colonised peoples and civilians meant that this blockade received less attention in commemoration in the racially hierarchical world of the first half of the twentieth century, which also prioritised the combatant fallen over civilian war experiences and deaths. One of the most significant recent trends in First World War studies has been to reassess – and, in many cases, reinsert – the experience of civilian war suffering into the history of the conflict. This has been most evident with regard to the Armenian genocide which, in the past two decades, has become fully integrated into the war's historiography and raised new questions about the relationship between genocide and total war, and about continuities between the two world wars.[9] The question of the Allies' Mediterranean blockade – with its deliberate targeting of entire civilian populations – also suggests that reinserting civilian wartime suffering into the history of the First World War can help shed new light on the conflict's totalising nature.[10] The Allied decision to blockade all food and medical supplies to enemy powers marked a key radicalisation of blockading practice – as well as a deviation from the 1909 London Declaration concerning the Laws of Naval War – and one that affected both the Mediterranean and the North Sea blockades.[11]

Part of this reinsertion has already begun. Recently, there has been a wave of new historical research into the wartime famine in Lebanon and the wider Greater Syria area, of which semi-autonomous Lebanon was a part, that occurred during the war, and which cost up to 500,000 lives by 1918, overwhelmingly civilians.[12] Stemming from the historiography of the Ottoman Empire and Middle Eastern Studies, this work opens up new academic debate about the causes of the famine and the extent to which it was directly caused by the Allied blockade or by other human or environmental factors that reduced food supplies, such as local profiteering, hoarding, corruption, requisitions for the Ottoman army, the 1915 severe locust plague that hit the region and poor weather during the war period. Research by Graham Auman Pitts, Leila Tarazi Fawaz, Melanie Tanielian, Zachary Foster, Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, Aaron Tylor Brand and Keith Watenpaugh, among others, has shed considerable new light on the famine.[13] Their conclusions on the impact of the blockade upon the famine conditions that developed, however, vary considerably and the history of the Allies' Mediterranean blockade itself, its evolution and implementation, is not yet fully integrated into this scholarship. For Schatkowski Schilcher the famine had multi-causal origins, including the impact of the blockade and grain hoarding.[14] For Graham Auman Pitts, a determining cause was powerful merchant figures in Lebanon monopolising access to grain and using their leverage with the Ottoman state during the war to profiteer.[15] Auman Pitts has additionally argued that the blockade also played a leading role as drought, conscription of agricultural labour and a severe plague of locusts 'cannot account for the excess mortality of the war years.'[16] Aaron Tylor Brand has emphasised the important role played by climate factors interacting with war disruption, blockade and maladministration, in particular a shortage of rain, while Zachary Foster and Anne Caldwell have highlighted the devastating 1915 locust plague which destroyed crops and fruit trees.[17] Najwa al-Qattan points to a range of domestic and international causes: 'unusually snowy winters, locusts, conscription and

corvée labor, war requisition, currency devaluation, [Ottoman] official inefficiency, the Entente blockade, hoarding, speculation, and corruption.'[18] Lindsey Cummings in a recent Masters thesis argues strongly that the Allied blockade was the fundamental cause of famine, while for Laura Robson, the Allied blockade was 'an Anglo-French blockade designed precisely to starve the Arab provinces into the arms of the Allies.'[19] It is clear that this vital new wave of research into the wartime famine in Lebanon and Greater Syria raises major questions about the extent of the Allied blockade's impact on civilian famine deaths. However, this new historiography on the famine has yet to fully investigate the blockade dimension, in particular the Allies' assessments of their Mediterranean blockade plans, aims, effects, successes and failures, and their perspectives on the famine itself. In fact, the famine remains a neglected topic in wider First World War historiography, including the war historiography on blockade in general, which has virtually entirely focused on the North Sea blockade and its impact on Germany and Austria-Hungary. As Mustafa Aksakal has argued 'while the Syrian famine is now attracting research by scholars of the Middle East, it has made few inroads into the international historiography on the war. Comparing the naval blockades of Germany and Syria and their respective impacts would seem to be an important next step for scholars interested in globalizing our understanding of World War I.'[20]

In fact, the naval operation of the Mediterranean blockade – how it functioned – continues to receive little attention. The historiography that exists largely examines it from a naval military history perspective and is not integrated with any discussion of its economic effects, or social or cultural history, or, indeed, the new famine historiography. Briefly covered by Paul Halpern in his classic study of the naval war in the Mediterranean and more recently by Lawrence Sondhaus in his overview naval history of the First World War, the blockade is also summarily mentioned by David Abulafia in his survey history of the Mediterranean from the ancient world to the present.[21] Olivier Forcade, Martin Motte and Marjorie Farrar have also worked on the overall French role in wartime maritime blockade, with some coverage of the Mediterranean case as part of this, while Carolina García Sanz has pioneered research into the economic impact of wartime blockade on neutral Spain.[22] However, with the exception of Spain, it is still not fully clear how the blockade affected Mediterranean neutrals such as Italy or Greece or how it impacted their decisions to enter the war in 1915 and 1917 respectively. Carolina García Sanz has persuasively argued that in the western Mediterranean Britain's efforts through its blockade practices to stop all neutral trade with the Central Powers by Spain and Italy was part of a broader effort to concomitantly increase the British export market share in these countries.[23] Britain also wanted to use blockade to create commercial pressures to persuade neutrals to enter the war on the Allied side – a process that was highly effective, García Sanz argues, in the case of Italy.[24] An even more radical version of this process of using blockade to pressurise neutrals was tried in the Eastern Mediterranean when, in 1916, the Allies blockaded Greece briefly in order to try and bring it into the war, causing food shortages in some areas.

In sum, we are starting to know more about the lived experience of the wartime famine in Lebanon, and Greater Syria more widely, but weighing up the multiple causal factors that led to it remains the subject of historiographical debate. The roles of Britain and France in the Mediterranean blockade remain largely unresearched. We also still know far too little about British and French policies towards the Mediterranean famine and food shortage conditions that arose during the war in Lebanon, and in the wider Ottoman Empire, in parts of Greece, and in Austro-Hungary's blockaded Istria region where hunger also emerged.[25]

Multiple blockades and their operation

This fragmented historiographical landscape has also occluded the real wartime strategic importance of the Mediterranean blockade and the value placed upon it by wartime planners and policy-makers, in Britain, France and Italy, in particular. From the outset of the First World War, naval blockade was a central feature of the war in the Mediterranean and tied down resources.

According to Eugene Rogan the combined Allied Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean alone in November 1914 – its Eastern Mediterranean Squadron – was 'eighteen battleships, forty destroyers, fifteen torpedo boats, twelve submarines and twenty monitors (shallow-draft warships with heavy cannons […])'.[26] For the Allies, the Mediterranean was key to war supplies, trade, colonial troops from Asia and Australasia, and to access to imperial possessions as colonial administrators travelled to East and South-East Asia *via* the Suez Canal. Both Britain and France, therefore, prioritised protecting their Mediterranean shipping routes. At the same time, both states recognised that before the war Germany had been the second greatest user of the Suez Canal for trade and believed that preventing Central Power access to the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal would hasten the end of the conflict.[27] The French and Italians also hoped that the Mediterranean blockade would bring about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, allowing for French and Italian colonial expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean area. The British, traditionally supporters of a solid Ottoman Empire bulwark against Russian colonial expansionism, came to share this idea by the end of the war as they too sought to expand their colonial control into former Ottoman territories.

This strategic importance of the Mediterranean for the Allies helps explain why, in the first weeks, following the outbreak of war, the British and French, who controlled the Mediterranean relatively unimpeded at this point, made rapid plans for using blockade. Yet what ensued were dramatic shifts in how blockade functioned in wartime. Three key points deserve emphasis here. First, the Allied Mediterranean blockade produced significant innovations in blockading models, rapidly evolving from a traditional naval blockade to keep enemy surface fleets in port, into a hybrid war method, that combined naval inspections, technical innovations such as drifter vessels and a wide web of land-based commercial and bureaucratic support measures, to enforce a form of 'total' economic war on the enemy. This, in turn, provoked the Central Powers into using submarines in ever more radical experimental new forms of counterblockade action. Second, blockade in the Mediterranean also married very spatially diverse, largely separate, localised naval blockade actions with wider 'total' economic warfare aims. Third, the Allied blockade was set up as an inter-Allied endeavour, which, although it never fully evolved into effective coalition warfare, still radicalised the use and impact of blockade. In reality, there was no singular Allied blockade but rather a set of plural, sometimes overlapping, blockades managed by separate states, with diffused responsibility, rivalries and commands. In sum, while the First World War Mediterranean blockade is usually referred to in the singular, the reality was that it was a process of multiple, highly complex, often interconnected and experimental blockades in operation around the Mediterranean, driven by both the Allied and Central Power states.

The evolution of blockade practices occurred rapidly from the start of the war. Initially, the British and French had two naval priorities. They wanted to neutralise the Austro-Hungarian Naval Surface Fleet in the Adriatic by locking it into its key ports of Cattaro (Kotor) and Pola (Pula), through creating an Allied blockade of the entrance to the Adriatic Sea at the Straits of Otranto, and they wanted to keep the German Mediterranean Surface Fleet – which consisted of two ships, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau,* which had fled to Constantinople (Istanbul) at the outbreak of the war and which continued to be crewed by the German navy despite having nominally transferred to the Ottoman fleet – out of the Mediterranean by monitoring the Dardanelles Straits.

These early fleet blockading actions were not doctrinally innovative, even if that at Otranto did exhibit some technical experimentation in using drifter vessels, which were converted fishing trawlers that were lightly armed or unarmed. Yet, very rapidly Allied blockade in the Mediterranean took on multiple, sometimes overlapping, different forms. Traditional naval blockades, closing off enemy ports to prevent enemy naval and commercial surface shipping entering or leaving them, along with forms of naval area denial, were combined with a wider innovative and total 'long distance' maritime regional blockade, managed on land and sea at Gibraltar and Suez, combining naval, civil service and commercial bureaucracy resources, creating effectively a new form of modern trade war. Not only could no enemy surface shipping, naval or merchant, now access or

exit the Mediterranean, all neutral shipping was also controlled at Suez and Gibraltar in radical new ways. Unlike in the North Sea blockade, where geography meant that 'it was almost impossible' to completely stop trade between Germany and neutral Sweden or Norway 'because of their proximity to Germany *via* the narrow Skagerrak and Kattegat waters,' British control of Gibraltar and the Suez canal was much more favourable to establishing complete control of all surface shipping trade in the Mediterranean, although this never extended to Central Power submarines which continued to be able to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar largely undetected throughout the war.[28]

This overarching regional blockade was supplemented by local level blockades that impacted trade around the Mediterranean. These often had their own dynamics. For example, there was a specific blockade and counterblockade process that operated at the Dardanelles, where the Ottoman Empire closed the Straits in September 1914 while it was still neutral, thereby effectively locking the Russian Black Sea Naval Fleet out of the Mediterranean.[29] After the Ottoman Empire entered the war on 29 October 1914, the Dardanelles Straits, heavily mined, became effectively closed to all surface shipping – neutral and Allied vessels could not enter due to mines and Ottoman land fortifications, while their Central Power counterparts could not exit due to the Allied external blockade of the Straits. This situation effectively marked the start of an Ottoman economic blockade of Russia as the Dardanelles route carried over ninety-five per cent of Russia's inward and outward trade.[30] Russia's allies were left with the option of the North-West route which was blocked by ice for much of the year or the Pacific one '8,000 miles' from the front.[31] The Baltic Sea was not an option as it was under German control. The British and French could no longer get Russian grain deliveries *via* the Mediterranean route, a factor that drove soaring grain prices in late 1914 and influenced the British decision to plan the Gallipoli campaign in the hope of defeating the Ottoman Empire and re-opening the Dardanelles Straits.[32] The Allies responded to Ottoman entry into the war with a local blockade of the Ottoman Empire's wider coastline which began in November 1914 on its Aegean coastline 'from the Thracian port of Dedeağaç' as far as the island of Samos, south of Smyrna (modern Izmir) and was later extended and tightened in 1915 to cover the whole coast of the Greater Syria area, including Palestine.[33] Fearing French invasion, the Ottoman Empire also blockaded grain shipments to part of its own coastline in 1914–1915, a policy that started while it was still neutral, resulting in 'food shortages in Beirut and autonomous Lebanon beginning in September 1914.'[34] The purpose was to prevent large food stores building up that might fall into Allied hands should they invade the Ottoman coast or be used by local Christian populations in an anti-Ottoman uprising. Cemal Pasha, who was the wartime governor of Syria wrote in his memoirs of how: 'About this time there was a general idea throughout Syria and Beirut that the Christians of the Lebanon would rise in the near future.'[35] This Ottoman blockade, however, was of relatively short duration: 'it was no longer in place when extreme scarcity began to impact the populace in Beirut and Mount Lebanon in the spring of 1915.'[36] The example of the Ottoman case highlights how local level blockade escalations with their own dynamics could develop between belligerents within the wider Mediterranean regional blockade operation.

In part, the fact that multiple economic maritime blockades emerged so quickly in the Mediterranean was due to British pre-war planning for economic warfare against Germany.[37] Pre-1914 Admiralty ideas about strangling German trade were quickly applied to the Mediterranean once war broke out. However, it is also crucial to emphasise that the Mediterranean blockade was an Inter-Allied affair from the start, albeit one poorly managed through a series of, sometimes intemperate, *ad hoc* naval conferences that were riven by national self-interests.[38] Only on occasion did Inter-Allied blockade planning approximate to new innovations in coalition warfare and it often fell far short of this. To some extent, a total economic blockade emerged despite, or indeed because of, inter-Allied rivalries rather than always being driven by a shared universal plan.

Yet coordination did steadily improve across the war and the blockade in the Mediterranean was much more of an Inter-Allied operation than that in the North Sea, *de facto* mostly a Royal Navy solo run. At the outbreak of war, concerned about potential Central Power submarine attacks, the Allies provisionally divided the Mediterranean into zones, with the British responsible for protecting Allied shipping routes for Malta, the Aegean, and the Gibraltar and Egyptian coastal areas, while the French initially had responsibility for the Otranto Straits. The blockade in the Mediterranean was also placed under overall French operational control from the start of the war, supported by the British and later also the Italian navies, with further later Greek, Japanese and American naval support all from 1917; the first US ship reached Gibraltar in August that year.[39] The British commanders in the Mediterranean had the status of squadron commanders, along with the local British commander at Malta, and were subordinated to whichever French admiral held the position of Allied Mediterranean Naval Commander-in-Chief.[40] In practice, however, the British naval posts took their commands directly from London and implemented British agendas to realign Mediterranean trade through blockade in British interests. As Carolina García Sanz points out, from August 1914, the British naval centres of Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria and Port Said played a major role 'in making visible the real power of Great Britain' over the Mediterranean region, controlling and checking all cargoes entering or leaving it by sea and gathering detailed commercial intelligence.[41] This was then used as leverage to put commercial pressure on neutral powers such as Spain, and Italy until 1915, particularly through the British flotilla at Gibraltar's control of transatlantic trade between the Americas and the Mediterranean in key goods like rubber and copper and the control at Suez of the transit of Sorghum from India to Europe. Therefore British control of the entry and exit points to the Mediterranean was, for much of the war, very disconnected from the theoretical overall French command of Allied Mediterranean naval operations. In practice, this created a diffuse responsibility for the blockade as actual British and French coordination was limited. This diffuse multilateral responsibility was only exacerbated when Italy entered the war in 1915 and most of the Allied blockade enforcement in the Adriatic was placed under *de facto* Italian control. Allied coordination on the Adriatic was particularly poor, given fierce Italo-French wartime rivalry and strategic conflicts of interest. The Inter-Allied nature of the Mediterranean blockade is another reason why it was difficult to fit it into post-war national histories as it was difficult for any one Allied state to claim it as its own. It was also not the case that only one country was responsible for the radicalisation of war that the blockade represented, which raises important questions about how a war culture of targeting civilian food supplies spread internationally in wartime, largely without facing any dissenting voices on the Allied side.

In fact, no politician or commander can be singled out as solely responsible for the radicalisation of the Mediterranean Allied blockade; it was a collective Allied process. French leadership of the Inter-Allied effort in the Mediterranean was never smooth or complete, highlighted by the fact that they switched their Mediterranean Commander-in-Chief three times, while civilian coordination between the French and British Ministries for Blockade was initially *ad hoc*, although it improved by the end of the war.[42] The first French Commander-in-Chief, Augustin Boué de Lapeyrère, resigned after the catastrophic sinking of the French troopship the *Léon Gambetta*, in 1915, with the death of 684 crew and troops, sunk by a U-Boat that had escaped the supposedly sealed Straits of Otranto Allied blockade.[43] His successor, Louis Dartige du Fournet, was sacked after criticism that he had not bombarded Athens more vigorously in October 1916, after the Allies raided the city in a failed attempt to disarm the then-neutral Greek navy and land a contingent of sailors to support Greece's pro-Allied Venizelist politicians who wished to bring Greece into the war on the Allied side against the will of its pro-German king and his supporters. Although the raid failed, due to stiff Greek royalist resistance, resulting in French casualties, it highlighted the Allies' ruthless treatment of neutral states in their pursuit of winning the Mediterranean war. Dominque-Marie Gauchet, the final French Commander-in-Chief, remained in place to the end of the conflict. This contrasted with the Central Powers, where there was quite

good Inter-ally coordination and more command success and stability until 1917, when mutinies within, rather than operational failures, rocked their navies leading to changes in personnel: in the German case, Wilhelm Souchon had overall command in the Mediterranean until 1917 when he was replaced by Vice-Admiral Hubert von Rebeur-Paschwitz.[44] Austria-Hungary's navy was commanded by Anton Haus until his death in February 1917; he was succeeded by Admiral Maximilian Njegovan, who was replaced after the spring 1918 mutiny at Cattaro (Kotor) when Admiral Miklos Horthy succeeded him as Fleet Commander.[45]

In fact, at every level the Mediterranean blockade involved a vast range of nationalities and ethnicities. While the blockade was directed by an international coalition of Allied policy-makers, planners, and naval officers, crews on board ships were also from all around the world. For example, many British ships blockading the Mediterranean used Greek, Maltese, Chinese, Egyptian, Somali, Indian and other African and South Asian crewmen for manual labour, often working as stokers or firemen. These were treated as hired hands and were not well-integrated into the ideology of any national or imperial war effort. This was particularly true for non-European crew who were referred to by the racialised term of 'Lascar' and subject to racially discriminatory attitudes, often treated as disposable and interchangeable colonial manual workers.[46]

Any discussion of how shifts in the use of blockade drove war radicalisation in the Mediterranean must also include the Central Power counterblockade which was itself an additional form of Mediterranean war blockade. Here too blockade triggered technical, tactical and strategic innovation as the Central Powers adapted the new weapon of the submarine in response to the Allied blockade. The Central Powers aimed to use submarines to destroy Allied naval strength in the Mediterranean, to disrupt Allied communications and troop transports, and to ultimately wage an all-out economic war against the Allies by sinking merchant shipping, both Allied and neutral, to strategically impact the Allies' economic supplies. As historian Paul Halpern has argued, 'the Germans realized that the Mediterranean was an excellent theatre for submarine operations against merchant shipping. The weather was generally far easier to operate in than the North Sea, there were certain choke points where shipping routes converged, and at first little unity among the Allies in countering the threat.'[47] The Mediterranean had another advantage: American ships were less likely to be encountered there, something which spared the Germans the major diplomatic repercussions of sinking neutral US ships before American entry into the war in 1917, removing a key restraint on using submarines ruthlessly.[48]

In fact, both the Allied and the Central Power regimes used blockade in the Mediterranean with two overlapping aims – to blockade enemy naval forces in port, preventing them from protecting or attacking shipping in the Mediterranean, and to entirely halt all of the enemy states' sea trade, either by sinking it, in the case of the Central Power's submarine campaign, or by blocking it in port or confiscating it at sea, in the case of the Allies' blockade measures. Using submarines to carry out an economic and naval blockade was a novelty and from the Central Powers' perspective a successful one. In practice, the fact that the Allies never fully managed to stop Austro-Hungarian and German submarines from navigating through the Straits of Otranto and out into the wider Mediterranean throughout the war meant that the French and Italian naval surface fleets kept their largest battleships in port for most of the conflict, wary of losing them to underwater attack. Central Power submarine actions made crossing the Mediterranean hazardous for troops and civilians alike and sinkings also reduced the amount of Allied merchant shipping tonnage available for the war effort. Central Power submarine actions threatened Allied Mediterranean supremacy, with a significant impact in terms of both economics and loss of life. Of the 12 million British-registered tons of shipping lost during the First World War, a quarter sank in the Mediterranean.[49] Significant numbers of French, Italian, Japanese and Greek naval and merchant shipping met the same fate. 7% of the total Mediterranean tonnage sunk in the war went down in the Mediterranean in just one month – April 1917.[50] The submarine crisis that month for the Allies was so serious that the British considered routing shipping from Asia and the Pacific around the Cape of Good Hope, instead of the shorter route *via* the Mediterranean.

According to Jean Monnet, who, during the war, was French representative on the Inter-Allied Maritime Commission, 'neutral ship-owners demanded danger money, which the French paid.'[51] In July 1917, the French government finally requisitioned its merchant fleet, at last overcoming the objections of private trading interests. Among those who had most resisted this move until this point were those involved in trade with Indochina.[52] It is perhaps no coincidence that their opposition was only possible to finally overcome in summer 1917 when their route that usually traversed the Mediterranean was so badly affected by unrestricted submarine war. In this period, the U-boat campaign in the Mediterranean caused significantly more disruption to the movement of troops than the comparable campaign in the Atlantic where U-boats failed to make any major impact on the US transport of 2,079,880 men in the sealift of the American Expeditionary Force from America to Europe.[53] Ultimately, the war in the Mediterranean, particularly at the Gibraltar and Otranto Straits, showed that it was extremely difficult to use surface naval blockade to curtail submarine activities in the First World War and that the Allies were unprepared for the versatility of submarines and slow to respond to this war innovation, in contrast to the Central Powers who ramped up submarine building and transported submarines from Germany to the Adriatic. An investigation of blockade, in other words, reveals the extent to which, in a globalised and imperial world order, economic warfare became central to both sides in the Mediterranean and their diverse adaptations in response to this.

The different impacts of blockade

In many ways blockade became a laboratory for testing the thresholds of what degrees of radicalisation were acceptable in wartime – both in terms of the boundaries of international law and of public opinion. This is evident both in regard to the imperial and commercial expansionist agendas that underpinned blockade policies and the radicalisation of targeting of civilians that the Allies' and Central Powers' responses to blockade reveal. Maritime blockade in the Mediterranean during the war rapidly segued into imperial engineering – and this was a feature of how the disruption of civilian trade supplies to the Ottoman Empire was understood by blockade policy-makers. In March 1916, an Allied conference in Malta further divided the Mediterranean into 'national zones of responsibility' as the Allies tried various unsuccessful methods to counter Central Power submarines but also with an eye to future zones of colonial control.[54] This marked a new imperial division with portent for the future, demarcating what would become post-war spheres of influence. With so much future colonial expansion at stake in the blockade, tensions abounded in the Allied coalition. The main French base at Corfu competed with the Italian navy, whose fleet was based at Taranto and Brindisi, over command control of the Adriatic and who had ultimate leadership in the blockade of Austria-Hungary's ports, a rivalry that did nothing to enhance the effectiveness of the blockade in stopping submarines escaping into the wider Mediterranean through the Straits of Otranto.[55] However, the use of blockade to further imperialist agendas went largely unchallenged during the war. This kind of radicalisation was accepted by the Allies.

Attacking the Allies' blockade in the Mediterranean by waging their own submarine economic warfare also drove ruthless Central Power radicalisation against civilians, showing pre-war moral norms being abandoned. All merchant shipping, including passenger liners and neutral vessels, was a designated target throughout the war, although *how* it could be attacked varied across the conflict. During the two periods when Germany and its allies practiced unrestricted submarine warfare, 4 February 1915 – 4 May 1916 and 1 February 1917 – 11 November 1918, any civilian merchant shipping could be sunk on sight. Following American protests, some restrictions allowing for civilians to evacuate were put in place by Germany in its 'Arabic Pledge' of September 1915 which promised that passenger liners would not be sunk without any warning and that civilians on all merchant ships would be granted thirty minutes to evacuate prior to their ship being sunk.[56] In the Mediterranean, however, throughout much of the war, individual submarine commanders had considerable latitude in how they applied international law, government

policies, and their naval orders, and in what and how they targeted. Cases of sinking merchant vessels on sight occurred throughout the conflict in the Mediterranean. For example, Max Valentiner, commander of the U 38, torpedoed the British passenger liner, the P. & O. ship, the *Persia*, off Crete on 30 December 1915 without warning which was in breach of Germany's September 1915 Arabic pledge to allow civilians time to leave a ship prior to sinking; 343 people died, mostly civilians, including women and children.[57] Few submarines wanted to risk surfacing to apply cruiser rules, whereby a ship was captured prior to sinking and those on board the targeted ship were given time to evacuate before it was sunk, as this made the submarine vulnerable by revealing its location and was particularly dangerous after the British introduced Q-ships, decoy merchantmen which were disguised to lure up submarines in order to attack them. Central Power U-boats were often able to sink not only one ship but also those vessels that came to rescue people from an initial target after it had been hit. In such incidents, there was no humanitarian concern or exemption for ships arriving in a rescue mission who were torpedoed on sight.[58] U-Boats were also able to hit multiple targets by lurking on frequently trafficked routes: on 4 August 1916, the German U-boat ace, commander of the U35, Lothar Arnauld de la Perière, was able to sink 3 ships in one morning in four hours in the Mediterranean, one after the other, this way.[59] There were also widespread breaches of flag rules by both sides, with ships and submarines claiming false national affiliations as ruses. German submarines posed as Austro-Hungarian for some operations in the Mediterranean in 1915 as when Italy entered the war it first only declared war on Austria-Hungary in May, not Germany – it declared war on the latter in August – and during the intervening period Germany aided Austria-Hungary in the Mediterranean submarine war by false flagging some of its submarines as Austro-Hungarian.[60] Allied ships, and in particular, British 'Q' ships, also flew the flags of neutral countries at times to try to avoid identification . Targeting was also often very *ad hoc,* with torpedoes fired from submarines upon the sighting of surface vessels without much time for consideration of the target's national affiliation. There were significant numbers of civilian and troop deaths from submarine warfare in the Mediterranean, often hundreds at a time drowned in a sinking, but states frequently censored the reality of the scale of their losses in such incidents, in order to protect home front morale, so there was less wartime public reaction than one might expect.[61]

However, one radicalisation in March 1917 did provoke a major international outcry, when unrestricted submarine warfare was officially extended by Germany to Allied hospital ships in the Mediterranean. This led to debates in the House of Commons on reprisals and Britain responded to the German action by bombing Freiburg by air.[62] The Germans believed that hospital ships were being used illegally to transport troops and munitions, something that the Allies denied. The British were relatively powerless against the German move. Their hospital ships were highly vulnerable: Britain lacked the naval forces to protect all British hospital ships in the Mediterranean and argued that only on the return voyage, when loaded with wounded, could ships be accompanied by armed naval vessels.[63] Following an intervention in August 1917 by the king of Spain and the introduction of a policy of placing neutral Spanish naval officers as commissioners on board Allied hospital ships operating in the Mediterranean, whose role was to guarantee to the Central Powers that such hospital ships were only being used to transport the wounded, the unrestricted attacks on hospital ships in this theatre ceased. On 10 September 1917, it was announced that German forces would respect hospital ships in the Mediterranean.[64] Ultimately, however, in response to the Central Powers' U-boat war's success in spring 1917, and its campaign against hospital ships, the Allies would adopt effective convoy systems in the Mediterranean which made it more difficult for U-boats to successfully sink ships and saw the Allies, finally, gain a decisive advantage in the maritime war of blockade in the Mediterranean theatre. Britain first established convoys in January 1917 for delivering its coal supplies to France; on 21 April 1917 Admiral John Jellicoe approved convoys for Britain's Scandinavian trade, before, on 30 April, Prime Minister David Lloyd George secured an agreement from the Admiralty to initiate convoys on a trial basis across the board.[65]

Of the multiple Mediterranean blockades outlined above, however, by far the most significant in terms of its impact on civilian deaths and radicalisation was the Allied naval blockade of the Greater Syrian coastline (which in this period also included the coasts of Lebanon and Palestine). This was made official by a French declaration in August 1915, tightened in December 1915, and covered the key Ottoman trading ports of Jaffa, Tripoli, Alexandretta (Iskenderun) and Beirut.[66] It was complimented by the additional Allied blockade of the port of Smyrna (Izmir) on the Anatolian coast which was carried out by the British.[67] It took the Allies the whole of the first year of the war to adapt from patrolling the Eastern Mediterranean and blockading the Ottoman, German and Austro-Hungarian surface fleets into the Adriatic and Black Sea ports to a strict, impenetrable policy of economic trade blockade for the entire Mediterranean Ottoman coastlines. Like the other experiments in blockade processes during the war, this blockade too evolved and was extended. According to Lindsey Cummings: 'The blockade of the Syrian coast was not a singular policy that emerged at the beginning of the war and remained constant […] it evolved over the first several years of the war in response to changing political and military circumstances' and became fixed only toward the end of 1915.[68] However, as Cummings points out 'very little work has been done to substantiate how, why, and when the Allies implemented a blockade of the Syrian coast.'[69] During the early period of the war, in 1914, some neutral Italian and American ships were permitted through to evacuate foreign nationals but for the rest of the conflict the Allies did not permit humanitarian aid or trade to reach Ottoman ports or any shipping to leave them, effectively stopping postal communications, as well as exports, with significant knock-on effects for the Ottoman Empire's ability to acquire foreign currency.[70] Aid sent by ship from the Syrian and Lebanese USA diaspora was delayed in transit ports by the Allies and never reached Beirut.[71] This blockade of the Greater Syrian coastline was above all a policy to stop all trade with Ottoman ports as a way of weakening the Ottoman Empire, in particular, by causing hunger among its civilians and soldiers. As a secondary function, it facilitated some Allied naval ships shelling Ottoman ports and railway facilities, such as at Mersin where the port was linked to the Baghdad railway, thereby interrupting Ottoman troop and supply transports to the Palestine and Mesopotamian fronts.[72] It also allowed the Allies to mount violent raids on the Anatolian coastline carried out by Greek locals from neighbouring islands and to land and remove intelligence agents.[73] Cummings concludes that 'The Allies had full knowledge that a blockade of the Ottoman Empire's Mediterranean coast would produce food and supply shortages to the detriment of the empire's civilian populations; however, this reality was understood as a necessary by-product of their wartime policies.'[74] The wider evidence certainly supports this claim. David Lloyd George in his *War Memoirs* referred to how:

> In a war of this order, sea power was the key to ultimate victory so long as either party could manage just to hold their own on land. If we maintained control of the seas without actually breaking on shore, the Central Powers could in the end be starved into surrender […]. Potential famine was therefore the most powerful weapon in the army of the belligerents. As long as Britain kept her rule over the waves, neither she nor her Allies could be beaten by any shortage of food or essential material for waging war. On the other hand, the Central Powers could not win if they were cut off from the resources of the great world outside. It was a ruthless calculation, but war is organised cruelty. […] Men, women and children all suffered the horrors of war. The deaths behind the fighting lines owing to the effects of underfeeding and bad feeding were more numerous than those of the slain in the stricken field.[75]

Lloyd George's comments referred to the multiple wartime blockades, not just that in the Mediterranean and he exaggerated the death tolls – more combatants died on the war's multiple battlefields than due to blockade. Antoine Prost has recently estimated total military deaths in the war at 10 million.[76] If we combine the current historiographical estimates for civilian deaths from wartime malnutrition or famine for Germany (c.478,500), Austria-Hungary (c.460,000) and the Ottoman Empire (c.1,500,000, a figure which excludes the Armenian genocide), the total is some 2,438,500 civilian victims.[77] However Lloyd George's comments show how blockade was seen in ruthlessly strategic terms despite its human cost.

The French Foreign Minister, Jules Cambon, referred in July 1916 to how blockade-induced famine in the Ottoman Empire would encourage Arab populations to turn against the Ottomans and thereby open opportunities for French colonialism by making the Ottomans 'hated in all of the Arab countries.'[78] On 16 March 1916, the British Ambassador in the USA wrote to the British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey that the 'United States Ambassador at Constantinople is here and I understand he thinks position of Turkish population very bad and that famine is to be expected.'[79] A paper presented at the British Cabinet on 17 August 1916, reported, based on a conversation with the head of the American Mission in Beirut, Dr Hoskyns that 'His description of the situation was appalling and confirms all our reports: the people of the Lebanon and the Syrian Moslems subjected to an absolutely ruthless reign of terror, since eight months ago, and being starved to death.'[80] The fact that this Cabinet paper mentions confirmation of other reports suggests that the situation in Lebanon was well known; nevertheless the Mediterranean blockade continued. During the First World War famine, in June 1916, the French government warned London that tens of thousands of people in Syria had already starved to death. It suggested temporarily suspending the blockade in order to allow neutral states to send humanitarian food aid into the region but the British rejected this, contending the blockade was deliberately meant to create such conditions of supply shortages. 'His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs expresses his earnest hope that the French Government will not encourage any such scheme. […] The Entente Allies are simply being blackmailed to remedy the shortage of supplies which it is the very intention of the blockade to produce.'[81] The French concluded that the British saw blockade hunger as part of their tactic to rouse support for the Arab revolt against the Ottomans: the British 'consider the famine as an agent that will lead the Arabs to revolt.'[82] This was an accurate assumption. The British were channelling food supplies to those Arab groups who switched to supporting them and so famine conditions in the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire gave the British political leverage.[83] The French also had a political agenda, believing that when the war ended, a weakened population would be easier to colonise and that the French, who would arrive with food supplies, would win the immediate support of local populations by feeding them. In 1918, when French troops arrived in Syria and Lebanon they immediately organised food relief, putting this policy into practice.[84] However, there was also a strong belief among British and French policy-makers during the war that the Ottoman regime was operating a deliberate policy of hunger to quell Arab nationalism and to persecute its Christian minorities. Allied souces continually downplayed the causal role of their own blockade in favour of blaming rumours about the Ottoman enemy's food policies.

The Allied blockade targeted not just military supplies like munitions and oil, but food and medicines, as well as effectively stopping emigration. Ottoman Lebanon's income 'fell by as much as 80%'.[85] The blockade contributed to severe famine in Lebanon and Greater Syria, exacerbated by the locust plague in 1915, as well as Ottoman Empire food requisitioning and distribution problems. Between April 1915 and December 1918, one out of every three Lebanese died, almost all of starvation or disease due to the wartime conditions.[86] Maritime blockade had devastating effects on civilian food supplies. The autonomous Mount Lebanon region of the Ottoman Empire produced only 6.3% of its own grain needs so blockade had a disproportionate impact upon it.[87] The area was dependent on silk and olive exports and remittances from the American Lebanese diaspora, all of which were stopped by the blockade. In fact, US Lebanese diaspora communication with Lebanon became very difficult during the war. A steamship could travel from Beirut to Tripoli in three hours; the journey by road was 90 kilometers and took more than a day travelling by horse or mule power.[88] As Graham Auman Pitts argues: 'The 5,759 kilometers of railways in the empire were geared to interface with maritime transport, and not link Ottoman provinces directly. The Ottoman Empire's susceptibility to a naval blockade was thus significantly greater than the other Central Powers, and its consequences there were more lethal than elsewhere.'[89] The blockade also stopped quinine supplies and malaria rocketed in Lebanon.[90] Although as Lindsey Cummings points out, the role of the Allied blockade in creating the famine conditions

in Lebanon and parts of Greater Syria 'remains difficult to evaluate because very little research has been done on Allied aims and policies regarding the blockade' in the Mediterranean, it is clear that the Allied blockade was the key enabling factor; after all, British-controlled Cyprus experienced the same locust plague in 1915 as Greater Syria and Palestine but food imports protected the local population from starvation.[91] The blockade's effect was further exacerbated by harsh Ottoman controls placed on food smuggling into Lebanon, grain speculation and drastic wartime inflation.

One source that provides insight into conditions for civilians on the ground in Lebanon comes from the British-born woman, Miriam Pease Bo Sauder, who was married to an invalid Lebanese man and a long-term resident in Lebanon, emigrating there from New Zealand before the war. She described in her diary her struggle to find food for her children and a virtual complete absence of soap. On 6 June 1916 she wrote 'My birthday. No breakfast. […] There is nothing for dinner and the children are crying.'[92] Pease Bo Sauder wrote of how, on 31 April 1917, desperate for food, she emptied a rag doll that she had made before the war for her young daughter which she had stuffed with bran and the family ate the bran.[93] She ultimately took refuge at Broumana [also known as Brumana or Brummana] Quaker school, which was turned into a famine soup kitchen during the war; by working there and bringing her children with her, she ensured that they would have improved access to food, although her diary account shows that they continued to struggle as the relief centre was precariously supplied.[94] Pease Bo Sauder described on 6 April 1918 how a friend who had travelled to Beirut had seen 'by the side of the road there were the bones of a man who had died of hunger. His poor sister had tried to bury him but she had not strength to dig the grave. The foxes had eaten his flesh and all that was left were the bones.'[95] She also recalled 'Many sad things. Only yesterday, a poor girl was dying by the roadside. Dr Utergeh sent her milk but she was [sic] so far gone to be able to swallow. Such scenes are an everyday occurrence.'[96] Her diary also described eating boiled dandelions.[97] Miriam Pease Bo Sauder's children survived the famine but she died in late 1918 of 'Spanish fever,' worn out by her wartime battle against ill-health in the face of inadequate nutrition and medicine shortages.[98] The Quaker magazine, *The Friend* stated on 17 January 1919 that 400 deaths occurred due to wartime famine hardships at Brummana and noted that of Mrs Abu Sadir, 'English wife of a Syrian' and almost certainly a reference to Miriam Pease Bo Sauder.[99] The famine's horrors, unsurprisingly, dominated Lebanese oral memory of the war. The historian Najwa al-Qattan has written powerfully of the ways that the extreme horrors of the famine in Lebanon were remembered locally by the Lebanese population.[100]

Ultimately, the Allies' blockade policy of starving the Greater Syrian coastline was not a one-off but the most extreme example of a policy of starving civilians in order to win the war that underpinned all of the Allied Mediterranean blockades. A similar trajectory started elsewhere too but did not reach the scale of what occurred in Greater Syria. For example, the Allied blockade of neutral Greece from 1916–1917, to persuade its monarch and his government to enter the war on the Allied side, produced food shortages, widespread unemployment and, in some areas, starvation, before the Allies, worried about public reaction following awkward questions in parliament in Westminster, called it off.[101] The impact of wartime hunger caused by the Mediterranean blockade also led to food shortages in Istria, Herzegovina and Dalmatia. In Istria, in 1918, people were dropping dead of hunger or 'trying to live off grass and nettles.'[102] Through maritime blockade, civilian hunger ultimately became a First World War policy which was to be applied against civilians in all of the Central Powers.

It lies beyond the scope of this article to examine longer-term trajectories but it is also important to state that key questions remain unanswered about continuities between the two world wars regarding the use of blockade in the Mediterranean, where it would re-emerge as a wartime weapon in the 1939–45 conflict, causing widespread civilian hunger and starvation, for example, on Malta, which was blockaded by the Axis powers. Another interesting case for comparing the two world wars is Greece, which was notably occupied

by Germany and blockaded by its own ally Britain in the Second World War, having also briefly experienced blockade during the First, when the Allies took sides during the National Schism.[103] There is much that still remains unknown about how blockade in the First World War Mediterranean instigated learning curves or 'lessons' that were influential in 1939–45. Both wars also raise important questions about moral thresholds – in 1914–1918 humanitarian aid was allowed through the North Sea blockade by the Allies to Belgium, while in the Second World War, the Allies allowed food aid through to Greece after their blockade caused the humanitarian catastrophe of mass starvation in 1941–42. In the First World War too, Lord Robert Cecil, Minister of Blockade, 'drew attention,' at a British cabinet meeting on 9 January 1917 to the fact that 'the blockade of Greece which was being carried out might result in the starvation of the Venizelists. […] He was of opinion that measures should be taken to provide food for the Venizelists.'[104] The war cabinet concurred and Cecil was instructed to discuss arrangements with the Admiralty and the Greek Minister to Britain John Gennadius. This incident highlights both that the British cabinet understood blockades could cause civilian starvation in the First World War and were prepared to take mitigating action when it was in Britain's self-interest – the Venizelists supported the Allied cause. Both Belgium and Greece were German-occupied Allied states in the Second World War, whereas Mount Lebanon, while seen as a pro-Allied region due to its largely Maronite Christian population in the First World War, lay *within* the Ottoman enemy state and its starvation in wartime did not trigger any humanitarian aid blockade exemption, despite some American attempts to organise this and an appeal by Enver Pasha to the Vatican.[105] Historian Elizabeth Thompson has argued that, in 1919, the British public turned against the Allies' ongoing post-Armistice blockade of Germany but there was never any such public reckoning with the effects that wartime blockade had had upon Ottoman Syria.[106]

In conclusion, the Mediterranean in the First World War saw multiple blockades which legitimised and radicalised the targeting of civilians. This shift also occurred across multiple countries at the same time as the Allies together blockaded civilian food and medicine supplies, and the Central Powers sank civilians on board ships as well as targeting the wounded in the 1917 hospital ship sinkings which attacked vessels protected under international law. This overall radicalisation, in particular of civilian targeting, was the context for the horrific famine that occurred in Lebanon and wider Greater Syria. Although the famine was caused by a number of different factors, including the 1915 locust plague and the deficiencies of Ottoman administration and profiteering, it was primarily the blockade that throttled the peacetime sea supply routes for food into the Lebanon area that was the principle cause. Allied blockade policy intended civilian suffering – this is clear from the range of blockaded items that it included, such as medicines, and from the refusal to allow humanitarian aid through the blockade. There was surprisingly little public or private outcry on the Allied side about the shift to using civilian hunger as a war policy in the Mediterranean; this silence contrasts starkly with the lively wartime debates, in Britain in particular, in the press and parliament, about the morality of other policies targeting non-combatants, such as using reprisals against German prisoners of war or bombing German cities from the air.

The ruthless radicalisation of war on non-combatants that the blockade triggered operated on multiple internal Mediterranean fronts – the Adriatic Sea, Smyrna [Izmir], the Greater Syrian coastline and through the Central Powers' submarine warfare – and was carried out by a wide range of states and nationalities. It was a truly international process. Indeed, in many respects the Mediterranean war marked an internationalisation of the collapse of the combatant–non-combatant distinction, which was occurring very visibly all around the Mediterranean Sea. This had long-lasting significance. Blockade warfare, and its consequences in the First World War Mediterranean, would provide lessons that were to be resurrected with further devastating outcomes for civilian populations in 1939–45.

Notes

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4. Avner Offer, 'The blockade of Germany and the strategy of starvation, 1914-1918,' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2000), 169-188; Isabel Hull, *Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Ithaca, 2014), 141-275.
5. García Sanz, 'Del "egoísmo inglés" al "sacro egoísmo" italiano en la Gran Guerra,' 50.
6. On this see: Matthew Seligmann, 'Competing Narratives on Economic Warfare: The Unlikely Origin of Archibald Bell's Unwanted *History of the Blockade of Germany*,' *The International History Review*, 2023, 1. DOI: 10.1080/07075332.2023.2294764.
7. See for example the work of Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford, 1989).
8. Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East 1914-1920* (London, 2015), 116.
9. Jay Winter, 'Under Cover of War: The Armenian Genocide in the Context of Total War' in Jay Winter (ed), *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge, 2004), 37-51.
10. For a definition of 'totalisation' see Stig Förster, 'Introduction,' in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 2000), 1-16.
11. Isabel Hull, *Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War* (Ithaca, 2014), 184-186.
12. For the statistic of 500,000 deaths see Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, 'The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria', in John P. Spagnolo (ed), *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani* (Oxford, 1992), 229.
13. See, for example, Melanie S. Tanielian, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017); Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Boston, Harvard, 2014); Graham Auman Pitts, "Make them hated in all of the Arab Countries': France, Famine, and the Creation of Lebanon' in Richard P. Tucker, Tait Keller, J.R. McNeill, Martin Schmid (eds), *Environmental Histories of the First World War* (Cambridge 2018), 175-190; Schilcher, 'The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria,' 229-258; Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA., 2015).
14. Schilcher, 'The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria', 229-258.
15. Graham Auman Pitts, 'A Hungry Population stops thinking about Resistance: Class, Famine and Lebanon's World War I Legacy,' *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, 7, 2 (2020), 217-236.
16. Pitts, 'Make Them Hated,' 175.
17. Aaron Tylor Brand, 'Lives Darkened by Calamity: Enduring the Famine of World War I in Lebanon and Western Syria' (PhD dissertation, American University of Beirut, 2014), 34, a revised version of this thesis has since been published as Tylor Brand, *Famine Worlds: Life at the Edge of Suffering in Lebanon's Great War* (Stanford, 2023); Zachary J. Foster, 'The 1915 locust attack in Syria and Palestine and its role in the famine during the First World War,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 51, 3 (2015), 370-394. Anne Caldwell, unpublished paper 'Hunger, Disease and Turkish Pillage: Locusts and Famine in Palestine through the Lens of British Media, 1915-1923,' presented to the War, Society and Culture Seminar, Institute of Historical Research, 14 December 2022.
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22. Marjorie Millbank Farrar, *Conflict and Compromise: The Strategy, Politics and Diplomacy of the French Blockade* (The Hague, 1974); Martin Motte, 'La seconde Iliade: Blocus et contre-blocus au moyen orient, 1914-1918,' *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 2, 214, (2004), 39-53; Olivier Forcade, 'Le blocus en 1914-1918. Histoire et historiographie,' *Les Cahiers Sirice,* 1, 26, (2021), 5-21; Carolina García Sanz, 'British Blacklists in Spain During the First World War: The Spanish Case Study as a Belligerent Battlefield', *War in History*, 21 (2014), 496–517.

23. Carolina García Sanz, 'El poder de John Bull en la Gran Guerra. Visiones de la diplomacia italiana sobre la neutralidad (1914-1915),' *Historia Y Política* 33, 1 (2015), 125-53; García Sanz, "Del "egoísmo inglés" al "sacro egoísmo" italiano en la Gran Guerra,' 47-69.
24. García Sanz, 'Del "egoísmo inglés" al "sacro egoísmo" italiano en la Gran Guerra,' 49, 55-56, 58.
25. On Istria see: Alan Sked, 'Austria-Hungary and the First World War', *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, n° 22, 1 janvier-avril (2014), 16-49, 21, https://www.cairn.info/revue-histoire-politique-2014-1-page-16.htm, accessed 4/8/23.
26. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 93.
27. Max Fletcher, 'The Suez Canal and World Shipping, 1869-1914,' *The Journal of Economic History*, 18, 4 (1958), 565.
28. Hull, *Breaking and Making International Law during the Great War*, p. 142. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 272; 338-339.
29. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 106-107.
30. Dan Van der Vat, *Stealth at Sea: The History of the Submarine* (London, 1994), 95.
31. Ibid.
32. On this see Nicholas Lambert, *War Lords and the Gallipoli Disaster: How Globalized Trade led Britain to its Worst Defeat of the First World War* (Oxford, 2021).
33. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 93.
34. Auman Pitts, 'A Hungry Population,' 224.
35. Cemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913-19* (New York, 1922), 202.
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40. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 106.
41. García Sanz, 'Del "egoísmo inglés" al "sacro egoísmo" italiano en la Gran Guerra,' 53-54.
42. Jamie Martin, *The Meddlers: Sovereignty, Empire and the Birth of Global Economic Governance* (Boston, Mass., 2022), 29; 31-33.
43. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 131.
44. Ibid., 289.
45. Ibid., 244; 315. Souchon's nephew Hermann was also a naval officer and one of the men who murdered Rosa Luxemburg.
46. Lynn Schler, *Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea* (Athens O.H., 2016), 24.
47. Paul G. Halpern, 'Mediterranean Theater, Naval Operations,' International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 2016: https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/mediterranean_theater_naval_operations. Date accessed 28/3/2024.
48. Ibid.
49. Saxon, 'Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation, 1914-1918,' 62; 80.
50. Ibid., 80.
51. Jean Monnet, *Memoirs*, transl. Richard Mayne (New York, 1978), 62.
52. Ibid.
53. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 261.
54. Halpern, 'Mediterranean Theater, Naval Operations.'
55. Stefano Marcuzzi, 'From the Adriatic to the Mediterranean: Italy in the Allied Naval Strategy, 1915-1918,' *War in History*, 27, 3 (2020), 456-485; 470-471.
56. Simone de Santiago Ramos, 'Sussex Pledge,' https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/sussex_pledge, accessed 7/8/23.
57. The total death figure varies from 334-343: Alan Wren, *The Ambush of SS Persia: Voices from a Lost Liner* (Wren, 2020), xiv; Stephanie Pain, 'Deep Secrets of the SS Persia,' *New Scientist,* 13/12/2006.
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59. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg, RM 97.766 Vom 26.7.16 bis 31.7.17, U35, 4/8/1916. The ships were the *Favonian*, the *Tottenham* and the *Siena*.
60. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 146; 155.
61. Enzo Raffaelli, *La Tragedia Censurata. Albania, 8 giugno 1916, il siluramento del Principe Umberto* (Udine, 2016).
62. Stephen McGreal, *The War on Hospital Ships 1914-1918* (Barnsley, 2008), 144.
63. The National Archives, United Kingdom (hereafter TNA) MT 25/9, 'Protection of Hospital Ships (Mediterranean),' Document M05099, Minute Sheet, May 1917.

64. McGreal, *The War on Hospital Ships*, 166; also 188–189.
65. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 256.
66. Cummings, 'Economic Warfare and the Evolution of the Allied Blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean,' 8.
67. Captain L. B. Weldon for example recalls his ship being ordered away from the blockade of the Greater Syrian coast (near Palestine) to blockade Smyrna: Captain L. B. Weldon, *'"Hard-Lying" Eastern Mediterranean 1914-1919* (London, 1925), 26, something which greatly upset his largely Greek crew.
68. Cummings, 'Economic Warfare and the Evolution of the Allied Blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean,' 12.
69. Ibid., 3.
70. Ibid., 11-12. See also Pitts, 'Make Them Hated,' 186. On evacuations see: Glenda Abramson, 'The 1914 deportation of the Jaffa Jews: 'a little footnote of war'?' *Israel Affairs*, 28, 5 (2022), 712.
71. Pitts, 'Make Them Hated,' 186.
72. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 95.
73. Sondhaus, *The Great War at Sea*, 238.
74. Cummings, 'Economic Warfare and the Evolution of the Allied Blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean,' iii.
75. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, vol .1, (London, 1938), 649.
76. Antoine Prost, 'The Dead' in Jay Winter (ed), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 3, *Civil Society* (Cambridge, 2014), 587-588.
77. For the statistics on Austria-Hungary, which, due to source gaps, are an estimate for civilian deaths from famine, cold and illness (excluding the Spanish influenza pandemic) see Anatol Schmied-Kowarzik, 'War Losses (Austria-Hungary),' 14-18 Online Encyclopaedia of the First World War (2016), https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/war_losses_austria-hungary, accessed 4/8/23; for the statistics on Germany see: Jay Winter and Jean-Louis Robert (eds), *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge, 1997), 517. The official post-war statistics in *Schaedigung der deutschen Volkskraft durch die feindliche Blockade*: *Denkschrift des Reichsgesundheitsamtes* (December 1918), put losses higher at 763,000 civilian deaths caused by the blockade; on the Ottoman Empire, see Antoine Prost, 'The Dead' in Winter (ed), *The Cambridge History of the First World War* , 563.
78. Auman Pitts, 'Make Them Hated,' 180.
79. TNA, FO 800/86/1, Sir Cecil Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 16/3/1916, f.86.
80. TNA, CAB 37/153/33, 17 August 1916.
81. . The original quote is in: Ministère des Affaires Étrangères-La Corneuve, Correspondence Commerciale et Politique, 1897-1918, Série Guerre 873, Syrie-Palestine, 22 Mai 1916 - 31 Juillet 1916, Bertie (British Embassy, Paris) to Margerie, 2/6/1916, f.41-42, .
82. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères-La Corneuve, Correspondence Commerciale et Politique, 1897-1918, Série Guerre 873, Syrie-Palestine, 22 Mai 1916 - 31 Juillet 1916, Note in file, 4/6/1916, f.48 .
83. Melanie Tanielian, 'Politics of Wartime Relief in Ottoman Beirut (1914-1918),' *Journal of First World War Studies*, 5, 1 (2014), 72-73.
84. Pitts, 'Make them Hated,' p. 177; Christian Taoutel, '1914-1918: La Famine au Liban'; Documents d'archive selectionnés et présentés par Christian Taoutel,' *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, 2015, 3, no. 119, 48-49.
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86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., 177.
88. Ibid., 182.
89. Ibid., 183.
90. Ibid., 176.
91. Cummings, 'Economic Warfare and the Evolution of the Allied Blockade of the Eastern Mediterranean,' 3. Ronald C. Jennings, 'The Locust Problem in Cyprus,' *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, 51, 2 (1988), 287, fn.26, 308.
92. Rachel Saliba (ed), *In the Midst of Starvation. Diaries of Miriam Pease Bo Sauder in Lebanon: Centennial of the Big War* (Lebanon, 2015), 51.
93. Ibid., 93.
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95. Saliba, *In the Midst of Starvation*, 160-161.
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