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Writings on Empire and Slavery

Alexis de Tocqueville

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After completing his research for *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville turned to the French consolidation of its empire in North Africa, which he believed deserving of similar attention. Tocqueville began studying Algerian history and culture, making two trips to Algeria in 1841 and 1846. He quickly became one of France's foremost experts on the country and wrote essays, articles, official letters, and parliamentary reports on such diverse topics as France's military and administrative policies in North Africa, the people of the Maghrib, his own travels in Algeria, and the practice of Islam. Throughout, Tocqueville consistently defended the French imperial project, a position that stands in tension with his admiration for the benefits of democracy he witnessed in America.

Although Tocqueville never published a book-length study of French North Africa, his various writings on the subject provide as invaluable a portrait of French imperialism as *Democracy in America* does of the Early Republic period in American history. In *Writings on Empire and Slavery*, Jennifer Pitts has selected and translated nine of his most important dispatches on Algeria, which offer startling new insights into both Tocqueville's political thought and French liberalism's attitudes toward the political, military, and moral aspects of France's colonial expansion. The volume also includes six articles Tocqueville wrote during the same period calling for the emancipation of slaves in France's Caribbean colonies.

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