

Charles de Gaulle and the “Forever Abandoned:” Conceptualizations of Empire and French
Identity

by

Julien Charles Herpers

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Honors Requirements for the History Department
Dickinson College

Professor Regina Sweeney, Supervisor

Professor Christopher Bilodeau, Reader

Carlisle, Pennsylvania
May, 2019

Introduction	3
Chapter I: The <i>maréchal</i> , de Gaulle, and Empire, 1919-1939.....	20
Chapter II: Fractured Identities and First Encounters, 1940.....	33
Chapter III: Imagining the French Empire’s Postwar Seat at the Table, 1941-1942	54
Chapter IV: <i>France d’Abord</i> and Brazzaville, 1941-1942	59
Chapter V: Rubber, the Brazzaville Conference, and Lost Voices, 1943-1944	69
Conclusion	77
Bibliography	79

Introduction

Writing in an op-ed piece of *Le Petit Brazzavillois* on November 14, 1942, one anonymous author anxiously asked that “our political leaders do not forget, in hours of danger, that France is not only France but that she is an Empire of 100 million men.”¹ This author’s assertion that “France” is an “Empire of 100 million men” contributed one perspective to a complex network of conceptualizations of Empire and France’s identity during the Second World War that attempted to establish the extent to which France’s identity was tied to its Empire. This complicated relationship between Empire and what defined *France* is important to consider because it links to the scholar Ruth Ginio’s claim from 2006 that “the social and political problems that France faces today with regard to its vast population of immigrants, most hailing from its ex-colonies, emphasize the necessity of viewing colonial and metropolitan history as one research area.”² Indeed, individuals during the Second World War ranging from the leading figures of “France” to inhabitants in the most remote corners of the French Empire were suddenly confronted with how Empire “fit” within the narrative of metropolitan France and its role in the global conflict of the Second World War.

Charles de Gaulle and Philippe Pétain demonstrated their understanding of the importance of including Empire in their opposing visions of “France” as early as June of

¹ *Le Petit Brazzavillois*, “14 novembre, 1942,” p. 2. “Nos gouvernants n’oublent plus, aux heures de danger que la France n’est pas seulement la France mais qu’elle est un Empire de 100 millions d’hommes.”

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are those of the author. I have chosen to keep the French capitalization of “Empire” as a proper noun that denotes France’s overseas territories between 1919 and 1944, which consisted of its colonies and mandates. The author has attempted to translate each passage without distilling the meaning of the original French text. As a result, French terms or direct translations are used when the author has deemed them appropriate. *Le Petit Brazzavillois* was the supplement of the bi-monthly newspaper, *France d’Abord*, based in Brazzaville and published between 1941 and 1942.

² Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked: The Vichy Years in French West Africa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), xv.

1940. On June 18, 1940, four days after the resounding sound of heavy boots announced the arrival of German troops in France's capital, Charles de Gaulle faced a microphone about 4,000 miles north of Brazzaville in the London headquarters of the British Broadcasting Corporation and declared that "France is not alone! ... She is not alone! She has a vast Empire behind her... This war is not restricted to our country's unfortunate territory ... This war is a world war."³ One week later, Philippe Pétain, *maréchal de France*, addressed the "French of the metropole and the French *d'outre-mer*" in a radio broadcast and asserted that "I did not want to place outside of the soil of France my person or my hope. I have not been less attentive to our colonies than to the metropole. The armistice safeguards the ties that unite the metropole to the colonies. France has the right to count on their loyalty."⁴ The Empire was caught between two claims to legitimacy and was a contested physical and figurative canvas where both Philippe Pétain and Charles de Gaulle projected their visions of France's identity.⁵ Further, 1940 marked a period of uncertainty when it was unclear who would control the Empire between Pétain, de Gaulle, the Allies, Japan, and the Third Reich.⁶ Both the future face of the Free French and the head of the Vichy regime quickly recognized

³ Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – L'appel : 1940-1942*, vol. 1, 3 vols., Mémoires de guerre 1 (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954), 331. "La France n'est pas seule !. . . Elle n'est pas seule ! Elle a un vaste Empire derrière elle. . . Cette guerre n'est pas limitée au territoire malheureux de notre pays. . . Cette guerre est une guerre mondiale."

⁴ Philippe Pétain, *Discours aux Français: 17 juin 1940-20 août 1944*, ed. Jean-Claude Barbas (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), 63; Philippe Pétain, *Actes et écrits*, ed. Jacques Isorni (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 454. "Français de la métropole et Français d'outre-mer." "Je n'ai voulu placer hors du sol de France, ni ma personne, ni mon espoir. Je n'ai pas été moins soucieux de nos colonies que de la métropole. L'armistice sauvegarde les liens qui l'unissent à elles. La France a le droit de compter sur leur loyauté." "Outre-mer" in 1940 referred to the colonies and territories of the French Empire. Therefore, Pétain was referring to the French inhabitants of these colonies and territories through his use of "d'outre-mer." "Métropole" in 1940 referred to the borders of metropolitan France, as opposed to its exterior Empire. "Maréchal" is France's highest military distinction.

⁵ This paper uses Joachim Blatter's broad definition of legitimacy as the "popular acceptance of a government, political regime, or system of governance." See Joachim Blatter, "Legitimacy," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., December 17, 2019).

⁶ See Chantal Metzger, *L'Empire colonial français dans la stratégie du Troisième Reich (1936-1945)*, 2 vols., Diplomatie et histoire (Bruxelles: Peter Lang ; Paris : Direction des archives, Ministère des affaires étrangères, 2002).

the need to address the role and relationship between the French Empire and a metropole experiencing the repercussions of a pivotal identity crisis as it faced a transition from the Third Republic to the collaborationist Vichy Regime.

The rival claims between de Gaulle and Pétain began as France traversed extraordinary “hours of danger” that problematized the representation of “France” in 1940. Most notably, France suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of its most bitter rival as the Third Reich’s *Blitzkrieg* defeated the French army in the span of six weeks. Further, France’s National Assembly voted to dissolve the Third Republic on July 10, 1940 and created in its place *l’État français*, which gave its leader, the eighty-four-year-old *maréchal* Philippe Pétain, full executive and legislative powers. This dramatic shift was the first time since 1789 that France’s government did not have a national representative body. Rather, in place of a democratic system, Pétain commanded a monocratic *État*.

However, both men entered 1940 with an understanding of Empire based on their interwar colonial experiences and their respective political positions. This paper first examines de Gaulle and Pétain’s interwar relationship with Empire to better understand what influenced de Gaulle’s interactions with the Empire in particular. While Pétain and de Gaulle belonged to the dominant interwar colonial philosophy to different extents, de Gaulle’s understanding of Empire grounded in his appreciation of republican values and his vision of “France’s” participation in a new world order separated him from Pétain’s conservatism.

Chapter II places Pétain and de Gaulle in contrast to one another to establish that de Gaulle’s rhetoric between June and December of 1940 included a multifaceted use of “Empire.” On one hand, the general established that the Empire and Free France represented legitimate “France,” allowing him to justify the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Free

France movement. On the other, de Gaulle's rhetoric demonstrated a practical understanding of the Empire as a territorial and military resource. As de Gaulle spoke to different audiences between June and December, his speeches and radio addresses included these multifaceted conceptualizations of Empire in order to target different messages to different groups.

As France's sovereignty became unclear in 1940, and it was not clear exactly what France *was* as a result of the events of 1940, a new space opened that necessitated individuals such as Charles de Gaulle and Pétain to establish their visions of national identity. "National identity" has historically referred to "A sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language" when referring to the traditional nation-state model.⁷ However, France's idea of "national identity" was severely problematized in the face of opposing conceptualizations of "France." To General Charles de Gaulle in particular, who established the Free France movement within the French Empire, it was crucial to define whether the Empire *was* French in order to challenge the legitimacy of the collaborationist Vichy Regime in the occupied metropole. To do so, it was important for the general to determine *who* was "French" and *what* was France within the context of the Empire. Further, it was necessary for de Gaulle to make these determinations repeatedly and in a variety of ways depending on the evolving situation of the Second World War.

Chapter III continues to follow de Gaulle's conceptualization of "Empire" in 1941 and 1942 and argues that de Gaulle began to understand the Empire as an opportunity to justify France's role among the Allies in the postwar world order.⁸ To do so, de Gaulle

⁷ This paper borrows the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of national identity. See "National Identity," in *Oxford English Dictionaries* (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

⁸ A self-defined "optimist," de Gaulle consistently thought of France's postwar future in terms of an Allied victory. See Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages. Pendant la Guerre: Juin 1940-Janvier 1946*, vol. 1, 5 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970), 192. *Discours et messages* will henceforth be abbreviated as "DM."

pointed to France's accomplishments in its overseas territories as evidence of France's continuous commitment to republican values. Further, de Gaulle asserted Free France's authority, as opposed to the authority of the Allies, to administer territories of France's Empire. This allowed him to further link Free France to France's sovereignty while also demonstrating that Free France would have the ability to oversee France's Empire in the postwar world order. Finally, de Gaulle highlighted the capacity of France's Empire to cooperate economically with European colonies on the African continent to demonstrate France's ability to participate in a postwar global economy.

However, Charles de Gaulle's various understandings of "Empire" and "national identity" between 1940 and 1942 became increasingly complex as they encountered preexisting conceptualizations of "France" and "French" *within the Empire itself*. Inhabitants of the Empire, ranging from indigenous populations to French settlers, asserted their own notions of what was "French," and their identities within the Empire often informed these perceptions. The dynamic between the "top down" approach that analyzes how de Gaulle perceived the Empire's relationship to France and a "bottom up" approach that studies how different populations within the Empire interacted with de Gaulle's rhetoric is crucial to our understanding of France's role in the Second World War because it highlights new questions that decenter France's history.

As France's sovereignty, identity, and the role of its Empire were at stake, the city of Brazzaville serves as an excellent case study to analyze the complex dynamics between de Gaulle and Empire. Brazzaville's sudden rise from an obscure city to becoming the capital of Free France provides a unique framework through which scholars can examine how the European residents of Brazzaville understood their role within Free France and how they

responded to de Gaulle's conceptualizations of France. Whereas before 1940 Brazzaville held a rather negligible position in France's broader Empire, the rallying of Brazzaville to Charles de Gaulle's Free France on August 28, 1940 elevated Brazzaville's status, placing it as a central figure in de Gaulle's conceptualization of French national identity and Empire.

Within the broader context of interwar France's Empire, Brazzaville had been a remote city in one of the Empire's poorest territories that exhibited qualities of a typical colonial city. Before 1940, inhabitants of Brazzaville and in the French Congo, such as our anonymous op-ed writer, remained geographically isolated from the metropole and, as a result, lived in an environment lacking connection to the "outside" world. Located in the present-day Republic of Congo, Brazzaville sits inland on the banks of the Congo River and continues to serve as an important link to the port-city of Pointe-Noire.⁹ By 1938, according to Roger Frey, the post-war, assistant administrator to the mayor of Potopoto, there were about 18,661 *indigènes* living in the city in contrast to 1,184 European inhabitants.¹⁰ Since Frey's 1953 demographic report, scholars have offered slight variation of these estimates, placing the European population in Brazzaville at the outbreak of the War at about 2,000, for example.¹¹ In comparison, Dakar, France's most important city in French West Africa (A.O.F.) had nearly four times the number of individuals, with a total population of about

⁹ On September 10, 1880, Italian explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza had signed a treaty with the king of the Batéké people, Makoko, that placed Batéké lands under French protection and allowed Brazza to "purchase" land to establish the city of Brazzaville in 1883. See Roger Frey, *Brazzaville: capitale de l'Afrique Équatoriale française* (Paris : Encyclopédie Mensuelle d'Outre-Mer, 1954), 26-30.

¹⁰ "Indigènes" was a colonial term used to distinguish indigenous populations that had inhabited a territory within the Empire before colonial conquest from the European populations. To use the French designation, Frey was administrateur-adjoint Délégué du Maire à Potopoto.

¹¹ It is entirely possible that in 1953, there were disparities in the methods with which city administrators gathered demographic data on *indigènes* and European populations. Brazzaville included a typical "cité européenne" in the center of the city, notably in the "Plateau," "Tchad," and "Plaine" neighborhoods. See Eric Thomas Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine* (Paris: Perrin, 2014), 56.

92,000, including about 6,500 Europeans in 1936.¹² “Europeans” in A.E.F. mostly included French *colons*, *fonctionnaires*, military men, colonial administrators, or bushmen (*broussards*), but also included *colons* who originated from other European countries, such as Italy, Portugal, or Greece.¹³ Regardless of their respective statuses, these Europeans held a privileged position within the colonial power dynamics of the French Empire and existed above the *indigènes* in the colonial hierarchy. Indeed, this small, elite population lived in the administrative, military, and cultural center of Brazzaville, situated between the “Black Brazzavilles,” also known as the “African urban areas,” to the northeast and southwest of the European neighborhood.¹⁴ The most prominent of these neighborhoods were Bacongo to the southwest and Potopoto to the northeast. According to Frey, these “Black Brazzavilles” had a “particular way of life and an entirely different character” from the European city center. Bacongo and Potopoto were composed of diverse populations of colonial subjects, including individuals of Senegalese origin and members of Central African Bantu ethnic groups, such as the Batékés.¹⁵ The status of *indigènes* within the colonial hierarchy contributed to a poor quality of living in these “Brazzavilles noires” that was considerably lower than in the “European” neighborhoods, as Bacongo and Potopoto experienced issues including poor infrastructure and a high unemployment rate.

¹² Denise Bouche, “Dakar pendant la deuxième Guerre mondiale. Problèmes de surpeuplement,” *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer* 65, no. 240 (1978): 423–38, 426.

¹³ Jérôme Ollandet, *Brazzaville, capitale de la France libre: histoire de la résistance française en Afrique ; 1940 - 1944*, Coll. Harmattan Congo (Paris: Harmattan, 2013), 52. “Colon” refers primarily to French settlers who came to the colonies to farm or exploit land. “Fonctionnaires” were civil servants who primarily served at the local government level. “Broussard” refers to Europeans who had settled in the hinterland of French Equatorial Africa, who often lived in isolated deserts of information from both surrounding cities and metropolitan France.

¹⁴ Frey, *Brazzaville*, 19, 87, 95. Frey uses the term “Brazzavilles noires” for “Black Brazzaville” and “agglomérations africaines” for “African urban areas.”

¹⁵ Frey, *Brazzaville*, 95. “Mode de vie particulier et un aspect entièrement différent,” “cité européenne.”

Despite Brazzaville's isolation, a close analysis of the Brazzaville-based newspaper, *France d'Abord*, in Chapter II posits that the French contributors of the newspaper considered their own role in the rallying of Brazzaville as evidence demonstrating that they held an important position within the Free French movement.¹⁶ Further, when compared to de Gaulle's account of the rallying of Brazzaville as a demonstration of unanimous support for Free France, *France d'Abord* illustrated the existence of opposing factions leading up to August, 1940. While de Gaulle was precise in his use of "Empire" to evoke different messages, he could not necessarily control how populations within the Empire would respond or interpret his meaning.

In addition to their perceived role in the rallying of Brazzaville, the authors within the issues of *France d'Abord* presented different definitions of "French" or "France" that often overlapped and that are crucial to decenter our understanding of the dynamics between de Gaulle, French national identity, and Empire. As studied in Chapter IV, articles within *France d'Abord* consistently demonstrated a "French" identity tied to a vision of a global community of "French" republican values. Yet, the newspaper also illustrated a representation of "Frenchness" founded on the local solidarity between the Europeans of Brazzaville and A.E.F. as a result of their shared experiences in the Empire. Finally, *France d'Abord* highlighted "French" identity among different subgroups of the "French" inhabitants of Brazzaville who identified as members of a culture in metropolitan France. The interactions between these different definitions and de Gaulle's own multifaceted perceptions of "French" identity demonstrated that certain populations in the Empire possessed the agency to interpret and create conceptualizations of French "national identity." As a result, a

¹⁶ *France d'Abord* can be translated as "France First."

study of France during the Second World War or of France's postwar identity is incomplete without considering the impact of these voices.

Chapter V further highlights the necessity to study the early years of Brazzaville's involvement in the Second World War through its illustration of the important turning points between 1943 and 1944 that have assumed a privileged position in the current historiography of the city's role in the war. Most notably, historians continue to remember Brazzaville as the location for the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, and an important moment in the history of French decolonization. Yet, Brazzaville's transition from its early-war position as an active participant in both the Free French movement and the discourse surrounding French "identity," to its role as an important provider of rubber and a symbol of decolonization has tended to overshadow the voices that interacted with de Gaulle between 1940 and 1942 and contributed to complex conceptualizations of national identity and Empire. Further, rather than serving as a space where de Gaulle asserted and implemented his vision of the future of Empire, de Gaulle provided experienced colonial administrators with the opportunity to determine the Empire's postwar relationship with France in 1944.

Historiography

Surprisingly, very few scholars have placed Pétain, de Gaulle, and French Empire in discussion with one another.¹⁷ Nor has anyone asked or compared how Empire operated

¹⁷ While scholars have largely neglected to compare Pétain, de Gaulle, and Empire, numerous scholars have compared de Gaulle and Pétain. See for example Jean-Raymond Tournoux, *Secrets d'État: Pétain et de Gaulle* (Paris: Plon, 1964); Michel Issaverdens, *Pétain et de Gaulle: une part de vérité* (Paris: Godefroy de Bouillon, 2018); Guy Penaud, *De Gaulle-Pétain: L'affrontement du printemps 1940* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012); Lucien Galimand, *Vive Pétain, Vive de Gaulle* (Éditions de la Couronne, 1948); Christopher Flood, "Pétain and de Gaulle: Making the Meanings of the Occupation," in *France at War in the Twentieth Century: Propaganda, Myth and Metaphor*, ed. Valerie Holman and Debra Kelly (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 88–110. However, scholars have overlooked the comparisons between Pétain, de Gaulle, and Empire.

within both men's conceptions of France's national identity.¹⁸ Moreover, in the thousands of works of scholars, biographers, and authors only focusing on Pétain or de Gaulle, Empire is often treated as a side-note or entirely ignored.¹⁹ For instance, in the most contemporary and comprehensive biography of Philippe Pétain to date, historian Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon only dedicates a few pages of a chapter to Pétain's relationship with Empire during his involvement in the Rif War in 1925. Vergez-Chaignon and her contemporaries do not explicitly attempt to analyze the evolution of Pétain's perceptions of Empire between the interwar period and 1940.²⁰ Similarly, scholars studying de Gaulle have generally failed to consider de Gaulle's interwar experiences with Empire as a means of analyzing the evolution in his thinking on the role of Empire in France. While historian Julian Jackson's 2018 biography of de Gaulle addresses the three years that de Gaulle spent in the Levant between 1929 and 1931, it fails to draw explicit connections between de Gaulle's understanding of Empire during his time abroad and his perception of Empire in 1940.²¹ While other scholars, such as Alexandre Najjar, have recently devoted more time to the study of de Gaulle's years

¹⁸ Though Éric Amyot's study does compare the relationship between Vichy, Free France, and Québécois responses to both competing governments, he does not apply his study to a broader analysis of Pétain and de Gaulle's understanding of Empire. See Eric Amyot, *Le Québec entre Pétain et de Gaulle: Vichy, La France libre et les Canadiens français, 1940-1945* (Saint-Laurent, Quebec: Fides, 1999).

¹⁹ Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon and Julian Jackson provide an extensive thematically organized bibliography relating to various aspects of the lives of both men. See Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain* (Paris: Perrin, 2014); Julian Jackson's *De Gaulle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018). *De Gaulle* lists the de Gaulle archives at the French *Archives Nationales* as a key starting point for any biography on de Gaulle. His bibliography is separated into categories including: "Diaries and Journals," "Biographies, Personal Life," "Gaullism, Before 18 June 1940" (which includes Vergez-Chaignon's *Pétain* and Jean-Raymond Tournoux's *Secrets d'État: Pétain et De Gaulle* as essential works to understand the relationship between both men), "1940-1944" (which includes Eric Jennings's *La France libre fut africaine* and Martin Thomas' *The French Empire at War 1940-1945*), and "Empire" (which only lists studies focusing on de Gaulle's relationship with Empire after the Second World War). Vergez-Chaignon's bibliography is separated into categories including: "Biographies," "l'Armée avant 1914," "l'Affaire Dreyfus," "La Première Guerre mondiale," "l'Entre-deux-guerres" (which includes books studying the Rif War but does not list works relating to Pétain's understanding of Empire), and "La Seconde Guerre mondiale" (which also fails to provide works relating to Pétain's perceptions of Empire). Both bibliographies are essential to the further study of both men.

²⁰ Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 200-213.

²¹ Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 64-68.

in the Levant to better understand his relationship with Lebanon and Syria after 1945, de Gaulle's three years abroad have primarily been examined as an isolated case separate from de Gaulle's conception of Empire in 1940.²²

Though Brazzaville's rise to prominence placed the city and its residents in a new position that provided its European inhabitants with a rare opportunity to elevate their voices and narrative to a global scale, the city and A.E.F. has remained largely ignored within the historiography of Free France and the Second World War. According to Eric Jennings, an expert on colonial French history of the Second World War, the scholars of Free France and external Resistance have neglected the study of Free France in A.E.F., notably outside of Gabon and Cameroon.²³ While the historiography of Vichy's colonial influence includes excellent studies relating to Vichy's colonial policies and the existing perceptions between Vichy and the colonial subjects in A.O.F. and French North Africa, the historiography of external resistance networks has just begun to scratch the surface of the complex dynamics between *colons* or *indigènes*.²⁴ As of yet, no study has explicitly studied the responses of

²² Clotilde de Fouchécour and Karim Émile Bitar, eds., *Le cèdre et le chêne : de Gaulle et le Liban, les Libanais et de Gaulle* (Paris: Geuthner, 2015); Alexandre Najjar, *De Gaulle et le Liban: vers l'Orient compliqué, 1929-1931*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Beyrouth: Editions Terre Du Liban, 2002).

²³ Jennings, *La France Libre*, 9; see Léon Modeste Nnang Ndong, *L'effort de guerre de l'Afrique: le Gabon dans la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, 1939-1947*, Études Africaines (Paris: Harmattan, 2011); Eliane Ebako, "Le ralliement du Gabon à la France Libre: une guerre franco-française" (Université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV), 2004); Léonard Sah, "Le Cameroun sous mandat français dans la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale" (Université de Provence Aix-Marseille 1, 1998); Didier Etaba Otoa, *Le Cameroun Libre Avec les Français Libres, 1940* (Yaoundé: Presses de l'université catholique d'Afrique centrale, 2000); André-Hubert Onana Mfège, *Les Camerounais et le Général de Gaulle*, Etudes Africaines (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006).

²⁴ Eric Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics: Pétain's National Revolution in Madagascar, Guadeloupe, and Indochina, 1940-1944* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001); Jacques Cantier and Eric Thomas Jennings, eds., *L'Empire colonial sous Vichy*, Histoire (Paris: O. Jacob, 2004); Ruth Ginio, "Marshal Petain Spoke to School Children: Vichy Propaganda in French West Africa, 1940-1943," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000): 291; Pascal Blanchard and Ruth Ginio, "Révolution impériale: le mythe colonial de Vichy," in *Culture impériale: les colonies au coeur de La République, 1931-1961*, ed. Sandrine Lemaire and Pascal Blanchard (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2004), 125–43; Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*; Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, "La France de Pétain et l'Afrique: images et propagandes coloniales," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études africaines* 28, no. 1 (1994): 1–31; Géraud Letang, "Traque impériale et répression impossible? Vichy face aux Français libres du Tchad,"

colons and *indigènes* to de Gaulle and Pétain’s colonial rhetoric. The issues of *France d’Abord* examined in this study predominantly represented European voices and excluded *indigènes* from its target “French” audience. When indigenous populations were included in *France d’Abord*, they appeared as demonized figures in poems that illustrated the harsh environment of A.E.F., as names within articles of *France d’Abord* detailing indigenous economic and military contributions to the Free French cause, and in photographs. Such isolated examples of indigenous voices in *France d’Abord* provide hints to understand how *indigènes* responded to de Gaulle’s conceptualizations that deserve further analysis, and the works of Eric Jennings and Jérôme Ollandet have contributed important studies examining the lived experiences of *indigènes* in A.E.F. during the Second World War.²⁵ Through their sources, Jennings and Ollandet provided this study with some access to indigenous voices. However, their work does not supply enough evidence that demonstrates how *indigènes* responded to different notions of “French” identity. Though indigenous voices appeared in *France d’Abord*, the European contributors of the newspaper excluded *indigènes* from their audience, preferring instead to communicate with global and local communities that they defined as “French.” As a result, this paper explores the dynamics between different understandings of “Frenchness” but does not wish to presuppose the voices of colonial

European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire 25, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 277–94; Nicholas Atkin, *The Forgotten French: Exiles in the British Isles, 1940 - 44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Jérôme Cotillon, “L’Empire français dans la Révolution Nationale : l’exemple de la vision algérienne des entourages du maréchal Pétain (1940- 1942),” *Outre-mers* 91, no. 342 (2004): 41–50; Christine Levisse-Touzé, *L’Afrique du Nord dans la Guerre, 1939-1945* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998).

²⁵ See for example Jennings, *La France libre*, 62-68, 237-240; Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 86-94, 113, 140. See Jennings, *La France libre*, 66 for a striking example of the incorporation of Charles de Gaulle’s figure in the *kébé-kébé* dance in the French Congo. The works of Jennings and Ollandet used sources that ranged from archival texts to oral histories in their works, indigenous populations left few sources that directly detail how different individuals understood competing definitions of “French” identity and Empire. Further, French colonial archives are spread throughout metropolitan France and national archives in former French colonies. A lack of access to these sources due to geographic and time constraints contributed to the limitations of this study.

subjects in *France d'Abord* and how they may have interpreted different notions of “French” identity.

The robust scholarship on France’s internal resistance movement serves as another example that reinforces the lack of work done on France’s Empire during the Second World War. Christian Bougeard, Emeritus Professor of Contemporary History at the *Université de Bretagne Occidentale* and an expert on the Second World War, emphasizes that the historiography of the French Resistance during the Second World War has traditionally separated into two categories: the internal and external Resistance (*Résistance intérieure* and *Résistance extérieure*). Both categories include a multitude of networks spread throughout the French *métropole* and the French Empire.²⁶ In the past three decades, scholars have typically focused on one or the other and the prevailing historiography has tended to examine internal resistance networks over the external.²⁷ When studies have overlapped, they have primarily examined the connections between internal resistance networks and networks in North Africa.²⁸ Further, the difficulty of access to archives and sources, such as the *Archives du Bureau central de renseignements et d'action* (Archives of the Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations) in France and particularly in ex-French colonies, may have

²⁶ Excluding de Gaulle’s Free French Forces, I define the term “external resistance network” as any collection of French resistance movements existing within the French Empire that opposed the Vichy Regime and/or the Third Reich. The “French” character of these networks varied; some networks only included French colonists as members, others only included indigenous members of the French Empire, whereas others included a mixed membership between both groups. Internal resistance networks existed as French resistance movements within the borders of metropolitan France.

²⁷ Christian Bougeard, “Éléments d’une approche de l’histoire de la France libre,” in *Pour une histoire de la France libre*, ed. Patrick Harismendy and Erwan Le Gall (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), 15–28; Jean-François Muracciole, *Les Français libres: l’autre Résistance* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009), 23.

²⁸ Historian Guillaume Piketty has provided an excellent collection of letters and diaries from French individuals living both in metropolitan France and within the Empire. However, the purpose of the work is not to place these in contact with one another. See, Guillaume Piketty, ed., *Français en Résistance: carnets de guerre, correspondances, journaux personnels*, Bouquins (Paris: Laffont, 2009). See also, François Marcot, Bruno Leroux, and Christine Levisse-Touzé, eds., *Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance*.

played a role in this imbalance.²⁹ According to Jean-François Muracciole, the historiography of the French Resistance has emerged and developed at a rapid pace over the past twenty-five years with a slight delay in comparison to the expansive historiography of Vichy France. The beginning of this twenty-five-year period saw new studies detailing Resistance and important figures that extended the field's existing understanding of the political, military, and social history of the Resistance.³⁰ Previously, a historiographical debate between communists and Gaullists on the right characterized the 1960s, during which the "Gaullist memory gradually triumphed over its communist counterpart."³¹ Further, contributions to the field opened space for scholars to study the Resistance through sociological, cultural, religious, gender, and global lenses that served to establish the external Resistance as an equal domain of influence existing parallel to the interior Resistance.³²

Historians have only recently turned their attention to the diversity of external resistance networks as the historiography has begun to "decenter the history of modern France and open new perspectives on the symbiotic relationship between empire and

²⁹ Bougeard, "Éléments d'une approche de l'histoire de La France Libre," 21.

³⁰ Muracciole, *Les Français libres*; Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre: de l'appel du 18 juin à la Libération* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996); Jean-Pierre Azéma, ed., *Jean Moulin face à l'Histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 2000); Alya Aglan, *La Résistance sacrifiée: le mouvement Libération-Nord* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); Laurent Douzou, *La désobéissance: histoire d'un mouvement et d'un journal clandestins, Libération-Sud, 1940-1944*, Histoire / Editions Odile Jacob (Paris: O. Jacob, 1995); Olivier Wieviorka, *Une certaine idée de la résistance: défense de la France, 1940 - 1949*, Repr., L'univers historique (Paris: Seuil, 2010); Diane de Bellescize, *Les Neufs Sages de la Résistance: Le Comité Général d'études dans la clandestinité*, Collection Espoir (Paris: Plon, 1979); Claire Andrieu, *Le programme commun de la Résistance: des idées dans la guerre* (Paris: Editions de l'Erudit, 1984); Gilles Le Béguec and Denis Peschanski, eds., *Les élites locales dans la tourmente: du Front populaire aux années cinquante*, CNRS Histoire (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2000); Philippe Buton and Jean-Marie Guillon, *Les pouvoirs en France à la Libération*, Histoire et Société. Temps Présents (Paris: Belin, 1994); Nancy Lawler, "Reform and Repression under the Free French: Economic and Political Transformation in the Côte d'Ivoire, 1942-45," *Africa* 60, no. 01 (January 1990): 88-110, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160428>.

³¹ Laurent Douzou, "A Perilous History: A Historiographical Essay on the French Resistance," *Contemporary European History* 28, no. 1 (February 2019): 96-106, 98. See for example, Pierre Nora, "Gaullistes et communistes," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard), vol. 2, 2489-2532.

³² See for example François Marcot, Bruno Leroux, and Christine Levisse-Touzé, eds., *Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance: Résistance intérieure et France libre*; François Broche, Jean-François Muracciole, and Georges Caïtuoli, eds., *Dictionnaire de la France libre*, Bouquins (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2010); Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre*; Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la Guerre*.

metropole.”³³ Scholars have begun to move away from constraining geographic parameters that focused primarily on the Free French movement in London and French North Africa to turn towards a global study.³⁴ In doing so, “historians have prompted fresh reflections on the role of the *oubliés* of the movement, women, foreigners [(Europeans)] and colonial soldiers and the global networks that comprised France’s external Resistance.”³⁵ While these reflections are all necessary, they continue to overlook the role of the *oubliés* such as the European and indigenous inhabitants of A.E.F., as well as the role of colonial subjects throughout the Empire in general.³⁶

³³ Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1997), 5; Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*; Ruth Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*; Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, “La France de Pétain et l’Afrique: images et propagandes coloniales.”

³⁴ Scholars have focused on a wide variety of territories both within and outside of the Empire from the Réunion to Canada. See Amyot, *Le Québec entre Pétain et de Gaulle*; Richard Château-Degat, “Le patriotisme français des Antillais : An Tan Robè e an Tan Sorin (1939-1943),” *Outre-Mers, Revue d’histoire*, no. 378/379 (2013): 165–82 ; Yvan Combeau, “La Réunion : une colonie gaulliste en reconstruction (1942-1945),” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 246, no. 2 (2012): 63; Denis Rolland, *Vichy et la France libre au Mexique: guerre, cultures et propagande pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Travaux et mémoires de l’Institut des hautes études de l’Amérique Latine (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1990); Frédéric Turpin, *De Gaulle, les gaullistes et l’Indochine: 1940-1956* (Paris: Les Indes savantes, 2005); Chizuru Namba, *Français et Japonais en Indochine, 1940-1945: colonisation, propagande et rivalité culturelle*, Hommes et Sociétés (Paris: Karthala, 2012); Akhila Yechury, “‘La République continue, comme par le passé’: The Myths and Realities of the Resistance in French India,” *Outre-Mers, Revue d’histoire* 103, no. 388–389 (2015): 97–115; Guillaume Pollack, “Résister sous les tropiques. Les réseaux de résistance en Indochine (1940–1945),” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 25, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 295–311; Élodie Jauneau, “Des femmes dans la France combattante pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale : le corps des volontaires Françaises et le Groupe Rochambeau,” *Genre & Histoire [En Ligne]* 3 (2008): 1–18; Janet R. Horne, “Global Culture Fronts: The Alliance Française and the Cultural Propaganda of the Free French,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 25, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 222–41.

³⁵ Charlotte Faucher and Laure Humbert, “Introduction – Beyond de Gaulle and Beyond London: The French External Resistance and Its International Networks,” *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire* 25, no. 2 (March 4, 2018): 195–221; “Oubliés” is defined as “forgotten.” Blanchard and Boëtsch, “La France de Pétain et l’Afrique”; Alya Aglan, “Pour une approche transnationale des mouvements clandestins de résistance,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Pierre Renouvin* 38, no. 2 (2013): 69; Valerie Deacon, “Fitting in to the French Resistance: Marie-Madeleine Fourcade and Georges Loustaunau-Lacau at the Intersection of Politics and Gender,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 2 (April 2015): 259–73; Hanna Diamond, *Women and the Second World War in France, 1939-48: Choices and Constraints* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013); Guillaume Pollack, “Résister sous les tropiques. Les réseaux de résistance en Indochine (1940–1945),” Muracciole, *Les Français libres: l’autre Résistance* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009); Stéphane Longuet and Nathalie Genet-Rouffiac, eds., *Les réseaux de Résistance de la France combattante: dictionnaire historique* (Paris: Service historique de la défense-Economica, 2013).

³⁶ When compared to the scholarship on France’s external resistance networks, the scholarship on Vichy’s role in the Empire is more developed as experts have sought to understand how Vichy administered the Empire as

The monographs of Eric Jennings and Jérôme Ollandet together provide the most comprehensive study of A.E.F.'s involvement in the Second World War, its administration under the Free French, and the responses of indigenous populations to the dynamics of the Second World War. While much of the work to place the “*oubliés*” in the forefront of the Resistance historiography dates from the last decade, I argue that Jérôme Ollandet’s, *Brazzaville, capitale de la France libre: histoire de la résistance française en Afrique, 1940-1944* (*Brazzaville, Capital of Free France: A History of the French Resistance in Africa, 1940-1944*), originally published in 1981, was one of the first works to call for historians to include indigenous voices in the historiography of Free France.³⁷ However, Ollandet’s work has remained underutilized and ignored by many scholars.³⁸ Indeed, many works published on the African continent or by African scholars have received less attention than their North American, European, or Middle Eastern counterparts. Ollandet recognized that historical works had ignored the local dynamics between indigenous populations and “French” inhabitants of the colony. To include these narratives within the historiography, Ollandet combined official texts from the Free French administration, secondary sources detailing the

well as how it depicted the Empire in its propaganda. Eric Jennings and Ruth Ginio have both contributed foundational works on the operation and ideology of the Vichy colonial administration in France’s Empire. Ph.D. candidate at the Centre d’histoire de Sciences Po, Géraud Letang has recently studied the space of contact between Vichyists and pro-de Gaulle colonists in the colony of Tchad in 1940 to understand how Vichy supporters responded to the administrative overhaul by the Free French in most of French Equatorial Africa. Pascal Blanchard and Ruth Ginio have extensively studied representations of Empire in Vichy colonial propaganda. However, these studies do not fully place the colonial ideologies of Pétain and de Gaulle in interaction with Empire during the Second World War. See Ginio, *French Colonialism Unmasked*; Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*; Cantier and Jennings, *L’Empire colonial sous Vichy*; Géraud Letang, “Traque Impériale et Répression Impossible? Vichy Face Aux Français Libres Du Tchad.”

³⁷ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 11-12. In prevailing scholarship, the city of Brazzaville itself is primarily described according to its strategic and symbolic value for Free France without emphasizing local dynamics or the responses of populations to Free France and Vichy. One slight exception is Marc Michel’s brief mention of the role of *tirailleurs sénégalais* in the removal of général Husson during the *ralliement* of Brazzaville. See Marc Michel, “Brazzaville,” ed. Christine Levisse-Touze, François Marcot, and Bruno Leroux, *Dictionnaire historique de la Résistance: Résistance intérieure et France libre* (Paris: Laffont, 2006), 327.

³⁸ This points to a broader question regarding *who* studies external resistance networks and which published works receive the most attention.

Second World War in A.E.F., and oral accounts.³⁹ Eric Jennings' work seeks to rediscover the narratives of indigenous populations in A.E.F., including cooks, chiefs, workers, women, and soldiers to highlight the importance of A.E.F. to the Free French movement while also examining how local populations experienced the Second World War.⁴⁰ To do so, Jennings analyzed judicial reports, letters, memoirs, telegrams, photos, and looked for the names of *indigènes* in archives. In contrast to Ollandet, Jennings chose to limit the use of oral history in his work due to the timing of his work; by the publication date of the book in 2014, most individuals who had lived in A.E.F. during the Second World War would have been nonagenarians. Ollandet, meanwhile, conducted oral histories in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

One difficulty present in both monographs is the absence of a “pure” geographic focus on Brazzaville and the French Congo. Ollandet argues that to understand the role of A.E.F. during the Second World War, scholars must examine Brazzaville and the A.E.F. within a network that included Congo-Léopoldville, Nigeria, and Angola.⁴¹ This is exemplified in the works of Ollandet and Jennings as both scholars considered A.E.F. relative to its importance to Free France's war economy and its military strategy; both works examine for example, the practice of forced labor in A.E.F. and Cameroon to increase the production of rubber for the Allied war effort as well as forced conscription.⁴²

³⁹ Ollandet, 17-18.

⁴⁰ Jennings, *La France Libre Fut Africaine*, 12.

⁴¹ Ollandet, *Brazzaville, capitale de la France libre*, 12-13.

⁴² Jennings, *La France libre*; see also Crécence Memoli-Aubry, “Le Mbam dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale : contribution d’une région administrative du Cameroun à l’effort de guerre français,” *Outre-mers* 96, no. 362 (2009): 241–66.

Chapter I: The *maréchal*, de Gaulle, and Empire, 1919-1939

An analysis of the relationship between de Gaulle, Pétain, and the Empire is crucial to our understanding of twentieth-century French history and how the Empire fit in France's identity. This chapter seeks not only to decenter prevailing histories of de Gaulle and Pétain in 1940 but to recognize the relationship between Pétain, de Gaulle, and Empire between 1919 and 1940 as central to an analysis of how de Gaulle imagined the place of Empire within "French" national identity at the outbreak of the Second World War. In fact, both Pétain and de Gaulle's interwar positions on the role of the Empire illustrated deeply held beliefs that illuminate how de Gaulle's formulations of Empire during the Second World War were rooted in his pre-war thinking.

Compared to many of their colleagues in the French military, neither Philippe Pétain nor Charles de Gaulle had extensive experience serving in France's Empire. Nonetheless, both men left behind letters, diaries, and speeches from their brief time in the Empire, providing scholars with valuable sources to piece together how both men perceived the Empire before 1940. Pétain had never travelled to a location in France's Empire prior to the 1920s; in fact, Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, a leading scholar on Pétain, details that many of Pétain's responsibilities during the interwar period prevented him from travelling abroad at all.⁴³ Rather, Pétain avoided service in France's colonies, "preferring duty within metropolitan France," according to James Hogue.⁴⁴ Following his appointment to the position of Inspector General of the Army, he travelled to Algeria and Morocco for his first voyage to the Empire in 1925 and would later travel to France's African colonies on military

⁴³ Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 200-211.

⁴⁴ James Hogue, "Pétain, Henri-Philippe (1856-1951)," ed. Anne Cipriano Venzon and Paul L. Miles, *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities ; Military History of the United States, v. 1205. v. 3 (New York: Garland Pub, 1995), 461.

inspection mission to assess the military and economic resources of the territories.⁴⁵ Following his role as *inspecteur général de l'armée*, Pétain oversaw French military operations in the Rif War. Like Pétain, Charles de Gaulle was not an “officier colonial.”⁴⁶ De Gaulle had not participated in colonial conquest campaigns prior to the First World War nor did he command colonial troops in the First World War. Though he would have preferred to teach at the prestigious *École supérieure de guerre* (War College) in 1929, *chef de bataillon* (the equivalent rank of a major in most English-speaking countries) de Gaulle was instead assigned to head the 2nd and 3rd Bureaus in the Levant, which dealt with information and operations.⁴⁷ Stationed in the Levant from 1929 to 1931, his position allowed de Gaulle to gain leadership experience that was necessary to climb the military hierarchy, rather than to provide the *chef de bataillon* with a colonial experience. To de Gaulle, his presence in the Levant only hindered his ability to operate and grow within the bustling Parisian ““decision-making centers.””⁴⁸

Despite their lack of colonial experience, both Pétain and de Gaulle’s understanding of Empire during the interwar period belonged to the dominant colonial philosophy to varying degrees. As we will see below, on one hand, de Gaulle grounded his conceptualization of Empire in his appreciation of universal republican values and his rejection of isolationism. On the other, Pétain’s ties to monarchism and fascism, as well as his respect for agricultural production influenced the *maréchal*’s perception of Empire, placing him in stark contrast to de Gaulle. Such uncertainty over the future of France

⁴⁵ Pétain’s physical experience within the Empire was almost entirely limited to the African continent. See Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 200-21; Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle I. Le rebelle: 1890 - 1944*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1984), 160.

⁴⁶ “Officier colonial” is translated as “colonial officer.”

⁴⁷ Lacouture, *Le rebelle*, 161.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Lacouture, *Le rebelle*, 159-160. “centres de decision”

reflected the political debates of the interwar period; politicians argued over republicanism while also debating whether to turn towards modern industrial development or to focus on the agricultural backbone of France.

French historian Alice Conklin understands the interwar turmoil as a period where “French men and women were caught between a sense that they must continue to ‘modernize’ to remain competitive in a new international order. . . and a desire to return to the pre-war status quo.”⁴⁹

Yet, despite the persisting threat of powerful opponents of republicanism following the First World War, the majority of left-wing and right-wing politicians would continue to recognize the existence of France’s Empire as an important economic resource tied to the doctrine of *association*. *Association* was a colonial policy that claimed that the differences between cultures prevented some from achieving “the same levels of civilization” as the French.⁵⁰ French *association* recognized the distinct practices of the cultures in its Empire

⁴⁹ Alice L. Conklin, Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, eds., *France and Its Empire since 1870* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

⁵⁰ Stovall, *Transnational France*, 303. Historians Alice Conklin and Raymond Betts have demonstrated that the colonial doctrine of *association* had appeared prior to 1919 and overlapped with the doctrine of *assimilation*. Already before 1919, “Parisian theorists. . . had advocated some form of government. . . predicated upon respect for indigenous cultures, and administration through preexisting native political structures,” quoted in Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 187-188. While *assimilation* was predicated on the belief that *indigènes* would have the ability to be equal in status to French citizens through the adoption and practice of French republican values and traditions, “This liberalism had its well-defined limits. Only a few Africans were ever expected to become French citizens, and Africans were to love France and Africa simultaneously,” quoted in Conklin, 249. Nonetheless, elite groups of *indigènes* categorized as *évolués* who had been educated through the French education system and had embraced French republican values demanded full equality. As a result, colonial administration employed the doctrine of *association* as a “counterdoctrine to the *évolué* ideology of assimilation. This justified giving but a small part of French sovereignty to the new elite,” quoted in Conklin, 203. Through *association*’s racialized argument that *indigènes* were inherently separate from France and rarely able to achieve French civilization, the French colonial administrations attempted to restrict *évolué* understandings of assimilation. Not only did *association* function as a “counterdoctrine to the *évolué* ideology of assimilation,” it served as a reaction to the modern liberal ideals of *assimilation* while also introducing a new understanding of “difference” between France and the inhabitants of its empire. Alice Conklin has shown that despite the limitations of *assimilation* detailed above, the doctrine of the colonial administration in French West Africa (A.O.F.) between 1895 and 1914 “called for the eradication of slavery and the aristocracy, in the name of an individual’s right to freedom,” quoted in Conklin, 249. Further, the administration “proclaimed the need for mass education and the spread of the French language, and they built railways and improved public health in the

and sought to guide its colonies towards socioeconomic progress that would benefit both metropole and the colonies. As a result, French historian Tyler Stovall argues, French colonial administrations asserted that it was the French Empire's "duty. . .to allow each people to pursue its own path" through the implementation of projects such as economic development (also known as *mise en valeur*) and granting *indigènes* small amounts of administrative control regarding their internal affairs.⁵¹ To different extents, Pétain and de Gaulle both agreed that the Empire served as an economic resource ripe for development, and they shared the paternalism of *association* that defined France's "duty" as regulating the "development" of its colonial subjects.

By 1940, both de Gaulle and Pétain understood the need to develop the Empire as an economic resource through *mise en valeur*. Yet, de Gaulle saw *mise en valeur* as a modern solution to establish France's position in a global economy and that justified France's presence in its territories. For example, in his 1934 book, *l'Armée de métier (The Army of the Future)*, he argued that

[France's] national existence has become that of an Empire, and, as time goes on, this character becomes accentuated. . . .Not only because of the task of developing the colonies calls for more and more energy on the part of France, but also because the restrictions on international exchange, a dominating factor of the age, daily increase the importance of finding fresh markets in our economic life.⁵²

This passage demonstrates that in 1934, de Gaulle already understood the Empire as closely connected to France's "national existence" in a world economy restricted as a result of the Great Depression; to de Gaulle, the colonies had value because they provided France with

name of France's republican traditions," quoted in Conklin, 249. Meanwhile, *association* explicitly stated that most *indigènes* were not capable of achieving the republican and liberal ideals embodied in French civilization. Alice Conklin has also argued that the development of *association* in the empire during the interwar years reflected the Third Republic's shift towards conservatism.

⁵¹ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 217-218; Stovall, *Transnational France*, 303.

⁵² Charles de Gaulle, *The Army of the Future*, trans. Walter Millis (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1941), 83-84.

new markets as an alternative to the prevailing isolationism of the period. Further, de Gaulle's mention of "developing the colonies" alluded to the *mise en valeur*, an important element of the doctrine of *association*. According to Conklin, the doctrine of *mise en valeur* involved "expanding infrastructure" and "specialized agricultural services" in the colonies with a focus on the "individual producer."⁵³ Colonial administrations argued that it was important to educate and improve the health of individual producers as a means of "motivating and mobilizing [them] to grow the desired commodities," such as cash crops like cotton.⁵⁴ De Gaulle was also concerned with France's ability to expand infrastructure during his time in the Levant. In a letter sent in June of 1930 to *colonel* Émile Mayer, de Gaulle privately expressed his belief that if France could not lead by example and achieve its goal of developing the economy of the mandate, a French exit from the Levant was a better strategy as opposed to greater direct control. De Gaulle stated in the letter that France could not incite "the people to raise themselves up" if it had "never accomplished anything here, neither the canals of the Nile, nor the aqueduct of Palmyra, nor a Roman road."⁵⁵ When compared to Pétain's focus on the agricultural aspects of *mise en valeur*, this letter demonstrated the value that de Gaulle placed on the development of industry and infrastructure in the Empire

Compared to de Gaulle, Pétain's colonial rhetoric demonstrated an understanding of *mise en valeur* based on the *maréchal's* appreciation for agricultural that reflected Pétain's very conservative politics. Amid the instability of the interwar period, he anchored himself on the far-right of the political spectrum through his powerful sense of loyalty towards the army, his ties to royalism, and his firm support of family, nationalism, and agricultural

⁵³ Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*, 217-218.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Quoted in Lacouture, *Le rebelle*, 163-164. "Les gens à se lever d'eux-mêmes," "jamais rien réalisé ici, ni les canaux du Nil, ni l'aqueduc de Palmyre, ni une route romaine."

labor.⁵⁶ The product of an agricultural, religious, and family-oriented village, Pétain's observations of agricultural and industrial productivity in the Empire reflected the importance he placed on tradition. For example, Pétain frequently observed the Empire through his evaluation of its agricultural productivity during his military inspection visits to A.O.F. in the 1920s. On a visit to a market in Houdougou, Haute-Volta, Pétain was especially attentive to the available agricultural produce. Referring to the market, Pétain wrote on February 6th 1925 that he was "very surprised to see so many people there and so many products for sale – cotton, millet, iron utensils, oxen, horses, goats, sheep, fowl, etc."⁵⁷ Given that the *mise en valeur* doctrine explicitly encouraged agricultural productivity alongside industrial expansion, it is notable that Pétain was so surprised, which may indicate his relatively low opinion of the colonies' ability to produce a variety of products for a large body of consumers.

In addition to their different understandings of *mise en valeur*, de Gaulle and Pétain's interwar colonial rhetoric demonstrated different degrees of paternalism characteristic of the ideas of the doctrine of *association*. When compared to de Gaulle's paternalist tone in his early writings, Pétain used a consistent paternalistic rhetoric grounded in his familial metaphor of Empire. For example, though Pétain stated to a group of Malians in 1925 that

⁵⁶ The *maréchal* "was an admirer of Charles Maurras, the leader of the royalist [and radical-right] *Action Française*," quoted in Richard Vinen, "Vichy: Pétain's Hollow Crown," *History Today* 40, no. 6 (June 1990), 15. In 1936, following the election of the Popular Front, Pétain asserted that "The Croix de Feu [(a nationalist French league)] is one of the soundest elements in the country. It wants to defend the family," quoted in "Left Turn," *Time*, May 11, 1936. However, Pétain's political views were not widely publicized and Pétain himself claimed to his friends that "Je hais la politique et je hais les politiciens," a statement characteristic of right-wing politics at the time, quoted in Bénédicte Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain* (Paris: Perrin, 2014), 249; Vinen, "Vichy: Pétain's Hollow Crown," 15. Rather, Pétain's politics tended to revolve around his respect of military hierarchy and order.

⁵⁷ Philippe Pétain, *Actes et écrits*, ed. Jacques Isorni (Paris: Flammarion, 1974), 380. "très surpris d'y voir tant de monde et tant de produits à vendre, coton, mil, ustensiles en fer, bœufs, chevaux, chèvres, moutons, volailles, etc."

“you are French like me, like the governor, like the *commandant de cercle*,” he reminded them not to forget that “you are young French, [and] that you still have much to learn. It has taken centuries for the Frenchman of France to become the man that he is today. It will also require many centuries for you to equal the French that guide you today.”⁵⁸ While Pétain claimed that the Malians were French, he applied a familial metaphor that defined Malians as “young French” on a far lower “tier” of “Frenchness” when compared to the “highly evolved” French of the metropole. This served to demarcate Malians as distinct from the French of metropolitan France. To the *maréchal*, the Malians were similar to children of the Empire who needed to be guided to a point where they could “achieve” the level of civilization of the “French of France.” The “civilized” and “superior” French father-figure would lead its colonial children to higher levels of civilization, if they remained disciplined and obedient.

Pétain’s paternalism also reflected his conservative natalist politics. Pétain was a notorious womanizer who exhibited misogynistic traits towards indigenous women during his visits to the Empire and who believed that indigenous women had a narrowly defined set of purposes.⁵⁹ For instance, while visiting the region of Worogho on February 4th, Pétain was struck by “the ugliness of the women. The men are much better [looking].”⁶⁰ Again, on a visit to Ségou in Mali, the *maréchal* remarked that “The small negresses sang for us a war hymn in their shrill voices; it was really of no musical importance.”⁶¹ In the Ivory Coast,

⁵⁸ Quoted in Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 2014, 201. “Vous êtes français comme moi, comme le gouverneur, comme le commandant du cercle. . . . Vous êtes de jeunes Français, que vous avez encore beaucoup à apprendre. Le Français de France a mis des siècles pour être l’homme qu’il est aujourd’hui. Il vous faudra à vous aussi plusieurs siècles pour égaler les Français qui vous guident aujourd’hui.”

⁵⁹ Vergez-Chaignon, *Pétain*, 60.

⁶⁰ Pétain, *Actes et écrits*, 379. “la laideur des femmes. Les hommes sont beaucoup mieux.”

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 389. “ Les petites négresses nous ont chanté un hymne de guerre de leur voix criarde ; c’était vraiment sans intérêt musical.”

Pétain observed “young boys and girls in their national outfits, that is to say, made out of skin.”⁶² Pétain’s observation of young boys and girls “in their national outfits, that is to say, made out of skin” served as an indication of the degree of condescension with which the *maréchal* wrote about *indigènes*.

In contrast, de Gaulle’s paternalism was less frequent in his descriptions of Empire and was tied to his republican beliefs that it was France’s duty to spread republican values to develop its colonies. For example, de Gaulle argued that

while under our aegis wealth, instruction and liberty abound, we can see the growth there of ideas, passions and interests, the obvious aim of which is the end of our domination. Of course, if we are enabled to pursue our work to the point of progress at which rulers acquire wisdom and the masses become loyal, we shall see populations, which are restless at present, sincerely accept the union [between indigenous rulers and the population].⁶³

De Gaulle understood the “task of developing the colonies” as tied to France’s national existence, but also as an energy consuming process that would ultimately result in “the end of [France’s] domination [in its colonies].” However, before France could achieve this objective, the indigenous rulers in France’s Empire needed to “acquire wisdom” through France’s guidance. De Gaulle’s belief that France’s “work” of guiding the “restless” indigenous populations towards “progress” was consistent with the paternalism associated with *association*. However, de Gaulle separated himself from Pétain through his conviction that instilling French republican values in the Empire to spread “wealth, instruction and liberty” would allow the Empire to achieve “progress.”

While both de Gaulle and Pétain belonged to the prevailing colonial philosophy of the interwar period, Charles de Gaulle’s dedication to republican values further distinguished his

⁶² Ibid., 377. “de[s] jeunes garçons et de[s] jeunes filles en costume national, c’est-à-dire en peau.”

⁶³ Gaulle, *The Army of the Future*, 83-84

conceptualization of Empire from Pétain's. Charles Maurras, the royalist leader of *l'Action Française*, argued that by 1918, the monarchy did not attract de Gaulle; instead the victory of 1918 had proven the value of *République*.⁶⁴ De Gaulle's "conversion" to republicanism was all the more remarkable considering his upbringing in a family where his father identified as a monarchist and his mother considered herself a royalist.⁶⁵ According to Jean Lacouture, one of his biographers, de Gaulle was a republican by 1919 and looked up to politicians such as Paul Reynaud, Louis Marin, and Georges Mandel, who championed "l'esprit jacobin" – a republican political philosophy that advocated for the existence and values of the *République*.⁶⁶ De Gaulle's belief in the *République* early in the interwar years and his support of the anti-fascist weekly magazine *Temps Présent* placed him in stark contrast to Pétain's association with monarchism, fascism, the *Croix de Feu*, and *l'Action Française*.⁶⁷

De Gaulle further distinguished his interwar colonial philosophy from Pétain's beliefs through his conceptualization of French Empire as a vital element of France's ability to assert its authority on a global scale. As an active participant in the First World War himself, de Gaulle's desire to avoid another conflict with Germany influenced his vision of France's position in the world. For instance, referring to France's history of armed conflicts with Germany, de Gaulle understood that "the accumulated weight of history, would preclude us

⁶⁴ Philippe Levillain, "Monarchie," ed. Claire Andrieu, Guillaume Piketty, and Philippe Braud, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 790.

⁶⁵ Established in 1870, the Third Republic valued the ideas of liberalism and republicanism that had emerged during the French Revolution. Supporters of the Revolution advanced the government system of the republic as a necessary replacement to the absolute monarchy; they argued that the purpose of a state was to exist for the common good of its citizens, or in other words, that popular sovereignty guaranteed the existence of a state and its functions through elections. Further, the Third Republic promoted a platform of civil rights such as universal male suffrage, legal trade unions, and the freedom of the press. The Third Republic established itself as secular and promoted anticlericalism as another means to place all French citizens in a new French society founded in "equality." One of the central projects of the early Third Republic was the development of the French Empire; Jules Ferry and Léon Gambetta, two primary liberal republicans of the Third Republic, considered it France's mission to spread French universal values throughout the Empire.

⁶⁶ Lacouture, *Le rebelle*, 291. "L'esprit jacobin" is translated as "the jacobin spirit."

⁶⁷ Lacouture, 292.

from isolation” and that France “form[s] a part of a certain established order of things, whose elements are inextricably interwoven,” given that “we [France] have signed treaties, subscribed to pacts, given undertakings, and adopted an attitude, which, once again, confirms this interdependence.”⁶⁸ The international order before 1945 existed in the form of the League of Nations, established in 1920, and consisted of laws and institutions that governed the relationships between states in an attempt to maintain peace. Within this “established order of things,” de Gaulle saw France as “the Penelope of international work. From this comes the network of pacts, protocols and general acts which she is trying to weave around the world.”⁶⁹ France’s dream was “that of an organized world, where the strictness of the law, the moderateness of desire and the ubiquity of the police would guarantee peace for all.”⁷⁰

Within the system of the League of Nations, de Gaulle’s reference to the “ubiquity of the police” linked to his belief in a professional force alongside a conscript army that could guarantee global peace.⁷¹ Further, within this “organized world,” de Gaulle believed that “. . . the union of nations to guarantee the good of each one would result in the transposition of a specifically French objective into the international scheme.”⁷² His belief connected a peaceful global order and France’s republican identity. To Pétain and the military right, de Gaulle’s belief in the creation of two armies handicapped the unity of France’s, while the left criticized de Gaulle’s “provocative celebration of the *esprit militaire*.”⁷³

⁶⁸ Charles de Gaulle, *The Army of the Future*, 81.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 86. See also Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 73.

⁷² Gaulle, 82.

⁷³ Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 76.

Thus, de Gaulle's understanding of the "international order" in relation to the mandated territory of the Levant in 1931 was unique compared to his contemporaries because he believed that through the adoption of French universal republican values, the Levantine population would be able to undertake the construction of a modern, democratic republic that mirrored France's model. De Gaulle's 1931 address to a population of Levantine students at the Jesuit-affiliated *Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth* in Lebanon demonstrated how he envisioned the future of the mandate. Speaking to the educated elite youth of Lebanon, de Gaulle emphasized how an independent Lebanon would serve as a successful representation of France's prestige within the international order. The *chef de bataillon* instructed the Lebanese youth that "it's a motherland that you must create" in the near future and that "it's up to you to build a state," along with a "public spirit."⁷⁴ De Gaulle further stressed that it was necessary to build a state with "this life of its own, this internal strength, without which there are only empty institutions." To de Gaulle, it was essential that the "Lebanese youth" be prepared for its "national task" which would establish a "president of the Lebanese Republic, . . . linked to France by all the ways of the mind and the heart."⁷⁵ It is important to note that maintaining a tie between France and a newly independent Lebanon imbued with republican values *achieved* France's objective of "transposing" the "union of nations" into "the international scheme."⁷⁶ De Gaulle saw these architects of the Lebanese Republic as an "elite that will be the catalyst of a population charged henceforth with the heavy duties of liberty."⁷⁷ That de Gaulle charged the Lebanese youth with the national tasks

⁷⁴ Quoted in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle I. Le rebelle: 1890 - 1944*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 1984), 165-166. "C'est une patrie que vous avez à faire," "il vous appartient de construire un État," "esprit public."

⁷⁵ Ibid. ". . .cette vie propre, cette force intérieure, sans lesquelles il n'y a que des institutions vides," "tâche nationale," "président de la République libanaise, . . . liée à la France par toutes les voies de l'esprit et du cœur."

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. ". . .élite [qui] sera le ferment d'un peuple chargé, dorénavant, des lourds devoirs de la liberté."

of constructing a free democratic republic, a presidency, a public sphere, government institutions, and a *patrie* (motherland) is telling of de Gaulle's vision of a future independent Lebanese government as a global model that mirrored France's government system and universal republican values. Though de Gaulle noted that France's guidance, his address gave the Lebanese a large amount of agency to build their own future. Far from Pétain's familial metaphor, de Gaulle's message to the Lebanese students of *Université Saint-Joseph* established his understanding of the mandate as an able champion of French universal values such as republicanism, universalism, liberty, popular sovereignty, and equality.

While the concept of France bringing universal values was not new, de Gaulle's philosophy was unique because it emphasized the agency of the Lebanese population. Political scientist Paul-Marie de La Gorce asserted that the message of de Gaulle's speech "was far from the ideas that prevailed at the time in the army, and even in the administration."⁷⁸ Gabriel Bounoure, a professor at l'École des lettres de Beyrouth who witnessed the speech, observed that people were amazed to hear de Gaulle's words. Jean Lacouture also suggested that it would have been rare to hear such a speech from another French military official in 1931.⁷⁹ Literary critic Alexandre Najjar characterized de Gaulle's words as "brave words that reveal a language different from that common among the officers and *colons* of the period."⁸⁰ While these scholars do not explicitly state *how* de Gaulle's speech differed from the prevailing rhetoric of colonial administrations, this paper argues that de Gaulle's interwar colonial philosophy was unique because it perceived the future of

⁷⁸ Quoted in Paul Marie de La Gorce, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 98. ". . .n'était pas, loin de là, les conceptions qui prévalaient alors dans l'armée, pas même dans l'administration."

⁷⁹ Lacouture, *Le rebelle*, 165-166.

⁸⁰ Najjar, *De Gaulle et le Liban*, 39. "[des] Paroles courageuses qui révèlent un langage différent de celui qui tiennent les officiers et colons de l'époque."

Lebanon as a modern, democratic republic created by the agency of Lebanese youth. Further, especially when compared to Pétain's rhetoric, it would have been rare in 1931 and throughout the Third Republic to recognize the role of populations in the achievement of their own independence.

Chapter II: Fractured Identities and First Encounters, 1940

Within the six weeks following the Third Reich's invasion of France on May 10, 1940, France's grandeur would be challenged. To the surprise of the French high command, the Wehrmacht quickly advanced through the Ardennes in Belgium. Colonel Charles de Gaulle took command of the 4th Tank Division on May 15 in a desperate attempt to halt the advance of German Panzers into France. In Paris, Paul Reynaud appointed seventy-two-year-old général Maxime Weygand as Commander in Chief on May 16 and offered the honorary position of Deputy Prime Minister to eighty-four-year-old *maréchal* Pétain on May 18.⁸¹ By June 14, German troops had crossed the Seine and occupied Paris. The French government along with millions of refugees evacuated Paris and the north of France.⁸²

Once Pétain had succeeded Paul Reynaud as prime minister, he began negotiations for a cease-fire. Two weeks after an armistice was signed at Compiègne, the National Assembly met and voted to dissolve the Third Republic with 569 members voting yes out of 649. In the place of the *République*, the Assembly created *l'État français* and gave Pétain full executive and legislative powers, allowing Pétain to appoint all government officials, create all legislation, command the army, and run all foreign affairs.

The day Pétain became Prime Minister, Charles de Gaulle flew from Bordeaux to exile in London where he would immediately challenge Pétain's legality and legitimacy. Between 1940 and 1944, France's Empire was caught between these two claims to legitimacy, and de Gaulle's support for republican values within an international order would influence his conceptualization of the Empire and Free France. By early August of 1940,

⁸¹Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 97-122. De Gaulle was promoted to brigadier general on May 23, 1940. See Jackson, 105.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 97-122.

Vichy had charged de Gaulle with treason and desertion, revoked his military rank, citizenship, and sentenced him to death. De Gaulle's Free France would have to establish its legitimacy over Vichy in a battle of opposing visions of France's identity through methods such as the demonstration of the legality of its respective governmental institutions and its sovereignty within the Empire's territories. To do so, de Gaulle's rhetoric between June and December of 1940 included a multifaceted use of "Empire" that allowed him to justify the legitimacy and sovereignty of the Free France movement while also demonstrating an understanding of the Empire as a territorial and military resource to different audiences.

Whereas Pétain had served a minor role in the Empire throughout his long career, the Second World War was an opportunity to build-out his preexisting familial model of Empire and his militaristic understanding of unity, rather than an example of a shift in the *maréchal's* thinking regarding Empire. When Maréchal Philippe Pétain assumed the position of *Chef d'État* at the age of 84 in 1940, in theory he gained control of almost 4.4 million square miles of territory that constituted France's empire.⁸³ Empire quickly assumed an important role in Pétain's strategy to portray an untarnished image of France's unity despite signing the armistice with Nazi Germany and the challenge from de Gaulle abroad. For example, Pétain stated in 1941 that he had sent General Weygand to Africa in December of 1940 where "in Algiers, Rabat, Tunis, and Dakar, General Weygand proudly demonstrated what is and must be French unity."⁸⁴ To Pétain, the promotion of figures such as Weygand served as a means of illustrating the physical unity between Vichy and its Empire given that Pétain himself had decided to remain within the borders of metropolitan France.

⁸³ Rein Taagepera, "Expansion and Contraction Patterns of Large Polities: Context for Russia," *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (September 1997): 502.

⁸⁴ Pétain, *Actes et écrits*, 595. "À Alger, à Rabat, à Tunis, à Dakar, le général Weygand a fièrement montré ce qu'est et doit être l'unité française."

The *maréchal*'s presence on metropolitan French soil allowed him to establish his legitimacy in opposition to the Free French's presence throughout the Empire. On June 13, 1940, Pétain had established that "It is impossible for the government without emigrating, without deserting, to abandon the French territory. The duty of the government is. . .to remain within the country, at the risk of no longer being recognized as such. Depriving France of its natural defenders in a period of general disarray. . .is to kill France's soul."⁸⁵ Such a statement made the presence of Pétain on French soil essential to the preservation of "France's soul." It deliberately tied Pétain to metropolitan France which allowed him to "share the struggles and miseries" of the French population.⁸⁶ Pétain's distinction of the "French territory" from the rest of the empire established French soil in Europe as key to his legitimacy. Pétain's distinction allowed him to claim that he embodied the defender of French interests and the national spirit of France itself.⁸⁷ Pétain also used his claim to legitimacy tied to metropolitan France in opposition to Free France's challenge. For example, in his address on April 7, 1941, Pétain explained that "the dissidence was born, in June 1940, from the sudden jolt of the French *d'outre-mer* that encouraged [them] to continue the fight, and from the impression that France would not know, on its own soil, how to undertake the necessary *oeuvre* of its recovery."⁸⁸ Pétain's choice to refer to the Free French as "the dissidence" labelled their movement in challenging Pétain's legitimate France. This passage further emphasized the Maréchal's focus on soil and how it was almost insulting that the

⁸⁵ Ibid., 447-448. "Il est impossible au gouvernement sans émigrer, sans désertier, d'abandonner le territoire français. Le devoir du gouvernement est. . .de rester dans le pays, sous peine de n'être plus reconnu comme tel. Priver la France de ses défenseurs naturels dans une période de désarroi général. . .c'est tuer l'âme de la France."

⁸⁶ Ibid., 448. ". . .partager [les] peines et [les] misères"

⁸⁷ Ibid., 447-448.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 595. ". . .la dissidence est née, en juin 1940, du sursaut des Français d'outre-mer qui les poussait à poursuivre la lutte, du sentiment que la France ne saurait, sur son propre sol, entreprendre l'œuvre de redressement nécessaire."

“dissidents” believed that France would be unable to recover on its own land. In addition, Pétain claimed that “There are not several ways to be loyal to France. One cannot serve France against French unity, against the unity of the motherland and of the Empire.”⁸⁹ Though only unity between France and its Empire would allow France to rebuild and recover, Pétain’s need to delegitimize the authority of the Free French forced him to insist that such a process of rebuilding could only occur in the métropole, thus downplaying the importance of the Empire’s ability to legitimate France. As a result, Pétain’s understanding of the “unity” between France and its Empire rested upon the prominence of the métropole. Though Pétain promoted the unity between Vichy and the Empire, his claim to sovereignty lay in his argument of the power of the métropole’s soil.

In his calls for unity, Pétain’s paternalistic understanding of the Empire reinforced his belief that the Empire was bound to metropolitan France. Pétain stated that “I have not been less attentive to our colonies than to the metropole. The armistice safeguards the ties that unite the metropole to the colonies. France has the right to count on their loyalty.”⁹⁰ Such an understanding of the relationship between Empire and metropole underscored Pétain’s that as the separate subordinates of metropolitan France, the colonies had a duty to support and obey the motherland.

It is important to note that Pétain addressed some of his messages directly to the inhabitants of the Empire and that the *maréchal’s* rhetoric also served to categorize the differences between residents of the Empire. For example, in a radio message to the Empire on September 3, 1940, Pétain addressed the “populations *d’outre-mer*,. . .their governors,. . .

⁸⁹ Ibid., 595. “Il n’y a pas plusieurs manières d’être fidèles à la France. On ne peut pas servir la France contre l’unité française, contre l’unité de la mère patrie et de l’Empire.”

⁹⁰ Ibid. “Je n’ai pas été moins soucieux de nos colonies que de la métropole. L’armistice sauvegarde les liens qui l’unissent à elles. La France a le droit de compter sur leur loyauté.”

.their *colons*,. . .to the citizens, subjects, and inhabitants living in French protectorates.”⁹¹

Pétain’s use of categories underscored his understanding of France and its colonies as separate. Pétain compartmentalized and differentiated between French citizens, subjects of the French Empire, and the inhabitants of France’s protectorates.

Compared to Pétain, *général* de Gaulle quickly demonstrated a multifaceted understanding of the Empire that overlapped between two levels; on the one hand, de Gaulle worked at a high, abstract level to link the Empire to his understanding of French national identity. On the other hand, on a more concrete level, de Gaulle worked to present the Empire as a practical resource for Free France. De Gaulle moved between these uses of “Empire” in his messages to legitimate Free France. For instance, as early as June 18, the *général* stated that “This war is not restricted to the unfortunate territory of our country. This war is not decided by the Battle of France. This war is a world war.”⁹² In direct contrast to Pétain, who emphasized the prominence of the metropole, de Gaulle asserted his belief in a France that extended its national identity to the Empire and within the international order. De Gaulle’s statement also allowed him to make the more practical claim that Empire existed as an extension of French soil, thus legitimating his absence from the metropole. By using the

⁹¹ Ibid., 459. “. . .populations d’outre-mer,. . . leurs gouverneurs,. . . leurs colons, aux citoyens, sujets, et protégés français.”

⁹² Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – L’appel*, 331. “Cette guerre n’est pas limitée au territoire malheureux de notre pays. Cette guerre n’est pas tranchée par la bataille de France. Cette guerre est une guerre mondiale.” It is important to note at this point that while parts of de Gaulle’s *Appel du 18 juin* were later reprinted in clandestine newspapers, the *Appel* was not initially recorded and few individuals around the globe even heard it, though Vichy certainly did. As the radio became an important tool for the general to project his voice and message within the Empire, it is interesting to consider how de Gaulle *imagined* his audience. Certain edited collections of his speeches indicate the general’s intended audience, while sometimes de Gaulle himself identified his audience within his messages. Regardless of de Gaulle’s intended audience, it is difficult to gauge exactly *who* he was reaching; French citizens in metropolitan France faced danger if caught listening to the BBC as a clandestine activity. Even *Radio Brazzaville* did not have a strong enough signal to reach Europe until 1942. Meanwhile, most *colons* in the Empire could not afford a radio to listen to the general.

Empire as a territorial claim to legitimacy, de Gaulle could justify Free France as a movement that continued despite Pétain's metropolitan isolationism.

Establishing that it was a crime against France to surrender territory in the Empire to an enemy that consisted of Vichy and Germany let de Gaulle establish the Empire as an extension of French soil while also justifying his call to resist. On June 19, de Gaulle addressed French soldiers within the Empire from London in a radio speech stating that "Every Frenchman that continues to carry weapons has the utmost duty to continue the resistance."⁹³ Instead of exclusively prioritizing higher ranking military officials, de Gaulle quickly saw the Empire as a resource for recruiting *any* "French" soldiers. The general made a similar plea on June 22 when he invited "the leaders and soldiers, sailors, and aviators of the French infantry, naval, or air forces, wherever they may currently be, to establish contact with me."⁹⁴ In this speech, de Gaulle reinforced his desire to target an audience within a broad hierarchical spectrum. However, as a wanted man, de Gaulle's rallying cries would not have appealed to many listeners. To ensure that his audience would listen to his message, it was necessary for de Gaulle to counter on June 19 that ". . .to submit any piece of French land to enemy control would be a crime against the motherland."⁹⁵ Given that de Gaulle was speaking days after Pétain had agreed to lay down arms against the Third Reich, his mention of the "enemy" included both Vichy and the Third Reich. As a result, de Gaulle distinguished his understanding of "*French*" from Pétain's while also claiming that the French Empire

⁹³ Gaulle, *DM*, "19 juin 1940," 4-5. "Tout Français qui porte encore des armes a le devoir absolu de continuer la résistance."

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, "22 juin 40," 5-7. "Les chefs et les soldats, les marins, les aviateurs des forces françaises de terre, de mer, de l'air où qu'ils se trouvent actuellement, à se mettre en rapport avec moi."

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, "19 juin 1940," 4-5. ". . .de soumettre n'importe quel morceau de terre française au contrôle de l'ennemi, ce serait un crime contre la patrie."

itself was French. This would also allow him to argue that de Gaulle's presence in the Empire placed him on French soil.

Considering de Gaulle's lack of legacy within the Empire, the General evoked prestigious colonial military figures tied to France's imperial history to erase Pétain's position in France's military narrative while also appealing to French soldiers throughout the Empire to rally to Free France.

De Gaulle stressed that "In the Africa of Clauzel, Bugeaud, Lyautey, Noguès, everything that has honor has the strict duty to refuse to carry out enemy orders."⁹⁶ The first three men were legendary French imperial figures and *maréchaux de France* – France's highest military distinction.⁹⁷ On the same day, de Gaulle sent a telegram to Noguès, the well-respected commander-in-chief of French North Africa in 1940, asking him to continue fighting against Germany. Noguès ultimately refused de Gaulle's call, but de Gaulle's list of colonial military figures nonetheless attempted to evoke a colonial legacy that de Gaulle did not possess in order to increase his own credibility.

Perhaps more importantly, de Gaulle's mention of Noguès was a direct challenge to Pétain's own military authority, given that Noguès technically served under Pétain. Again, on July 2, de Gaulle pleaded from London to his listeners in the metropole and in the Empire: ". . .these Frenchmen who put France before the cause of pride, of terror, or interests, I implore them to ask themselves this. . . would Dupleix, Montcalm, Bugeaud, or maréchal Lyautey, have ever consented to evacuate, without fighting, the strategic points of the Empire; would

⁹⁶ Ibid. "Dans l'Afrique de Clauzel, de Bugeaud, de Lyautey, de Noguès, tout ce qui a de l'honneur a le strict devoir de refuser l'exécution des conditions ennemies."

⁹⁷ Clauzel participated in the conquest of Algeria, Bugeaud later served as *gouverneur-général* of Algeria, and Lyautey had served as the *resident-général* of the Moroccan protectorate following a successful colonial career.

they have ever supported the enemy's control of the Empire without even having fought?"⁹⁸

While evoking important colonial military figures, this particular speech also placed these figures in opposition to Vichy's policies and establishing an abstract definition of "Frenchness" that included placing "France" before "pride," "fear," or "interests" and refusing to abandon France's Empire. Further, highlighting how Vichy had failed to consider the Empire's global resources allowed de Gaulle to contrast his understanding of France as a global presence with Vichy's defeatist policies.

Within the first few months of de Gaulle's attempt to rally supporters to his cause, the general also used the Empire to promote his vision of a French national identity tied to the international order while recognizing the Empire as an important economic asset. In late June of 1940, de Gaulle again called on members of the military to bring "liberty to the world and *grandeur* to the motherland."⁹⁹ When compared to de Gaulle's interwar writings that advocated for a global French professional force that would guarantee liberty, this message reinforced de Gaulle's desire to operate on a high level that tied his understanding of French national identity to abstract ideals such as "liberty" and "grandeur." On the other hand, de Gaulle was able to recognize the practical value of the Empire, such as when the general stated on August 3 from London that accepting a German and Italian presence in France's Empire "would mean losing our colonies. For each of them, this would mean surrendering their weapons, demobilizing the troops that guard them, renouncing all economic trade, and,

⁹⁸ Gaulle, *DM*, "2 juillet, 40," 12. "[. . .] ces Français qui font passer la France avant la cause de l'orgueil, de la terreur ou des intérêts, je les adjure de se demander ceci. . . Dupleix, Montcalm, Bugeaud, le maréchal Lyautey, auraient-ils jamais consenti à évacuer, sans combattre, les points stratégiques de l'Empire, auraient-ils jamais supporté sans même avoir livré combat, le contrôle de l'ennemi sur l'Empire ?"

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8. See also see p. 10. "la liberté au monde et la grandeur à la Patrie."

as a result, dooming themselves to ruin and to revolts.”¹⁰⁰ To prevent these events, de Gaulle argued that it was necessary that “French” inhabitants of the Empire “impose their will so that the defense and the economic life of the territory where they live may be ensured in the present and in the future.”¹⁰¹ These examples indicate that de Gaulle was acutely aware of the Empire’s military and economic importance. His multifaceted understanding of Empire in 1940 reflected his interwar vision of Empire.

As the general came into contact with new territories and audiences within the Empire in the fall of 1940, however, these elements would complicate his interwar understanding of the Empire’s role in the international order. For instance, de Gaulle’s definition of the “*French*” evolved as soon as Tchad rallied to Free France on August 26, 1940.¹⁰² In a speech presented on the BBC radio the next day, de Gaulle stated that “France, crushed, humiliated, handed over, begins to climb back up the slope of the abyss. The French of Tchad have just proven this. . . .the territory of Tchad,. . . .by its admirable resolution, has shown the path towards duty and gives the signal of recovery (*redressement*) to the entire French Empire.”¹⁰³ Whereas de Gaulle’s previous calls to the Empire had only used “*Français*” for primarily military “French” individuals within the Empire, this message added a new layer of categorization to “*Français*” with the introduction of “*Français du*

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., “3 août 1940,” 21-22. “Signifie perdre nos colonies. Pour chacune d’elles, cela signifie livrer ses armes, démobiliser les troupes qui la gardent, renoncer à tous échanges économiques et, par suite, se vouer à la ruine et aux révoltes.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid. “Imposent leur volonté pour que la défense et la vie économique du territoire où ils vivent soient assurées dans le présent et dans l’avenir.”

¹⁰² This paper will use the French spelling of “Tchad” as opposed to “Chad.”

¹⁰³ Gaulle, *DM*, “27 août 1940,” 30-31. “La France, écrasée, humiliée, livrée, commence à remonter la pente de l’abîme. Les Français du Tchad viennent d’en donner la preuve. . . .le territoire du Tchad,. . . .par son admirable résolution, a montré le chemin du devoir et donne le signal du redressement à l’Empire français tout entier.” It is difficult to find a single English word equivalent to the meaning of “redressement.” “Redressement” includes the verb “redresser,” which can literally be translated as “making straight again.” “Redressement” implies the action of “making straight again” a physical or figurative element that has been deformed.

Tchad.” De Gaulle now had a particular group of French citizens within the Empire that he could use as a model to suggest how the rest of the Empire should “restore” itself. To de Gaulle, the “*Français du Tchad*” also supported his position that France indeed had the will and capacity to continue resisting on the global scale. The general explained that “Throughout the world, people imagined that, surely, France would no longer fight. These people have made a mistake.”¹⁰⁴ For the first time, in his career, de Gaulle had equated French inhabitants of a colony, in this case Tchad, with *France* itself. Rather than simple *colons*, these “*Français du Tchad*” had become “*la France*,” indicating how quickly his contact with the Empire had focused de Gaulle’s more abstract interwar understanding of the Empire.

Two days later, following the rallying of Cameroun and the Congo, de Gaulle added an additional layer to his description of A.E.F. when describing “*populations*,” the ambiguity of the term complicated how de Gaulle conceptualized Empire and its role in Free France. Speaking again from London, de Gaulle described the public reception his representative, Colonel de Larminat received in Brazzaville, stating that “Yesterday, August 28, at Brazzaville, capital of French Equatorial Africa, my representative, hailed by the entire population and obeyed by all the troops, has taken the civil and military powers in hand.”¹⁰⁵ The telling use of “*toute la population*” allowed de Gaulle to present a narrative highlighting *unanimous* and *obedient* support to Free France in A.E.F.¹⁰⁶ But “*population*” also opened up

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. “Dans le monde, des gens se sont imaginés que, décidément, la France ne se battrait plus. Ces gens ont commis une erreur.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., “29 août 1940,” 31-32. “Hier, 28 août, à Brazzaville, capitale de l’Afrique Equatoriale française, mon représentant, acclamé par toute la population et obéi par toutes les troupes, a pris en main les pouvoirs civils et militaires.”

¹⁰⁶ Despite de Gaulle’s optimism, newspapers such as *France d’Abord* and secondary sources such as Jennings demonstrate that unanimous support towards de Gaulle and in Free France was not the case. This will be addressed below.

space for the inclusion of *indigènes* within de Gaulle's conceptualization of Empire. Whereas de Gaulle in previous speeches had only referred to the "French" within the Empire, it was important for the General to demonstrate that the entire population, which included both a majority of *indigènes* and a minority of French citizens, supported the arrival of Colonel de Larminat. Later in the same speech, the General further suggested a *population* larger than the few thousand *colons* living in A.E.F. when he indicated that within "[. . .] this global and total war, in this war everything counts, the French Empire is a cluster of essential forces. Through the geographic and strategic situation, through the numerous population, through the vast resources of its colonies, there remain very important assets for France in this struggle where France's destiny is played out."¹⁰⁷ Again, the small population of *colons* in l'A.E.F. most likely did not fill de Gaulle's definition of "the numerous population." Rather, this passage was the General's first allusion to the Empire's ability to provide *colonial troops* to its war effort (among other resources), in addition to *Français* serving in the military; the rallying of A.E.F. introduced this important new category within his vision of France's global military effort in the general's rhetoric.

From de Gaulle's first visit to Brazzaville on October 24, 1940, his continued attempt to stress the "French" character of A.E.F. while also acknowledging *indigènes* in his speeches challenged how *indigènes* might fit within Free France's global movement and how de Gaulle could manipulate new categories of audiences to represent one vision of French national identity. For example, two days after his arrival, de Gaulle declared on Radio Brazzaville that "I feel how much this land is French. . . .Free French, French of Brazzaville!

¹⁰⁷ Gaulle, *DM*, "29 août 1940," 31-32. "[. . .] cette guerre mondiale et totale, dans cette guerre où tout compte, l'Empire français est un faisceau de forces capital. Par la situation géographique et stratégique, par la nombreuse population, par les vastes ressources de ses colonies, il reste à la France de très importants atouts dans cette lutte où se joue son destin."

And you, *indigènes* that are faithful to France, we know what hard duties impose on us the salvation of the Empire and the salvation of the country.”¹⁰⁸ In an earlier address, the General had also observed “in all the French and in all *indigènes* the same ardor and the same will.”¹⁰⁹ Almost immediately following de Gaulle’s arrival to A.E.F., the term “*indigènes*” and a new category of “*Français*,” the “French of Brazzaville,” entered the vocabulary of his speeches as not exclusively separate terms. According to de Gaulle, *indigènes* were to be praised for their “loyalty” to France, and shared “will” and “ardor.” Further, the general was clear to highlight the “French” nature of the territory. Though de Gaulle formed distinct new categories to define different audiences in A.E.F., he also believed these categories could be unified when he needed to define “France.”

De Gaulle’s creation of a governing institutions of Free France, the Empire Defense Council (CDE), that existed outside of France’s metropolitan borders, further contributed to the Empire’s complex role within a “French” identity.¹¹⁰ De Gaulle announced the CDE’s creation through an administrative order during his Brazzaville Manifesto on October 27, 1940. Mainly an advisory body, the CDE was nonetheless an attempt at legitimizing the Free French movement through the creation of a governing body.¹¹¹ De Gaulle presented one of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., “26 octobre, 1940,” 35- 36. “Je sens combien cette terre est française. . . . Français Libres, Français de Brazzaville ! et vous, populations indigènes fidèles à la France, nous savons quels durs devoirs nous imposent le salut de l’Empire et le salut du pays.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., “27 août, 1940, Léopoldville,” 38-39. “Chez tous les Français et chez tous les indigènes la même ardeur et la même volonté.”

¹¹⁰ The French term for the Empire Defense Council is the “Conseil de défense de l’Empire”

¹¹¹ Marcel Morabito, “Brazzaville (Manifeste De),” ed. Guillaume Piketty, Philippe Braud, and Claire Andrieu, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 150-151. An accord between Britain and Free France on August 7 of 1940 established that Britain recognized Free France as a government in exile and that Britain would respect the sovereignty of the French Empire’s borders. As a result, de Gaulle began to create a government organ for Free France, resulting in the CDE. Headquartered in London, the members of the CDE included General Georges Catroux, Vice-Admiral Émile Muselier, General Edgard de Larminat, Governor Félix Éboué, Governor Henri Sautot, Colonel Philippe Leclerc, *Médecin-général* Adolphe Sicé, Permanent Secretary René Cassin, and Captain Georges Thierry d’Argenlieu. Though headquartered in London, many members of the CDE, notably Sicé and Éboué, operated primarily from Brazzaville.

the CDE's central functions as maintaining "faithfulness to France, ensuring external and internal security, directing economic activity and sustaining the moral cohesion of the populations of the territories of the Empire."¹¹² The Conseil also reserved the power to "negotiate questions relative to the defense of French possessions and to French interests with foreign powers."¹¹³ Prior to the creation of the CDE, France had administered its colonies through a minister of the colonies, who was based in Paris. Henry Lémery served as Vichy's *ministre des colonies* from July to September of 1940 before the "radically Vichyite" Charles Platon replaced him.¹¹⁴ In contrast, de Gaulle's CDE defended its legitimacy through its declaration that "As long as a French government and a representation of the French people cannot be constituted. . . independent of the enemy, the public administration in all parts of the Empire free from control of the enemy will be exercised. . ."¹¹⁵ Thus, the CDE was unique in that it established a political institution that claimed to represent "public authority" *outside* of the metropole. De Gaulle's formulation of a functioning French government in the Empire established that the Empire was a legitimate French space where France could create and administer a government.

Upon his return to London in mid-November of 1940, de Gaulle reverted to his use of more abstract representations of "Empire" to communicate his understanding of resistance as tied to Empire and French national identity to a broader audience. As a result of the adherence of the A.E.F. territories to Free France, the status of the Empire now represented

¹¹² Gaullé, *Mémoires de guerre – L'appel*, 350.

¹¹³ Ibid., 350. "La fidélité à la France, veiller à la sécurité extérieure et à la sûreté intérieure, de diriger l'activité économique et de soutenir la cohésion morale des populations des territoires de l'Empire." "traite avec les puissances étrangères des questions relative à la défense des possessions françaises et aux intérêts français."

¹¹⁴ Jennings, *Vichy in the Tropics*, 21.

¹¹⁵ Gaullé, *Mémoires de guerre – L'appel*, 350. "...Aussi longtemps qu'il n'y aura pu être constitué un gouvernement français et une représentation du peuple français. . . indépendants de l'ennemi, les pouvoirs publics, dans toutes les parties de l'Empire libérées du contrôle de l'ennemi, seront exercés. . ."

both a *reason* to continue the war and a concrete piece of *evidence* supporting de Gaulle's vision of a robust Free France acting on an international level. For his French audience in the *métropole*, de Gaulle preferred fewer categories than the General had used when speaking to his audience in A.E.F. Speaking from the BBC radio on November 29, de Gaulle reported "The results? . . . We have at this moment. . . territories in full operation in Africa, Indochina, and in the Pacific, and significant groupings in all the countries of the world."¹¹⁶ De Gaulle also explained that "[the Free French are] an army and an army of volunteers."¹¹⁷ Such passages served to present tangible evidence of Free France's strong support around the globe. Not even a month prior, de Gaulle had recognized *indigènes* in Brazzaville as separate from the *Français Libres*, but nonetheless recognized their loyalty to France. As a result, it can be argued that de Gaulle chose to recognize *indigènes* when he was faced with an audience that he imagined included *indigènes*. However, when speaking to the *métropole* and to the rest of the world from London, de Gaulle did not include *indigènes* in his attempt to emphasize the French character of Free France. De Gaulle went on to claim that Free France had "growing financial resources, newspapers, radio stations, and, above all, the certainty that we are present every minute in the mind and heart of every Frenchman of France."¹¹⁸ It was essential that *Les Français Libres*, not *indigènes*, be remembered in the spirits and hearts of the inhabitants of metropolitan France. Further, de Gaulle stated that Free France desired an eventual victory to be "as much as possible, a French victory. . . . From this certain victory,

¹¹⁶ Gaulle, *DM*, "29 novembre 1940," 44. "Les résultats ? . . . Nous avons en ce moment . . . des territoires en pleine activité en Afrique, en Inde Française et dans le Pacifique, des groupements importants dans tous les pays du monde."

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 44. "[Les Français Libres sont] une armée et une armée de volontaires."

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, "Des ressources financières croissantes, des journaux, des postes de radio et, par-dessus tout, la certitude que nous sommes présents à chaque minute dans l'esprit et dans le cœur de tous les Français de France."

from our victory, we agree, we, the Free French, that a new France must emerge.”¹¹⁹ De Gaulle associated different categories of audiences within the Empire with “France;” for instance, as a result of the efforts of colonies such as Tchad, “France” was alive in the Empire.

Among the resources of Free France that the General presented on November 29, newspapers (*journaux*) would serve as an important canvas for French residents of A.E.F. to articulate how they imagined their role within Free France in relation to Charles de Gaulle’s public speeches, press conferences, and publications. De Gaulle’s November 29 speech demonstrated the General’s awareness of the important function of newspapers in addition to radio stations within the Free French global network that he was working to legitimate.

Brazzaville’s Response

While de Gaulle worked quickly to establish a multifaceted conceptualization of Empire that adapted to different audiences in the summer of 1940, the rallying of Brazzaville and A.E.F. to Free France was not unanimous. On the contrary, though the contradicting messages of de Gaulle and Pétain contributed to confusion throughout the Empire, most Europeans and indigenous populations in French North Africa, West Africa, and Equatorial Africa were *pétainiste*, according to Ollandet, and reluctant to pledge their loyalty to an unknown general.¹²⁰ Their reasons varied; for example, for “modestes fonctionnaires” in Brazzaville to rally would have placed their professions and lives at stake. Among the indigenous populations in A.E.F., Pétain had historically been represented to the veteran *tirailleurs sénégalais* of A.E.F. and to the new *tirailleurs* as “the man who stopped the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., “29 novembre 1940,” 44-45. “Le plus possible, une victoire française. . . De cette victoire certaine, de notre victoire, nous entendons nous, les Français Libres, qu’une France nouvelle doit sortir.”

¹²⁰ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 77; Jennings, *La France libre*, 57.

Germans” and these soldiers “spoke of him with veneration” prior to de Gaulle’s challenge to Vichy.¹²¹ In comparison, de Gaulle was virtually unknown in both the Empire and the métropole at the time of his June 18 *Appel*. By July 30, 1940, Vichy controlled A.O.F. and would soon administer French North Africa. As the largest remaining territory in France’s Empire, A.E.F. became one of the last opportunities for de Gaulle and Free France to establish their movement. This was a tall task, however, as Susan Traver, an English volunteer in the Free French forces who was stationed in Brazzaville between the end of 1940 and early 1941 described the *colons* of the city as of 2000 as individuals who “did not seem to like one another, and were divided into rigid social cliques, they were especially pro-Vichy and anti-English.”¹²² Faced with such a difficult situation, De Gaulle and his supporters needed to move quickly to have a chance at rallying A.E.F.

The rapid rallying of A.E.F. and Brazzaville to Free France depended on local and external circumstances, including the proximity of British colonies to the territory, and a minority of *colons* and Gaullist agents who were able to take advantage of the hesitations of Vichy officials to take over the administration. The Director-General of the A.E.F. Sanitary and Medical Services from April, 1940, who supported de Gaulle and later served as the High-Commissioner of Free French Africa, Alphonse Sicé explained in his 1946 memoir that a minority of *colons* had formed “a patriotic league for liberty and honor” in early August to rally the colony to de Gaulle.¹²³ Of course, such a “patriotic league for liberty and honor”

¹²¹ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 59, 64. “L’homme qui arrêta les Allemands,” “parlaient de lui avec vénération.”

¹²² Quoted in Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine*, 57. “Ne semblaient guère s’aimer, et divisés en cliques sociales et rigides, ils étaient surtout pro-Vichy et anti-Anglais.” See Susan Travers, *Tomorrow to Be Brave* (London: Transworld, 2000). Though Eric Jennings questions whether Susan Travers, who wrote her account in 2000, had exaggerated the “popularity of Vichy,” the account is striking because it demonstrates a lack of unanimity in Brazzaville absent from the prevailing narrative of the rallying of Brazzaville.

¹²³ “une ligue patriotique pour la liberté et l’honneur,” quoted in Adolphe Sicé, *L’Afrique Équatoriale française et le Cameroun au service de la France (26-27-28 Août 1940)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1946),

represented a minority of French men who mostly served as civil servants in Brazzaville. Indeed, Jennings argues that the rallying of l'A.E.F. was "above anything an act of persuasion directed towards the administrators of the colonies."¹²⁴ Ollandet had previously established this through his claim that "General de Gaulle's men in fact used all expedients. . . .The decision was that of a minority that had understood how to profit from the hesitations of local representatives of the Vichy government."¹²⁵ Jennings describes this process of "persuasion" throughout A.E.F. as a gamble as, for example, Gaullist agents sent to Brazzaville, such as Edgar de Larminat, used methods such as the distribution of propaganda flyers to simultaneously pressure the pro-Vichy administration to rally to de Gaulle while also attempting to convince *both* Europeans and *indigènes* to join Free France.¹²⁶ For instance, Claude Hettier de Boislambert, another Gaullist agent who had landed in A.E.F. in early August of 1940, wrote from Pointe-Noire between August 26 and 28 of 1940 that he had won over the loyalty of the European population as well as "high ranking Africans."¹²⁷ Thus, while the individuals initially behind the rallying of A.E.F. represented a minority of French *colons* and Gaullist agents, these individuals also sought to convince elite *indigènes*, illustrating their commitment to achieving support from a variety of populations. Writing in 1946, Adolphe Sicé wrote of the conviction of Amadou Diop, a prominent member of the the senegalese community of Brazzaville, to continue fighting despite the Armistice a few days

122. Born in Martinique in 1885, Sicé dedicated the majority of his life to the study of tropical medicine in various corners of France's Empire. Along with other high-ranking supporters of de Gaulle such as Félix Eboué, Edgar de Larminat, and Georges Catroux, Adolphe Sicé had important experience serving in France's Empire. "Free French Africa" is translated from "*l'Afrique française libre*."

¹²⁴ Jennings, *La France libre*, 41. "Avant tout un acte de persuasion dirigé vers les administrateurs des colonies."

¹²⁵ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 79. "Les hommes du général de Gaulle usèrent en fait de tous les expédients. . . .La décision fut celle d'une minorité qui avait su tirer profit des hésitations des représentants locaux du gouvernement de Vichy."

¹²⁶ Jennings, *La France libre*, 42-43.

¹²⁷ Quoted in Jennings, *La France libre*, 42. "Quelques Africains de marque."

after the signing of the document in June of 1940.¹²⁸ Further, Sicé observed that the flyers distributed by Edgar de Larminat that targeted mainly a European audience also had an effect on Africans in the city.¹²⁹ Throughout the month of August, Gaullist agents and supporters continued to gather support for Free France from these diverse populations.

The events of August 28, 1940, however, were far from de Gaulle's depiction of de Larminat entering the capital "hailed by the entire population and obeyed by all the troops." Following Tchad's announcement to join Free France on August 26 and Cameroon's on August 27, the rallying of Brazzaville and the French Congo occurred quickly on August 28, but was far from what de Gaulle's represented as unanimous. According to Ollandet, the small group of Gaullist agents, *colons*, and military officials began their *coup de force* at around 11:30 AM when Captain Louis Oubre ordered the arrest of the *chef de bataillon* of the *Camp Tchad*, contributing to the paralysis of the military staff of Brazzaville. As a result, the pro-Vichy governor-general of Brazzaville, General Louis Husson, could not communicate with the troops that remained loyal to his orders and retreated to the Governor's Palace.¹³⁰ According to Ollandet, as the capital of A.E.F., the success of Brazzaville's *coup de force* "consecrated the official response of the entire Empire to the *Appel du 18 juin, 1940*."¹³¹

Ignored in the current historical narrative of Brazzaville's rallying are the local representations of the event between 1940 and 1942 that demonstrated that some of the

¹²⁸ It is unclear how large the *communauté sénégalaise* was in Brazzaville in 1940. However, the neighborhoods of Baongo and Potopoto included a variety of ethnicities spanning western and central Africa. Thus, the presence of a Senegalese community in Brazzaville would not have been surprising at this time. Sicé, *L'Afrique Équatoriale française*, 86.

¹²⁹ Sicé, *L'Afrique Équatoriale française*, 86, 141.

¹³⁰ Adolphe Sicé quoted in Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 91. "Portail qui fait face à l'Institut Pasteur," "après de brèves sommations."

¹³¹ Ollandet, 86. "Consacrait la réponse officielle de toute l'empire d'[A.E.F.] à l'appel du 18 juin 1940."

French who participated in the rallying of Brazzaville in 1940 saw their efforts as an integral part of the resistance movement and of the French character of Free France. The monthly newspaper, *France d'Abord*, provides an important window into the local dynamics in Brazzaville and their relationship to Free France between 1940 and 1942. *France d'Abord* was a non-commercial bi-monthly newspaper written in Brazzaville and printed at the “Printing Office of the Belgian Colonial Future” in Léopoldville and claimed to distribute “thousands of copies” throughout the entire globe, according to the paper’s editor-in-chief, Louis Droux.¹³² The newspaper’s editorial board represented different types of the “French” population of Brazzaville, including journalists such as Louis Droux, as well as *fonctionnaires*, a veterinarian, a manufacturer, a law student, and an architect.¹³³ One key commonality between the members and contributors of *France d'Abord* was that they all belonged to the privileged European population of Brazzaville. Further, they wrote their newspaper for what they identified as a “French” audience that excluded colonial subjects.¹³⁴ Issues of *France d'Abord* included articles, stories, etchings, or poems from a handful of regular contributors, such as Madeleine Guillon, Roger Frey, the postwar administrator of Potopoto, and Gabriel Droux, a member of the Brazzaville Institute of Central African

¹³² *France d'Abord*, 12 mars 1942, 12. “. . .des milliers d'exemplaires. . .” The original French name of “the Printing Office of the Belgian Colonial Future” was “ l’Imprimerie de l’Avenir Colonial Belge.” From this point forward, *France d'Abord* will be abbreviated as *Fd*. Further, the dates of the issues of *France d'Abord* are kept in the original French.

¹³³ *Fd*, 22 février, 1942, 10.

¹³⁴ Though the target readership of *France d'Abord* was the “French,” hints of indigenous voices appeared in photographs, articles, reprinted messages from indigenous leaders, or poems in different issues of the newspaper. See for example *Fd*, 31 décembre, 10, and *Fd*, 22 février, 2. Further, there is evidence that suggests that indigenous readers of the newspaper existed. For example, in the 22 février, 1942 issue of *France d'Abord*, the second page included an announcement to “*Français d’Afrique Équatoriale et du Cameroun*” that requested that they send donations to the “*Œuvres de Guerre russes*” (“Russian War Charity”) and that stated that the names of donors would be printed in *France d'Abord*. In the 31 mai, 1942 issue of *France d'Abord*, the sixteenth page listed two common surnames among Sub-Saharan cultures, Mr. Kiboba, and Mr. Boubakar, indicating that certain colonial subjects may have read this announcement.

Studies.¹³⁵ Lucienne Droux managed the newspaper.¹³⁶ The paper's mission was to "exalt passionately, above all, everything that is French," but as Chapter IV will highlight, *France d'Abord*'s various definitions of "French" did not always overlap with de Gaulle's understanding of Empire and French identity.¹³⁷ For instance, the editorial board of the paper took pride in the local character of its participation in the rallying of Brazzaville, stating that *France d'Abord* was "founded by a group of Free French, who all actively participated in the liberation movement of 26, 27, and 28 August, 1940."¹³⁸

The shared claim that members of *France d'Abord* had actively participated in the rallying served as a core of Brazzaville as a key participant in the Free French movement. As a result, the newspaper provided its audience with *France d'Abord*'s narrative of the *Trois Glorieuses*. For example, in the September 6 issue of 1941 of *France d'Abord*, the paper reminded its readers that following the armistice of June 22, A.E.F. and Cameroon "immediately" voiced their opposition as different "organisms, associations, or local chambers of commerce" pleaded with colonial authorities to continue resisting through the creation of a "bloc africain."¹³⁹ Such an account minimized the dominant pro-Pétain public opinion to place the European inhabitants of A.E.F. and Cameroon as some of the first

¹³⁵ *France d'Abord* included fleeting windows into the lives of French women within the Empire during the war. One of the newspaper's few female writers, Madeleine Guillon, continued to write articles in 1943 in the newspaper, *A.E.F.*, demonstrating that women in Brazzaville were in positions to interpret news and publish their opinions. With regards to the voices of indigenous women, they only appear sparingly in Ollandet and Jennings' work, reinforcing the need for more research to rediscover those lives.

¹³⁶ While Louis, Gabriel, and Lucienne shared a last name, indicating a possibility that all three individuals were related, this study has not found conclusive evidence of this fact.

¹³⁷ *Fd*, 31 décembre, 1941, 2. ". . .exalter, par-dessus tout, passionnément, tout ce qui est français."

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 mars, 1942, 12. ". . .fondé par un groupe de Français Libres, ayant tous participé activement au mouvement libérateur des 26, 27, et 28 août 1940. Given the lack of primary sources detailing the participation of French inhabitants in the rallying of Brazzaville, it is difficult to determine the extent to which each member of *France d'Abord*'s editorial board took part. However, Adolphe Sicé's 1946 memoir claimed that Louis Droux was an active participant in the events leading up to August 28. According to Sicé, Droux's distribution of propaganda flyers in Brazzaville between August 23 and 24 resulted in judicial proceedings against him shortly thereafter. See Sicé, *L'Afrique Équatoriale française*, 118, 123, 140.

¹³⁹ *Fd*, 6 septembre, 1941, 4-6. ". . .organismes, associations ou Chambres de Commerce locales"

supporters of rejecting the armistice. The article continued to detail the participation of the supporters of Free France in its statement that after July 20 1940, “multiple fonctionnaires and directors of chambers of commerce are establishing contact with diverse military entities to establish a plan of action.”¹⁴⁰ On August 23, the article stated that “Brave men, despite tightening surveillance that they are subject to on a daily basis, have more and more contact with colonel de Larminat.”¹⁴¹ While this passage noted the “surveillance” of pro-Vichy administrators, the newspaper used this acknowledgment to accentuate the “brave” character of the supporters of Free France. Thus, although de Gaulle’s understanding of the rallying as “unanimous” allowed him to highlight the unity of Free France, the Free French Brazzavillois recognized the existence of Vichy supporters to highlight their own heroism in the events leading up to August 28. One of these “brave men” happened to be Louis Droux, who, according to *France d’Abord*’s August 28, 1942 edition signed the “Call of the Patriotic League for Liberty and Honor.” Demonstrating that its own editor-in chief was a key participant in the rallying of Brazzaville, *France d’Abord* could further establish its claim to represent Free France.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., “plusieurs fonctionnaires et directeurs de maisons de commerce se mettent en rapport avec divers éléments militaires pour établir un plan d’action.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 6 septembre, 1941, 4-6. “Des hommes courageux, malgré la surveillance chaque jour plus étroite dont ils sont l’objet, ont des contacts de plus en plus fréquents avec le colonel de Larminat.”

Chapter III: Imagining the French Empire's Postwar Seat at the Table, 1941-1942

In July of 1940 de Gaulle was in a vulnerable position that required him to navigate between abstract and concrete definitions of Empire to recruit supporters to Free France and to establish the territorial, political, and military legitimacy of his movement. The general would continue to operate at multifaceted level, but as the situation evolved and the conflict on the African continent shifted towards Libya, Egypt, and the Levant, de Gaulle sought to establish Free French troops alongside Allied troops in these territories. However, given the Allied presence in the Levant, still technically a French mandate, it was especially important for de Gaulle to demonstrate that Free France possessed the ability to control its territories. As de Gaulle's territorial focus shifted, so did the frequency of his visits to Brazzaville. In 1941, the general stayed in Brazzaville for about twenty-seven days, as opposed to the approximately seventy-one days that he spent in either Cairo, Beirut, or Damascus. He assumed an Allied victory and, as a result, began to justify why it was necessary for France to have an important role in the postwar world order. To do so, once again, the Empire became an important piece of evidence. De Gaulle pointed to the republican values represented in France's colonial accomplishments, a construction in and of itself, as a means of defining France's postwar identity. Finally, separate from *assimilation* and *association*, he introduced a postwar vision of the African continent founded on economic imperial cooperation between the European colonies on the continent, justifying Free France's participation in a postwar global economy.

De Gaulle considered the success of France's accomplishments in the Empire as demonstration of the power of republican values and to justify France's position in the future world order. At the abstract level, he tied France's "oeuvre colonial" to the proliferation of

French republican values. When speaking to what he identified as the “elite youth” at the “Cercle Français” (French Society) on November 25, 1941 at the University of Oxford, he reminded them of the principles of European civilization and of their influence throughout Empires. To de Gaulle, European civilization included “[. . .] an identical respect for liberty and justice” and “every individual’s liberty of their thoughts, beliefs, opinions, work, and leisure time”¹⁴² Indeed, to the General, “Thanks to the colonization, then to the gradual enfranchisement of innumerable populations, the moment approached when all the men of the earth had recognized the same superior principles and received the same dignity.”¹⁴³ De Gaulle applied this understanding in his speech at the luncheon of the “Royal African Society” on October 23, 1941, where de Gaulle reminded the British citizens that although the entirety of France’s African territories had not rallied to the General by 1941, this fact “Could not make one forget either the civilizing work accomplished in Africa by my noble and unfortunate country, or the contribution that the territories of Tchad, Cameroun, Gabon, Oubangui, Middle Congo, continue to bring to our joint efforts.”¹⁴⁴ De Gaulle was careful to establish France’s previous colonial success in its civilizing mission on the African continent to reinforce the fact that French republican values had spread throughout France’s African territories. However, it was equally important for de Gaulle to remind his British audience that Free France’s African territories were playing an active role in the “common efforts” between Free France and Britain.

¹⁴² Gaulle, *DM*, “25 novembre, 1941,” 138-146. “[. . .] un respect identique de la liberté et de la justice,” “la liberté de chacun dans sa pensée, ses croyances, ses opinions, son travail, ses loisirs.”

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, “Grâce à la colonisation, puis à l’affranchissement progressif de populations innombrable, le moment approchait où tous les hommes de la terre eussent reconnu les mêmes principes supérieurs et revêtu la même dignité.”

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, “23 octobre 1941,” 119-121. “. . . ne sauraient faire oublier, ni l’oeuvre civilisatrice accomplie en Afrique par mon noble et malheureux pays, ni la contribution que les territoires du Tchad, du Cameroun, du Gabon, de l’Oubangui, du Moyen-Congo, continuent d’apporter à nos efforts communs.”

De Gaulle also established that it was France and *only* France that had the authority to fulfil its mandated duty while maintaining a close relationship with new Lebanese and Syrian states imbued with republican values. Such a claim allowed him to equate Free France with “France” itself. As the focus of the war out in the Empire shifted to the Levant and North Africa in 1941 and 1942, de Gaulle believed that “It is the destiny of the Orient that constitutes during this war one of the principal strategic and political theaters. . .where the world of tomorrow is forged. It is also the destiny of France that she will play, once more, an essential role there.”¹⁴⁵ The general went on to declare that Lebanon and Syria’s independence “is the goal set for France by the mandate it has accepted from the League of Nations, and it could only be proclaimed under this mandate. That is to say, it belonged to France, and it only belonged to her, to institute independence.”¹⁴⁶ By evoking the mandate that the Third Republic had signed with the League of Nations, de Gaulle highlighted his commitment to France’s identity as a republic. Further, referring to the Third Republic allowed de Gaulle to establish a line of continuity between the Third Republic and Free France’s republican values and sovereignty. To a more radical degree, de Gaulle declared the independence of these territories on behalf of Free France, this served as another strategy to use the Empire as a means of tying Free France as “France” and to a republican national identity. De Gaulle was also clear to state that Syria and Lebanon could rely on “The resolute support of France to organize and to maintain their independence” because “France does not intend to renounce neither the civilizing *oeuvre*, which, for so many centuries... France is

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., “28 août, 1942,” 215. “C’est la destinée de l’Orient qu’il constitue durant cette guerre l’un des principaux théâtres stratégiques et politiques. . .où se forge le monde de demain. C’est aussi la destinée de la France qu’elle y joue, une fois de plus, un rôle essentiel.”

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 216. “. . .est le but fixé à la France par le mandat qu’elle a accepté de la Société des Nations et elle ne pouvait être proclamée qu’en vertu de ce mandat. C’est-à-dire qu’il appartenait à la France, et qu’il n’appartenait qu’à elle, d’instituer l’indépendance.”

proud to have accomplished here, nor to the guarantees of security that normally comprise the alliance of Syria and Lebanon.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, not only was Free France “France” itself, it would again serve to continue the republican “oeuvre civilisatrice” in the new world order. To de Gaulle, the Levant was an example of an accomplished “oeuvre civilisatrice” that nonetheless required a close post-mandate relationship with Free France.

Though Free France possessed the authority to grant independence to the states of the Levant, de Gaulle understood the future of the African continent as a modern cooperative economic model between empires that supported the argument for France’s postwar inclusion in a global economy. The Second World War had contributed to the enhancement of the African continent’s economic infrastructure, and, as a result, de Gaulle introduced his own vision of a future Africa united through communication networks and commerce. Speaking at the same luncheon of the African Royal Society, de Gaulle explained that “Africa is in this war and we cannot doubt the profound influence of the hardships of the war on its evolution.”¹⁴⁸ He went on to state that the Second World War had required “That we circulate, that we transport, that we communicate,” overcoming Africa’s “obstacles of nature.”¹⁴⁹ The “incessant movements of material equipment” from a wide range of Allied cities such as Brazzaville, Cairo, Léopoldville, and Cape Town contributed to the rapid development of “African communication” networks, from airports to ports.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the Second World War also illuminated “components of economic unity” in Africa.¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 217-218. “. . .l’appui résolu de la France pour organiser et faire vivre leur indépendance,” “la France n’entend renoncer ni à l’œuvre civilisatrice que depuis tant de siècles, . . . elle est fière d’avoir accomplie ici, ni aux garanties de sécurité que comporte normalement pour elle l’alliance de la Syrie et du Liban.”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., “23 octobre, 1941,” 119-121. “l’Afrique est dans la guerre et nous ne pouvons douter que cette gigantesque épreuve doive influencer profondément sur son évolution.”

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. “. . .que l’on circule, que l’on transporte, que l’on communique,” “obstacles de la nature.”

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. “. . .mouvements incessants d’effectifs de matériel,” “communications africaines,”

¹⁵¹ Ibid. “. . .des éléments d’unité économique”

conditions of possibility and conditions of the war had contributed to “thousands of new networks of exchange” between “Free French Africa, Nigeria, Belgian Congo, South Africa, Angola.”¹⁵² In addition to the war, de Gaulle also highlighted “the conferences of governors, the study missions, purchases, sales and tariff revisions, and the rights of customs” as evidence highlighting “a properly African economic life, that normal circumstances would have certainly not created.”¹⁵³ The unity of economy and communications contributed to this “theoretical unity of Africa.”¹⁵⁴ Neither seeking to assimilate populations, nor to develop the colonies through *mise en valeur* in his address, de Gaulle’s conceptualization of the African continent reflected his belief in the necessity of an imperial economic cooperation among Belgian, Portuguese, and British colonies.

¹⁵² Ibid. “mille liens nouveaux d’échanges,” “l’Afrique Française Libre, le Nigéria, le Congo Belge, l’Afrique du Sud, l’Angola.”

¹⁵³ Ibid. “. . . les conférences des Gouverneurs, les missions d’études, d’achat, de vente, les révisions de tarifs et de droits de douane,” “une vie économique proprement africaine, que les circonstances normales n’auraient certes pas pu créer.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. “. . . unité théorique de l’Afrique.”

Chapter IV: *France d'Abord* and Brazzaville, 1941-1942

Remembering the birth of *France d'Abord*, Louis Droux expressed that the objective of the paper was to “exalt, passionately, above all, everything that is French.”¹⁵⁵ While Charles de Gaulle was tirelessly working to define “*Français*” and “France,” *France d'Abord* and European residents of Brazzaville attempted to find space within complex dynamics to define their own understanding of “French.” On one level, de Gaulle and *France d'Abord*'s definitions of “Frenchness” overlapped, agreeing that “French” included a global community of French citizens, who abided by republican values in opposition to Vichy. On a more local scale, many contributors to *France d'Abord* also identified with the small “French” community of Brazzaville and its shared experiences suffering from isolation and interacting with their physical environment. Within this community that precluded colonial subjects, members did not always agree with Free France's policies and its effects on the daily lives of the “French” of Brazzaville. Some members of this small group further categorized themselves and identified with the cultural heritage of their home regions in metropolitan France. These three categories of identity were fluid and frequently merged.

France d'Abord's conceptualization of “French” as a worldwide community connected through shared republican values reflected the newspaper's republican tendencies, support for de Gaulle, and its rejection of Vichy. When expressing its political leaning, the newspaper stated that its “general politics are those that General de Gaulle has adopted.”¹⁵⁶ As a result, *France d'Abord* and Charles de Gaulle often shared elements of the same language in their “exalting” of “Frenchness.” These similarities were reflected, for example,

¹⁵⁵ *Fd*, 31 décembre, 1941, 2. “d'exalter par-dessus tout, passionnément, tout ce qui est français.”

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31 mars, 1942, 12. “. . .politique générale est celle qu'a adoptée le général de Gaulle.”

in the newspaper's slogan: "*France d'Abord* is read by all the Free French throughout the entire world. Read *France d'Abord*, it's the newspaper of all the French, it's your newspaper."¹⁵⁷ If *France d'Abord* was read by all the "Free French" around the world, then *France d'Abord* was the newspaper of the *French*. This parallel to de Gaulle's own equating of Free France to France itself is striking and demonstrative of *France d'Abord*'s acknowledgment of the general's rhetoric to its readership. In another example, the newspaper wrote on March 31, 1942, that it was the "Only French newspaper distributed worldwide and edited in a French territory free of all enemy clutches and foreign influence."¹⁵⁸ Like de Gaulle, *France d'Abord* emphasized its existence on *French* territory. Further, *France d'Abord* also placed Vichy in opposition to the *République* through questions such as ". . .do they have the right to shout, 'France first,' those who, obeying to the lowest, the most extreme of political instincts, did not hesitate to destroy the *République*, to call the enemy and to sell it France?"¹⁵⁹ Authors of *France d'Abord* even began to use the term "Vichytrouillards" (Vichy scaredy-cats) to designate individuals who "refused to take part in the fight against the invader of the fatherland."¹⁶⁰

Compared to the state of the press in Brazzaville prior to the Second World War, *France d'Abord*'s new role as a global representative of Free France and link to its supporters was unprecedented. News in Brazzaville and in A.E.F. during the interwar period was often unreliable and scarce. According to Jerome Ollandet, at the outbreak of the war,

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 16. "France d'Abord' est lu par tous les Français Libres dans le monde entier. Lisez 'France d'Abord' c'est le journal de tous les Français, c'est votre journal."

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 12. "Seul journal français a diffusion mondiale édité dans un territoire français libre de toute emprise ennemie et de toute influence étrangère."

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 31 décembre, 1941, 2. ". . .ont-ils le droit de crier 'France d'abord' ceux qui, obéissant aux instinct politiques les plus bas, les plus vifs, n'ont pas hésité, pour achever la République à terre, à appeler l'ennemi et à lui vendre la France ?"

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 25 avril, 1942, 12.

Brazzaville possessed only one printing press that belonged to the central administration used to print official government acts. In terms of news, Ollandet argues that, “A.E.F. had never been at the heart of the metropole’s preoccupations like the other parts of the colonial Empire.”¹⁶¹ Interwar newspapers in A.E.F. would often copy articles from newspapers and magazines in the metropole as a result of the isolation of the territory, and the *gouverneur général* of A.E.F. controlled the information printed in newspapers for both *colons* and *indigènes* through censorship. Though the official policy towards free press in theory was no different from the metropole’s laws, Ollandet argues that “A large gap existed in the colonies between the metropole’s official decree and actual practice on the ground [in A.E.F.]”¹⁶² As a result, if newspapers did publish news from outside the territory, it was not necessarily reliable and often reflected “opinions within the colonial *milieux*.”¹⁶³ The act of selling papers was also irregular and organized “in an artisanal fashion,” usually with African *porteurs* selling issues in streets and often disappearing “with the receipts.”¹⁶⁴ Further, newspapers had few subscribers – even certain “*Français*” such as “the little European *fonctionnaire*” could not afford an annual subscription.¹⁶⁵ Even fewer *Français* were able to afford the luxury of a radio.¹⁶⁶ Instead, Europeans absorbed their news through *l’affiche murale* (wall posters), despite their poor quality.¹⁶⁷ As most of these *affiches* were located in the colonial neighborhoods of Brazzaville, only literate *indigènes* working in these neighborhoods were able to obtain that news and pass it on orally to their communities. For

¹⁶¹ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 19. “l’A.E.F. n’avait jamais été au cœur des préoccupations de la métropole comme le furent les autres parties de l’empire colonial.”

¹⁶² Ibid., 20. “. . .il existait un grand fossé entre l’acte métropolitain et son application véritable sur le terrain”

¹⁶³ Ibid., 23. “. . .les vues d’esprit qui parcouraient les milieux coloniaux.”

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 26. “. . .d’une façon artisanale,” “avec les recettes.”

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. “. . .le petit fonctionnaire européen. . .”

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 28; *Fd*, 20 février, 1941, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ollandet, *Brazzaville*, 27.

instance, most typists working for newspapers were *indigènes* and could report on the news that they had typed for the publication.

As a result, the fact that *France d'Abord* placed itself at the forefront of Free France's global news was an enormous development for the status of the city's press culture. This is not to say that once Brazzaville was elevated to its prominent position within Free France *France d'Abord* suddenly stopped experiencing the issues that had previously plagued A.E.F. newspapers. In its calls to gain more subscribers, the editorial board of *France d'Abord* explained that it had few resources to report on news happening outside of Brazzaville, and in the paper's reoccurring section "News of the Second World War," the Press Service of the High-Commissioner provided *France d'Abord* with much of its information. One contributor to the paper living outside of Brazzaville bemoaned that *Français* living in "the hinterland" ("*la brousse*") of the colonies did not receive enough information about the Second World War or about developments in A.E.F. Further, the low revenue of the paper, its nature as a non-profit organization, and the increased cost of elusive paper and printing supplies challenged the ability of *France d'Abord* to consistently release issues, though it was able to do so on its usual bi-monthly schedule between 1941 and 1942. Nonetheless, that *France d'Abord* actually *had* subscribers living throughout the world and an audience that corresponded with the information presented in the paper demonstrates the large steps that *France d'Abord* had taken.

The small "French" community of Brazzaville defined part of its "Frenchness" according to its shared experiences of living in the isolation in A.E.F. and to its perceived connection to the metropole. For instance, while *France d'Abord* functioned as a demonstration of Brazzaville's global republican "French" identity, the newspaper's sporadic

ability to receive and transmit the news and trends in the metropole contributed to an anxiety among the Europeans of Brazzaville that they were losing their “French” identity. That readers of *France d’Abord* within A.E.F. expressed concern that losing track of current news in France negated their French identity reflected an understanding that the metropole itself equated “France.” For instance, one reader living in “la brousse” wrote “Give us news from France!”¹⁶⁸ To the author, the lack of reported news from metropolitan France seemed “as if France manifested no signs of life anymore. In this sense it seems to us that an ever-growing gap separates us from our unfortunate country.”¹⁶⁹ The author went on to state that in “la brousse,” “Isolation starts to weigh us down, to the point that we sometimes ask ourselves if we are still French.”¹⁷⁰ More so than Europeans living in the city of Brazzaville, “bushmen,” the term for Europeans who had settled in the hinterland of the territory, often lived in isolated deserts of information. To this author, a proximity to the metropole through information was a vital element of their French identity. *France d’Abord* ultimately agreed with this author, stating that amidst censorship from the territory’s Haut-Commissariat, the newspaper also had “The impression of losing our French personality.”¹⁷¹ Prior to the Second World War, the fear that isolation from the metropole could contribute to a loss of French identity existed within the French Empire.¹⁷² However, *France d’Abord*’s new position as a leading global news source for Free France compelled the newspaper to provide its local

¹⁶⁸ *Fd*, 25 avril, 1942, 12. “Donnez-nous des nouvelles de la France !”

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* “comme si aucune vie ne se manifestait plus en France. En sorte qu’il nous paraît qu’un fossé toujours plus grand nous sépare de notre malheureux pays.”

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* “. . .l’isolement commence à nous peser, et où il nous arrive parfois de nous demander si nous sommes encore français.”

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* “. . .l’impression de perdre notre personnalité de Français.” The decision regarding what information was censored came from the Free French headquarters in London, which advised the authorities in Brazzaville to consider “the way in which [Paul] Marion [(the Vichy Minister of Information from 1941-1944)] in Vichy would use this page if it fell into his hands.” Quoted in Jennings, *La France libre fut africaine*, 254.

¹⁷² See for example Frank Lestringant, “Going Native in America (French-Style),” *Renaissance Studies* 6, no. 3/4 (1992): 325–55.

readers with information from the motherland. As a result, the editorial board of *France d'Abord* saw it as a priority to ensure that the newspaper was “known by all the French in the world,” so that this global community could “all now know of our A.E.F, the forever abandoned.”¹⁷³

Readers of *France d'Abord* also associated their Frenchness with their ability to entertain themselves with current books from the metropole, demonstrating that while trends from the metropole were important to the Europeans of Brazzaville, their isolation removed them from the preoccupations of the metropole throughout the Second World War. The same author who had cried for news from France also requested that *France d'Abord* institute a “bookselling service” that would allow readers to order books from the newspaper and have them delivered to their respective locations. *France d'Abord* indicated that it was able to obtain books from the United States and Britain for distribution within A.E.F., although transportation and delays were a consistent problem. Already in 1941, *France d'Abord* had published an article to its readers detailing the most popular books in metropolitan France for that year, indicating that a concern to find entertainment was not a problem limited to the *broussards*. Rather, *France d'Abord* understood a proximity to the metropole through information and entertainment as a crucial element of Frenchness.

Linked to the desire to establish proximity to the metropole was a nostalgia for an untroubled France among contributors to *France d'Abord* that manifested itself through

¹⁷³ *Fd*, 31 mars, 1942, 12. “Tous connaissent maintenant notre A.E.F., l'abandonnée de toujours.”



Figure 1. “Vendages en Bourgogne.” *France d’Abord*, 31 décembre, 1941, 7.

romanticized imagery of French culture and landscapes. Contributors of *France d’Abord* living in Brazzaville evoked rustic French landscapes, through poems that included titles such as “Douce France” (Sweet France), and “Paysage.” These poems detailed images of France’s landscape such as village churches or shepherdesses, and as a result, provide clues as to how the French community in Brazzaville may have imagined France despite its physical isolation in Brazzaville. Poems and their corresponding etchings in linoleum often focused on specific regions or cities of France, such as the poem titled “Provence,” by Roger Frey. Poems and their *linogravures* also

depicted quaint elements of French culture tied to agriculture and the holiday seasons.¹⁷⁴For instance, “Noël Provençal,” by

Roger Frey describes the charm of Christmas in Provence, and “Vendages en Bourgogne,” from the December 31, 1941 issue was paired with a *linogravure* representing a *paysanne* at work in the vineyards of Bourgogne (Figure 1). Such poems and images contributed to these Brazzaville residents’ imagined perception of the metropole and served to connect them to the metropole.

Though contributors of *France d’Abord* linked their “Frenchness” to the metropole, they also expressed local “French” identities grounded in a belief that the Empire itself served as an extension of France. For instance, while our opening anonymous op-ed writer

¹⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that although members of *France d’Abord* fashioned parts of their “Frenchness” through their opposition to Vichy, there exist similarities between Pétain’s use of rustic, agricultural imagery in his messages and the nostalgic engravings present in issues of *France d’Abord*. This could indicate the power of the symbolism present in representations of an “untroubled France” and its ability to invoke “French” identity.

was pleased to hear that a new “Service de Presse” would be established to “allow the regular publication of monthly newspapers,” they were worried that “the cooperation [between residents of l’Afrique Française Libre and passing journalists and writers from around the world] would be lacking.”¹⁷⁵ As a result, the author expressed that it was necessary for the new “Service to Presse” to account for cooperation, “If, from Brazzaville, we want this great stream of ideas that should ensure that our political leaders do not forget in hours of danger that France is not only France, but that she is an Empire of 100 million men.”¹⁷⁶ To establish that Brazzaville had emerged as a pivotal figure in the Free French movement and that the capital deserved the support of the Free French administration, this writer was argued that the Empire *was* France.

Further, though the authors that appeared in *France d’Abord* supported most of Charles de Gaulle’s messages and actions, many also exhibited an introspection tied to their local circumstances and identities in Brazzaville that allowed them to scrutinize some of the policies of de Gaulle’s administration. For our anonymous author, while Brazzaville had emerged as the pivotal figure in the Free French movement on August 28, they recognized that the city required administrative support to sustain its development. To the writer, the Free French administration was not providing enough support to guarantee the maintenance of Brazzaville’s important position in the early years of the Second World War. In another example, four months earlier, in July of 1942, the article “What’s Happening in Madagascar?” had criticized de Gaulle’s lack of information regarding Free France’s

¹⁷⁵ *Le Petit Brazzavillois*, 12 novembre, 1942, 2. “. . . permettre la publication régulière de journaux hebdomadaires,”

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* “. . . si nous voulons que de Brazzaville parte ce grand courant d’idées qui devra faire que nos gouvernants n’oublient plus, aux heures de danger que la France n’est pas seulement la France, mais qu’elle est un Empire de 100 millions d’hommes.”

position.¹⁷⁷ Overall, contributors of *France d'Abord* admired and supported de Gaulle, but this fact did not shield the General from isolated criticisms.

If contributors to *France d'Abord* understood their French identity as tied to their shared experiences in Brazzaville, some also conceptualized their hybrid identities as tied to regional cultures in France. They recognized their regional cultural heritage from metropolitan France as part of their identities in Brazzaville. For instance, the October 3, 1942 issue of *France d'Abord* was entirely dedicated to the contribution of *Bretons* living in A.E.F. (Figure 2). Eric Jennings states that the French of Brazzaville organized themed “soirées” also recognizing other regions such as Corsica, however, this issue of *France d'Abord* was the only one dedicated to an entire regional heritage.¹⁷⁸ In the final page of the issue, an article detailed the role of the *Amicale des Bretons de l'AEF*, an organization open to *Bretons* residing in A.E.F., in the *trois glorieuses* of August, 1940. According to the article, the *Amicale* had sent a manifesto to the Governor General of the Moyen-Congo, Pierre Boisson, in July of 1940 expressing their desire to continue fighting against the Third Reich. The article goes on to claim that the *Bretons of A.E.F.* were perhaps the first members of A.E.F. to publicly express their refusal to accept the Armistice. While one key element of the local identity in Brazzaville during the Second World War was the collective belief that the “French” individuals in the city were the first to demonstrate the model of Free France to the world, residents of Brazzaville and A.E.F. complicated this identity with pride for French regions. The result was a hybrid identity that recalled regional identities in France while also

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 31 juillet, 1942, 4. “Que ce passe-t-il à Madagascar ?”

¹⁷⁸ This may be linked to the fact that Gaston G. Bizien, a member of *France d'Abord*'s editorial board in February of 1942 as well as a doctor and *lieutenant-colonel*, had important ties to the local organization, *Bretons of A.E.F.* Nonetheless, Jennings' example demonstrates that the French of Brazzaville celebrated other regional identities besides that of Brittany.

incorporating the colonial local identity of these individuals. While the majority of these men supported de Gaulle and Free France, when compared to de Gaulle’s conceptualization of “Frenchness” and Empire, Brazzaville’s rise to prominence allowed them to carve out complex French identities not reflected within de Gaulle’s discourse.



Figure 2. Part of the cover page of the October 3, 1942 issue depicting a flag containing the flag of Brittany and Free France’s Croix de Lorraine. The text is in Breton and can be translated as “Rise up Brittany, for France.”

Chapter V: Rubber, the Brazzaville Conference, and Lost Voices, 1943-1944

The military operations of the Second World War between 1943 and 1944 required de Gaulle to shift his focus towards French North Africa and the metropole itself, resulting in a diminution in Brazzaville's global visibility. On January 30, 1944, de Gaulle was in a stronger position than he had been in during the lonely first years of the war. The merger of de Gaulle's "National French Committee" (the successor of the CDE) with General Giraud's "French Civil and Military Commander in Chief of Algiers" resulted in the creation of the "French Committee of National Liberation" (CFLN) in 1943, and provided de Gaulle with a greater influence among the Allies and new resources. Following Operation Torch that resulted in the Western Allied forces' invasion of North Africa on November 8 1942, the Allies negotiated with Admiral François Darlan, the pro-Vichy commander-in-chief of French North Africa, to call all French forces to join the Allies.¹⁷⁹ The governor-general of A.O.F., Pierre François Boisson rallied to Darlan on November 24, requiring de Gaulle to move quickly to affirm the position of Free France as the sole representative of legitimate "France" versus this new competing claim. After the assassination of Admiral Darlan on December 24, 1942, General Giraud annulled the Vichy legislation in Algeria to reestablish the "légalité républicaine."¹⁸⁰

After almost three years as the global capital of Free France, Brazzaville returned to its status as the capital of A.E.F. and had a lesser role in de Gaulle's focus, which shifted

¹⁷⁹ George Melton, *Darlan: Admiral and Statesman of France 1881–1942*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 81–117, 152.

¹⁸⁰ Jean-Marc Sauvé and Stéphane Eustache, "Rétablir la légalité républicaine: Introduction du colloque organisé, le 27 octobre 2014, à l'occasion du 70ème anniversaire de l'ordonnance du 9 août 1944 par la fondation Charles de Gaulle et le Conseil d'État" (Conseil d'État, October 27, 2014), 3. Following the establishing of the CFLN in Algiers on June 3, 1943, Free France became one component of the committee and the Free French forces became *l'Armée française de la Libération*.

towards North Africa and the liberation of France following the invasion of Normandy in June of 1944. In fact, after de Gaulle's brief visit to Brazzaville in September of 1942, he would not return to the capital of A.E.F. until the Conference of Brazzaville in January 1944. Rather, the general moved primarily between London, Algiers, and the Middle East. With the political center of the legitimacy of Free France in Algiers, Brazzaville's role in the war shifted.

The targeted rubber campaigns in A.E.F. and in the French Congo further demonstrated Brazzaville's loss of status in the war because it established A.E.F. primarily as a material resource rather than a symbol of Free France's global presence. Rubber collection in the vicinity of Brazzaville and in the greater A.E.F. had begun as early as 1941. However, 1943 marked the start of an unprecedented rubber campaign. Japanese territorial gains in the Pacific sphere limited America's ability to import rubber from Asia, while the fall of Singapore and Malaysia in 1942 also limited British rubber imports. As a result, both countries turned towards A.E.F. and Cameroon as a reliable source. The results were impressive; by early 1943, A.E.F. and Cameroon rose to be the sixth largest producer of rubber for the Allies. Before the outbreak of the war, A.E.F. and Cameroon did not even place on the global chart of rubber production.¹⁸¹ The Free French administration saw this as an opportunity to attract investors from Europe and the United States while also filling the void in rubber production in its own Empire left by the loss of Indochina to Vichy. Despite this positive potential, French officials were soon faced with increased pressure from Britain and the United States. In A.E.F. and Cameroon, the British Ministry of Supply established a branch of the Rubber Control Board that hired local Africans on the spot while also

¹⁸¹ Jennings, *La France libre*, 188.

pressuring the Free French government to promote propaganda designed to stimulate rubber collection.¹⁸² This can be seen in almost every 1943 issue of *A.E.F.*, a weekly newspaper based in Brazzaville and published between 1943 and 1945, as some pages included slogans such as “Saving rubber is good. . .producing it is better,” or “Producing rubber equals continuing to fight.”¹⁸³

As a result, French administrators and British investors pressured rural zones of the Congo to increase the collection of rubber starting in late 1942, resulting in the severe disruption of local communities. Some African lumberjacks in Bacoula, about 50 miles to the northeast of Brazzaville, for example, were reassigned to collect rubber.¹⁸⁴ Europeans used methods to promote rubber exploitation that ranged from “Taxes, constraints, fines... and financial incentives.”¹⁸⁵ Such manic rubber collection campaigns took their toll on indigenous populations. Some Congolese laborers had to walk “50 kilometers to find the vines [of the rubber plant],” and one administrator from the Mayana district of Brazzaville stated that the exploitation was “a particularly unrewarding work that the *indigène* does not like, that does not pay for the exceptional effort that it requires.”¹⁸⁶

Whereas *France d’Abord* had marketed itself as the “journal des Français Libres” and championed Brazzaville’s role as the focal point of a global French communications network, the content of the newspaper, *A.E.F.*, reflected Brazzaville’s move away from the center of Free France’s legitimacy and symbolism. It is important to note that *France*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁸³ *A.E.F.*, 28 aout, 1943, 5: *A.E.F.*, “11 septembre, 1943,” 6. Economiser le caoutchouc c’est bien. . .En produire c’est mieux,” “Produire du caoutchouc c’est encore ce battre.”

¹⁸⁴ Jennings, *La France libre*, 194.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 198. “imposition, contrainte, amendes,. . .[and] incitations pécuniaires.”

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 200. “50 kilomètres pour aller chercher les lianes [de caoutchouc],” un travail particulièrement ingrat, que l’indigène n’aime pas, qui ne paye pas l’effort spécial demandé.”

d'Abord disappeared from the archival record after 1942 and it appears that inhabitants of Brazzaville were also not certain of the fate of the newspaper.¹⁸⁷ Begun nine days after the capital moved to Algiers, *A.E.F.* was intended for “*colons*, retail traders, *fonctionnaires*, and *broussards*,” rather than a global Free French audience. As a result, its focus shifted to a more local level that reported, for example, on matters ranging from the frequency of running water in Brazzaville to local soccer matches.¹⁸⁸ Like *France d'Abord*, *A.E.F.* was not an official news organ of Free France but did praise de Gaulle. For example, Albert-Henri Batailler, categorized the political leaning of the paper as “republican and democratic,” aligning the paper with de Gaulle’s own values and politics.¹⁸⁹ The editor-in-chief further wrote that de Gaulle “knows. . .that he has all of our trust, he knows that we will follow him and he knows that we will follow him to the Victory.”¹⁹⁰ The use of “we” designated the residents of Brazzaville and Léopoldville who heard de Gaulle’s messages through the radio. Instead of conveying an image of an ambitious Brazzaville embodying the expansive Free French movement and serving as its primary communicative agent, the tone of *A.E.F.* placed the inhabitants of Brazzaville as passive listeners, or followers, of de Gaulle’s progress, rather than key participants. While contributors to *France d'Abord* also established a local identity as European residents of Brazzaville, they nonetheless had proclaimed that their position within the Free French movement was central and important.

¹⁸⁷ For instance, Albert-Henri Batailler, the editor-in-chief of *A.E.F.* acknowledged that he had received questions regarding the sudden vanishing of *France d'Abord* and whether *A.E.F.* was its replacement, yet Batailler explained that not only was *A.E.F.* independent of *France d'Abord* and that “given that the format of [*A.E.F.*] may have lent itself to slight confusion, we believe it useful to specify that *A.E.F.* has nothing in common, directly or indirectly, with another publication that was previously published in Brazzaville” (See *A.E.F.*, 26 juin, 1943, p. 2).

¹⁸⁸ See *A.E.F.*, 25 décembre, 1943, 25; *A.E.F.*, 24 juillet, 1943, 7.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 juin 1943, 1. “Républicaine et Démocratique.”

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5. “sait. . .qu’il a toute notre confiance, il sait que nous le suivrons et il sait que nous le suivrons jusqu’à la Victoire.”

Despite what the content of *A.E.F.* may suggest, the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 demonstrated that Brazzaville had not completely disappeared from the international stage, while historians have debated whether the Conference fit in the narrative of the Second World War or of decolonization. With Vichy's days numbered and pressure from the American government to reevaluate the existence of colonialism, de Gaulle looked towards the postwar role of France's Empire. From January 30 to February 8, 1944, high-ranking French civil servants of the colonial administration, French representatives of economic and Catholic mission interests, and some members of the CFLN met in Brazzaville for the Brazzaville Conference to discuss the future of France's Empire.¹⁹¹ The city of Brazzaville today is largely remembered for the Brazzaville Conference, and this paper shares Eric Jennings' argument that the study of the Brazzaville Conference should be associated with the field of postwar history, rather than as a natural conclusion to Brazzaville's role within the Free French movement. Jennings decided not to include an analysis of the Brazzaville Conference in his main argument because he argues that the Brazzaville Conference represented "More of a break from the war period than a culmination [of the period]," and as a result, it does not belong within the scope of his analysis of *A.E.F.* and Cameroon during the Second World War.¹⁹² However, scholars Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur complicate Jennings' position, arguing that as experts have begun to study the Brazzaville Conference as a starting point within the narrative of decolonization in France's Empire, they "have become increasingly aware of the need to look back to the pre-war period in order to better

¹⁹¹ See Elikia M'Bokolo, "Brazzaville (conférence de)," ed. Claire Andrieu, Philippe Braud, and Guillaume Piketty, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2006), 149.

¹⁹² Jennings, *La France libre*, 15, 258-260. ". . . plus une rupture avec la période de guerre qu'un aboutissement."

understand the origins and nature of developments after the war.”¹⁹³ While this paper agrees that the Brazzaville Conference belongs in the field of the postwar or decolonization, its analysis of de Gaulle’s relationship with Empire provides valuable context to the General’s remarks at the Conference.

De Gaulle’s opened the Brazzaville Conference with a speech that was reminiscent of his interwar and wartime colonial philosophy, illustrating his belief in republican values, his use of a colonial rhetoric tied to *association*, and his vision of cooperation between empires. As he had stated at the Royal African Society luncheon in 1941, de Gaulle in 1944 still believed that the Second World War had contributed to the “evolution” and development of the African continent. In his opening remarks in Brazzaville, he stated that “the war precipitates evolution... the absolute and relative importance of resources, communications and troops of Africa, emerged in the floodlight of the theater of operations.”¹⁹⁴ De Gaulle had already demonstrated this understanding through his support of a cooperative economic and communications network between France and Britain’s empires on the African continent. Moreover, de Gaulle asserted that the war had necessitated the establishment of new “conditions of the *mise en valeur* of our Africa” and that “there would be no progress there that can count as progress if these men on their native land... could not elevate themselves little by little to the point where they would be capable of participating in the management of their own affairs.”¹⁹⁵ De Gaulle’s use of *mise en valeur* and the idea of “progress” and

¹⁹³ Tony Chafer and Amanda Sackur, eds., *French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusion* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 2-3.

¹⁹⁴ De Gaulle, *DM*, “30 janvier, 1944,” 372. “. . . la guerre, elle-même précipite l’évolution. . . l’importance absolue et relative des ressources, des communications, des contingents d’Afrique, est apparue dans la lumière crue des théâtres d’opérations.”

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 371, 373. “. . . des conditions de la mise en valeur de notre Afrique,” “il n’y aurait aucun progrès qui soit un progrès, si les hommes sur leur terre natale, . . . ne pouvaient pas s’élever peu à peu jusqu’au point où ils seront capables de participer chez eux à la gestion de leurs propres affaires.”

“elevation” reminds us that the general shared these elements of the dominant interwar colonial philosophy. As Alice Conklin’s work has shown, the principals of indigenous “evolution” and “elevation” had long been central components of the doctrine of *association*. Yet, de Gaulle’s opening remarks indicated that he *did* envision a future where native populations would possess the agency to manage “their own affairs.” Further, de Gaulle stated that France intended to “guide the sixty million men that find themselves associated to the fate of forty-two million children” due to the “loyalty” of the populations of the Empire that contributed to the creation of a “definitive link” between the metropole and the Empire.¹⁹⁶

Yet, while Charles de Gaulle’s opening speech at the Brazzaville Conference combined elements of his interwar and wartime colonial conceptualizations, the General had less of an open space in 1944 than in 1940 to assert his understanding of Empire’s relationship to France’s national identity. Rather than explicitly stating how France would support the link between the metropole and the Empire, de Gaulle stated that the Conference presented “an excellent opportunity to bring together, . . . to work together, to confront their ideas and their experiences, the men who are honored and charged with to govern, in the name of France, the African territories.”¹⁹⁷ De Gaulle preferred to place the future of France’s Empire in the hands of experienced colonial administrators, resulting in reforms that did not deviate very much from where France had left its colonial policy in 1939. One factor that may help explain de Gaulle’s decision is that while the General had spent almost four

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 372. “. . . diriger les soixante millions d’hommes qui se trouvent associés au sort de ses quarante-deux millions d’enfants.”

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., “30 janvier, 1944,” 371. “. . . occasion excellente de réunir, . . . pour travailler ensemble, confronter leurs idées et leur expérience, les hommes qui ont l’honneur et la charge de gouverner, au nom de la France, ses territoires africains.”

years outside of metropolitan France between 1940 and 1944, he still lacked experience in the Empire as a colonial administrator.

Whereas the Brazzaville of 1940 provided an open space for de Gaulle to tie his claim to legitimacy and his vision of France to the Empire, Brazzaville in 1944 primarily represented a space for members of a French colonial elite to deliberate the future of the Empire. Historians such as Ollandet argue that while the resulting reforms of the Conference were presented to an American and European audience as large steps towards progress, the proposed reforms contained few original policies. Historian Elikia M'Bokolo argues that ““It was therefore the continuity of the colonial enterprise that the Conference sought to underline.”¹⁹⁸ M'Bokolo further states that the Conference ultimately established that “the ends of the *œuvre* accomplished by France in the colonies ruled out every idea of autonomy, every possibility of evolution outside of the French *bloc* in the Empire: the eventual formation, even distant, of self-governments was to be dismissed.”¹⁹⁹ However, it is clear from de Gaulle's remarks at the Conference that the general did not entirely dismiss the formation of these “self-governments,” highlighting the side of de Gaulle that believed in the incorporation of universal republican values into new states. Nonetheless, the Brazzaville Conference clearly demonstrated that French colonial administrators did not see the system of “self-government” in the near or distant future of the Empire. Rather, the Conference attempted to maintain power over its colonies through a series of disappointing reforms that served to maintain the status-quo of *association*.

¹⁹⁸ Elikia M'Bokolo, “Brazzaville (conférence de),” 149. “Ce fut donc la continuité de l'entreprise coloniale que la Conférence tint à souligner.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. “ les fins de l'œuvre accomplie par la France dans les colonies écartent toute idée d'autonomie, toute possibilité d'évolution hors du bloc français de l'empire : la constitution éventuelle, même lointaine, de ‘self-governments’ dans les colonies est à écarter.”

Conclusion

This case study has demonstrated that it is impossible to disassociate France's national identity from Brazzaville's role in Free France. While Brazzaville is now primarily mentioned in relation to the Brazzaville Conference and, as a result, associated with the tribulations of decolonization, as France continues to struggle with its colonial heritage, it is vital to study how France's relationship with its Empire complicated, and perhaps continues to complicate France's national identity. For instance, according to Roger Frey, between 1945 and 1946, many *fonctionnaires* of Brazzaville were finally able to return to metropolitan France as a result of the Liberation. Many of these individuals had not seen France for ten years, and it is difficult to argue that their experiences in Brazzaville during the war would not have complicated their perceptions of metropolitan France upon their return. Meanwhile, in the neighborhoods of Bacongo and Potopoto, indigenous populations had witnessed a struggle for French legitimacy and sovereignty that demonstrated the malleability and fragility of the definition of French national identity as early as 1940, though we do not have a firm grasp on what they may have thought. Thus, the study and memory of Brazzaville should not be reduced to the Brazzaville Conference; as reminded by our anonymous op-ed writer, the city and the Empire served as important contributors to the reshaping of France's identity. This fact, whether in 1940 or in 2019, must not be forgotten.

Further, while de Gaulle is often associated with conservative nationalism espoused in the metropole during his term as President of the French Republic between 1959 and 1969, this paper has demonstrated de Gaulle's constant desire to place "France" and its republican values within a global community. De Gaulle's multifaceted use of "Empire" and its relationship to France's national identity both during the interwar period and in the

Second World War allowed him to create a shared ground that included his vision of nationalism as well as his appreciation for universal republican values. In this sense, as the postwar agenda of the United Nations promoted republicanism, democracy, and universal values, de Gaulle's experience with the external Resistance in many ways prefigured France's postwar position and exhibited one layer of French thinking dedicated to French republicanism.

The inhabitants of Brazzaville lived different experiences between 1940 and 1944, and, as a result, it is necessary for future work to attempt to capture how various populations understood their role within the fractured French identity of the war. *France d'Abord* is an ideal starting point to do so due to its large range of covered topics. Certain archives in Central Africa, notably the *Archives nationales du Cameroun*, contain a reserve of valuable documents that would contribute to any future study on external resistance networks, yet these are in desperate need of restoration. Further, as many scholars rely on French colonial archives such as the *Archives nationales d'outre-mer*, it is vital that future researchers do not continue to neglect central African archives.

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