

War of Words

War of Words argues that the conflicts that erupted over French colonial territory between 1940 and 1945 are central to understanding British, Vichy and Free French policy-making throughout the war. By analysing the rhetoric that surrounded these clashes, Rachel Chin demonstrates that imperial holdings were valued as more than material and strategic resources. They were formidable symbols of power, prestige and national legitimacy. She shows that having and holding imperial territory was at the core of competing Vichy and Free French claims to represent the true French nation and that opposing images of Franco-British cooperation and rivalry were at the heart of these arguments. The selected case studies show how British–Vichy–Free French relations evolved throughout the war and demonstrate that the French colonial empire played a decisive role in these shifts.

Rachel Chin is Postdoctoral Research Associate on an AHRC-funded research project at the University of Glasgow and a member of the Scottish Council on Global Affairs.

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*Britain, France and Discourses of Empire
during the Second World War*

Rachel Chin

University of Glasgow



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To my parents, Robbin and Joseph, who always had
time to take me to the library

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Abbreviations

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CFLN	Comité Français de Libération Nationale (French Committee of National Liberation)
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CNF	Comité National Français (French National Committee)
CNR	Conseil National de la Résistance (National Council of the Resistance)
COMAC	Commission d’Action Militaire (Military Action Committee)
COS	Chiefs of Staff
FFI	Forces Françaises de l’Intérieur (French Forces of the Interior)
IR	International Relations
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JPSC	Joint Planning Subcommittee
LON	League of Nations
MEC	Middle East Command
MO	Mass Observation
MOI	Ministry of Information
MRP	Mouvement Républicain Populaire (French Christian Democrat Party)
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (French Communist Party)
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission
RAF	Royal Air Force
SOE	Special Operations Executive