



Texas Revolution and Mexican American War

Condensed

Texas was one of the provinces that belonged to the Spanish Colonial Empire called New Spain - which stretched from Panama in Central America to Oregon in the US. The capital of New Spain was Mexico City. Spain mostly ignored Texas, concentrating on mining silver and gold in other parts of the Empire.

In 1821, Mexico successfully revolted against Spain and became an independent country. But due to the dysfunctional state of Mexican politics - and only 2 years after independence - five states in Central America declared themselves independent from Mexico - Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. On July 1, 1823, the United Provinces of Central America was formally established. Constant infighting resulted in the Union falling apart in 1838. The five states became independent nations without any interference from Mexico or threats of perpetual war.

Mexico invited Americans into Texas in 1821 and by 1834 there were about 30,000 Anglos. Mexico was in a constant state of political turmoil so Santa Anna was appointed President in May, 1833 to restore order. Santa Anna became increasingly dictatorial and in 1835, he abolished all state legislatures and centralized all power in Mexico City.

This centralization of power by Santa Anna caused the Mexican states of Texas, Coahuila and Zacatecas to revolt. On May 11, 1835 Santa Anna's Army crushed the revolt in Zacatecas and 2,000 civilians were killed. Fearing a similar fate, the governor of Coahuila, Agustin Viesca, disbanded the legislature on May 21. On June 25, Viesca issued the following appeal: "Citizens of Texas, arise and take arms, or sleep forever! Your most cherished interests, your liberty, your properties, even more, your very existence depend on the changing whims of your most relentless foes."⁽¹⁾

Hostilities started in Texas in Oct. 2, 1835. On March 6, 1836 Santa Anna's Army overwhelmed Mexicans and Texans defending the Alamo, with around 200 men fighting to the death. Texas was on the brink of defeat, but on April 21, 1836, San Houston's Army of 750 men defeated Santa Anna at San Jacinto River. Over 700 Mexicans were killed and 730 captured - including Santa Anna.

On May 14, 1836, Santa Anna signed the Treaties of Velasco that made Texas an independent country. The Rio Grande River became the boundary between Mexico and Texas.

Mexico refused to ratify the treaty. Once Santa Anna was released and back in Mexico, he declared he had signed the treaties under duress as a prisoner of war. While this was certainly true, he could have refused to sign. Throughout history, the winner in a war dictates the terms to the loser.

Mexico vowed never ending war on Texas until they reconquered the land. Mexican politicians used Texas as a way to unite Mexicans against the U.S. and divert attention from ongoing serious domestic problems. In January, 1838, President Bustamante addressed the Mexican Congress and said: "With regard to the Texas campaign, I will only observe that its prosecution is the first duty of the Government and of all Mexicans."⁽²⁾

When Santa Anna opened Congress in 1842, he said regarding the Texas question: "If we wish to preserve an honorable name among civilized nations, it is essential that we employ all our energies and resources in combating without cessation, at any sacrifice and at all hazards, until our arms and our pretensions finally triumph."⁽³⁾



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Mexican General Filisola. *"In our opinion the blood of our soldiers as well as that of the enemy was shed in vain... The massacres of the Alamo, of Goliad, of Refugio, convinced the rebels that no peaceable settlement could be expected, and that they must conquer, or die..."* [18]



A hundred years to come my people will not be fit for liberty. They do not know what it is, unenlightened as they are. . . " . . . a despotism is the proper government for them, --- Santa Anna in reply to former American envoy to Mexico Joel Poinsett after his capture by Texans in 1836 [19]

Texas had met with Mexico sporadically in an attempt to get Mexico to recognize Texas as an independent country. These negotiations always failed. When Texas voted to join the US in 1845 for their own protection. Mexico declared - repeatedly - that war with the United States was inevitable.

The U.S. made attempts to meet with Mexico over the issue of Texas. In October, 1845, Mexico indicated a willingness to negotiate and the U.S. sent envoy John Slidell, a man who spoke fluent Spanish to meet with the Mexican president, Jose Joaquin Herrera. Slidell landed in Vera Cruz on Nov 30 and arrived in Mexico City on 6 December. Unfortunately, by December, 1845, the Herrera government was about to be overthrown, and in a futile attempt to save itself, refused to meet with Slidell.(4)

In January 1846, General Mariano Paredes overthrew the Herrera government with one stated objective - start a war with the United States and retake Texas. Paredes also refused to meet with Slidell.

On Jan 12, 1846, Polk received word from Slidell that negotiations had failed. Polk realized that war with Mexico was inevitable and prepared to ask congress for a declaration of war. On Jan. 13, 1846, He ordered General Zachary Taylor to move his army from Corpus Christi to the north side of the Rio Grande River and prepare to defend Texas from a possible Mexican invasion. Polk's order to Taylor stated that "It is not designed, in our present relations with Mexico, that you should treat her as an enemy. . ."(5)



General Paredes

During his march to the Rio Grande River, Taylor repeatedly informed the Mexican government of his movements and stated repeatedly their intentions were to defend Texas from Mexico's constant vows to invade. On Mar 21, Paredes declared that Mexico "does not recognize the American flag on the soil of Texas" and "will defend its invaded territory. . ."(6) Taylor's troops arrived at the Rio Grande River opposite Matamoros on March 28, 1846.



Gen. Zachary Taylor

On Apr 11, Ampudia sent a communication to Taylor: "I require you" to retire to the north side of the Nueces River within "twenty-four hours," while the U.S. and Mexican governments negotiate. Taylor rejected Ampudia's 'order' and replied that an envoy - John Slidell - had previously been sent by the U.S. to Mexico for that purpose to no avail and he would remain on the north side of the Rio Grande River pending orders from Washington.(7)

In a letter dated Apr 18, 1846, Paredes wrote to General Arista who now commanded the Mexican force along the Rio Grande River: "It is indispensable that hostilities begin, yourself taking the initiative."(8)

On Apr 23, 1846, two days BEFORE the Mexican Army attacked the US Army, Paredes revealed his excuse to justify attacking the U.S.: ". . . I have commanded the general-in-chief of the division of our northern frontier to attack the army which is attacking us; . . ." "Our general. . . has demanded from the commander-in-chief of the American troops that they retire to the other side of the Nueces River, the ancient boundary of Texas, and the demand has been refused. . ." "From this day defensive war begins, and every point of our territory which may be invaded or attacked shall be defended by force."(9)

The Nueces River is about 100 miles north of the Rio Grande River. The Treaty of Velasco made the Rio Grande the boundary. Mexico's obsession for 10 years was with conquering Texas, which they considered a break-away province. Mexico did NOT attack Texas over a boundary dispute. Mexico NEVER said they merely wanted to conquer the land up to the Nueces River. Polk was aware of this Mexican scam over the Nueces River.(10) If Mexico wanted the boundary to be the Nueces, they had 10 years to bring it up with Texas, and later the U.S. and negotiate a deal. The obvious truth was that Mexico was NEVER going to resolve the border impasse as that would be an admission that Texas was separate from Mexico. Mexico owned all of Texas and intended to conquer it.

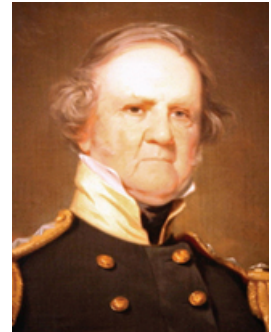


Nueces and Rio Grande Rivers.

On April 25, 1846, 1,600 Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and ambushed a force of 80 American troops. Eleven men were killed and the rest taken prisoner. President Polk received a report of the ambush on May 9. On May 13, Congress declared war on Mexico.

Initial U.S. strategy was to defend Texas and then attack across the Rio Grande into Mexico and conquer the Mexican territories of New Mexico and California. This, it was hoped, would persuade Mexico to negotiate a permanent peace with the U.S. By August, 1846, these lands had been conquered. But with Mexico still refusing to negotiate, a heated debate took place in Washington on how to prevent this war from dragging on indefinitely. General Taylor's opinion was that we had already conquered enough territory to pay all of our monetary claims against Mexico, and we should just stop the war and force Mexico to undertake any future offensive operations. Many in the U.S. favored this idea over a long war of attrition.(11)

Ultimately, this idea was rejected. Such a plan was precisely what the Mexicans, whose ancestors had fought the Moors of Spain for hundreds of years, desired. It was exactly this policy of endless war against Texas that had propelled Texas to join the American Union for her own defense. Endless war with Mexico would have required a large and continuous military force on the border and eroded national resolve. By November, Polk realized that Mexico had to be conquered. U.S. forces would have to occupy or threaten Mexico City and that it would be best to approach it from the Gulf coast, rather than from the north, taking the same route Cortez followed three centuries earlier when the Spanish conquered the Aztecs.(11)



General Winfield Scott

On March 1847, General Winfield Scott made his amphibious landing near Vera Cruz with about 12,000 men. Unable to maintain a secure supply line, Scott lived off the land. Mexicans eagerly sold Scott all the food and supplies he needed because the U.S. Army paid in cash.

Over the next 5 months, the American Army, with less than 15,000 men repeatedly outmaneuvered, outsmarted and decisively defeated Santa Anna and the Mexican Army. On September 13, 1847, Scott's men entered Mexico City. Santa Anna fled the country.

Negotiations with Mexico were difficult. But on Feb 2, 1848, agreement was reached and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, ending the war. The treaty gave the U.S. California, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming. In return, Mexico received \$15 million and the U.S. assumed Mexican debts of \$3.25 million owed to American citizens.



Land ceded to the U.S. after the Mexican American War

If Mexico had recognized Texas independence 10 years earlier, this war could have been avoided. While no American president would go to war over monetary claims against Mexico, once Mexico started the war, there had to be consequences. Compensation in the form of land became the policy. Polk said on Dec 7, 1847, *"It is well-known that the only indemnity which it is in the power of Mexico to make in satisfaction of the just and long-deferred claims of our citizens against her and the only means by which she can reimburse the United States for the expenses of the war is a cession to the United States of a portion of her territory."*(12) The war cost at least \$75 million. With Mexico's hostility towards America appearing to be permanent, the new border on the Rio Grande River gave the U.S. a shorter and more defensible border.

Holding an unjust grudge against the United States

The great sin of Mexico - for 170 years - was in demonizing Texans after they defeated Mexico in 1836 and then demonizing Americans after Mexico was defeated in the Mexican American War of 1846-48.

Contrast the hate speech and vitriol against America with how considerate Mexico was to the five states in Central America - Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica - **who declared themselves independent from Mexico.** On July 1, 1823, these 5 states formed the United Provinces of Central America. Constant infighting resulted in the Union falling apart in 1838. **The five states became independent nations without any interference from Mexico or threats of perpetual war. WHY???** Is it because the five southern states are fellow Spanish, whereas the northern territories came under the control of Anglo Americans? Were Mexicans racist towards Americans?

In 1846, Mexican General Mejia issued this declaration after General Taylor informed him he was moving to the north side of the Rio Grande River: "For what Mexican worthy of the name can resign himself not to fight to the death and so to see his noble race under the detestable domination of the foreigner?"(13)



Ulysses S. Grant

The U.S treated Mexican civilians better then their own government did during our occupation of Mexico. Ulysses S. Grant, later to become a general in the Union Army during the Civil War remarked: *"...the people who remained at their homes fraternized with the "Yankees" in the pleasantest manner. In fact, under the humane policy of our commander, I question whether the great majority of the Mexican people did not regret our departure as much as they had regretted our coming. Property and person were thoroughly protected, and a market was afforded for all the products of the country such as the people had never enjoyed before."*(14)

Historical revisionists claim we provoked Mexico into attacking the U.S. Army so we had an excuse to go to war and steal what became the southwest U.S. from Mexico. The truth is the US never believed victory over Mexico was a sure thing, which was one of the reasons it took so long to allow Texas to join the union and why the U.S. wanted to resolve issues peacefully.

Mexico was eager to start this war because they were confident they would defeat the U.S. Many international observers believed the U.S. would have a tough time defeating Mexico - and many thought the US would lose. Mexico was a nation of over 7 million people with many rugged mountains. The ability of Mexico to wage guerrilla war against U.S. supply lines would prevent us from massing sufficient troops to defeat the Mexicans deep in their territory. Mexico could outlast the U.S. without suffering disastrously, while the US would have to wage an extremely costly war, raise a large army and still not be able to defeat Mexico. Eventually the Americans would tire of the war, the never ending casualties, huge military spending and make peace on Mexico's terms.(15)

Following the war, a segment of American society came to the belief that the war with Mexico was an unjust war - a stronger nation beating up a weaker nation. The only reason this viewpoint was credible was because we won so decisively. Had the war gone badly for the US and had we suffered huge casualties, this view would not be credible. The truth is that in most every battle, the difference between victory and defeat for the U.S. was VERY small. The U.S. Army was always outnumbered by large margins. With a mistake here and there, America could easily have lost the war.

Due to this revisionist history of the late 1800s, Mexico changed their story and decided the war was all the U.S. fault - claiming the US goaded Mexico into attacking the U.S. Historical revisionists have blindly followed the Mexican line.

Mexican American War Today

Mexicans today claim the southwest US is historically Mexican land. Wrong. This land is historically Indian land. The Spanish stole it from the Indians and then lost this land to the U.S. after the Mexican American War. Many Mexicans also believe the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was too harsh. So even if Mexico is 100% to blame for starting both wars - which they were - did the US have the right to take almost half of Mexico's territory? The answer is ABSOLUTELY YES!! Here's why:

Mexico was looking for an excuse to start this war because they were certain they could defeat the US. But Mexico lost every major battle. To have beaten Mexico as badly as we did, conquered most of their country including the capital city, and then told them they must accept Texas as part of the US, which it already was, and then retreated back to the U.S. would not have been fair to us. This would have been an unforgivable disgrace to the men who died and the rest who went through hell to attain victory - and we would be inviting another attack.

Now put yourself in Mexico's shoes. Your army has been repeatedly defeated, nearly the entire country has been conquered, and the consequences are - nothing!! Just be nice and don't threaten Texas again! In a machismo society like Mexico, would they sit back and say 'OK' or would Mexicans think we Americans are unbelievably gullible. Mexico would hold Americans in contempt for conquering their country and not making them pay a price for their warmongering. Mexico had to pay a price for attacking the U.S.

The war cost the U.S. at least \$75 million. Compensation in the form of land became the policy of Polk - out of necessity. The only way Mexico could reimburse the United States for the expenses of the war was a cession of land to the United States.(12)

If the US could change history, what could we change so Mexico would love us today? If we only kept Texas and gave back the southwest U.S., would Mexico still hate us for keeping Texas? Absolutely yes. If we gave Texas to Mexico, would they love us? No, Mexico would still be bashing America and sending drugs and illegal aliens into all parts of our country. Giving all this land to Mexico would gain us nothing.

Most Mexicans believe that if they had kept ownership of the land north of the Rio Grande - Texas, California and New Mexico, these areas would be economically prosperous like they are now. **This is delusional thinking.** These areas became prosperous because they belong to the US, not Mexico. Had these lands stayed under the control of Mexico, they would not have helped Mexico prosper. This part of Mexico would be as dysfunctional as the rest of Mexico. All that would change is that constant revolutions, widespread poverty, a disastrous economic system, bad health care, poor education, political turmoil and murderous drug cartels would be in a country twice as large as it is now. Even more illegal immigrants from Mexico would be coming into our considerably smaller country for jobs.

After the war, even Mexicans admitted that Mexico chose war over negotiations. In Oct 1847, a pamphlet written by Mariano Otero, editor of El Siglo XIX and Senator from the state of Jalisco, appeared. Otero wrote: "The American forces did not advance to the Rio Grande until after the war became inevitable, and then only as an army of observation."(16) In December, 1847, General Arista declared, "I had the pleasure of being the first to begin the war."(16) In 1847, Santa Anna admitted that Mexico desired to go to war with the U.S., as did the minister of relations in 1849.(17) The Mexican correspondent of the Prussian minister in Washington — regarded by our secretary of war as entirely trustworthy — reported that the [Mexican] people were bent upon war.(17)

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Claims by some historians the Texas revolution occurred because of Anglo settlers stirring up revolts conveniently ignores the fact that many states in Mexico rebelled against the central government in Mexico City and **these states had few if any Americans.** With the near constant rebellion of Mexican states, **it just might be the fault of the government of Mexico.** The revolt in Coahuila, Zacatecas and Texas was the direct result of Santa Anna establishing a dictatorship - not an issue contrived by Texans so they had an excuse to revolt. **What made the Texas situation unique - and unforgiveable from Mexico's point of view - was that the central government was defeated by an Anglo army.**

Some Americans claim the U.S. started the war due to a belief in 'Manifest Destiny' - a belief that it was America's "manifest destiny" to overspread the continent." This is not true and it's important to recognize that **Spain/Mexico, like many other countries, had their own version of "Manifest Destiny."**

Spain's "manifest destiny" was to conquer all of the New World (except for Brazil) for Spain and Catholicism. Incredibly, Spain wanted more than just the New World. In 1513, Vasco Balboa claimed the entire Pacific Ocean and all lands adjoining it for Spain.

In conclusion, we must recognize that the US and Mexico will NEVER have a good relationship until Mexico stops holding a grudge against America for a situation **they** created. Mexican Americans who live in America and proclaim loyalty to Mexico don't deserve to live in the US. And it's time to end the pity party for Mexico.

For a detailed examination of the Texas Revolt and Mexican America war, go to:
<http://americanaction.us/index.php/american-history/mexican-american-war/>

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