



## Anglo-American Takeover of the Southwest Borderlands

*Between 1836 and 1845, through two votes and two wars, the Mexican North became the American Southwest. In 1835, disillusioned by Mexico City's attempts to create a tightly centralized nation, the Anglo-American colonists in Texas, together with a nucleus of Texas Mexicans, voted to sever the province from Mexico, a move that brought about a war with Mexico, the battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto, and a tenuous independence. In 1845, after years of wavering, the U.S. Congress voted to annex the Republic of Texas, triggering a war with Mexico that delivered to the United States a territory that today comprises California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and parts of New Mexico and Colorado. These were epoch-shifting events that ushered in a new era—the United States was now a continental power—but they also marked the culmination of an older history. That history can be only partially understood through a national prism, through the aspirations and actions of nation-states. For a more complete picture, it is necessary to look at the borderlands and the ways in which their inhabitants embraced, emulated, exploited, detested, and, eventually, rejected one another. The U.S.-Mexico borderlands were not putty in the hands of national governments; the borderlanders played an active role in the process that brought an international border in their midst.*

*The previous chapter discussed how market and marital relations reconfigured identities and loosened loyalties in the Mexican North, pushing local communities to envision alternate futures for the borderlands. American commodities, merchants, immigrants, and customs became ubiquitous, and the borderlands began to turn from Mexico toward the United States. This reorientation raised the specter of U.S. takeover, preparing the borderlands for a more purposeful and aggressive conquest. This chapter explores how Americans maneuvered politically and militarily to absorb the Mexican North and how Mexicans responded to those efforts. It also discusses how the enduring indigenous power in the borderlands shaped Mexican and American policies during the years leading up to the U.S.-Mexican War and how that war revealed deep divisions within both U.S. and Mexican societies.*

 DOCUMENTS

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On March 2, 1836, while the Alamo in San Antonio was under siege by the Mexican Army, delegates from several Texas communities gathered at Washington-on-the-Brazos and declared independence. Historians have identified many causes for this Texas revolt: strict customs regulations, the prohibition of slavery in Mexico in 1829, and the 1830 ban on further immigration from the United States had alienated Anglo immigrants and members of the Tejano elite from Mexico. But the final spark came in 1835, when a new centralist regime came to power in Mexico City and set out to curtail state rights. The first document is the Texas Declaration of Independence, which echoes the U.S. Declaration of Independence almost sixty years earlier. The document contains two main sections: a statement on the nature of good government and a list of grievances. The second document is a map drawn by Stephen F. Austin, a prominent empresario and Anglo-Texas political leader, in 1835. The map captures the process of "cartographic dispossession" by which Euro-American colonists used maps to diminish and ultimately revoke native territorial claims. Most of the land marked on this map as Anglo-Texan empresario grants was actually controlled by the Comanches, who here seem to hover in the air, unattached to land and the political landscape. Austin's map anticipated the appropriation of Comanche and other Plains Indian lands by the United States in the late nineteenth century.

In the years leading up to the U.S.-Mexican War, anti-Mexican sentiments became increasingly prevalent in the United States. Rufus B. Sage, a journalist and a fur trapper, both built on and inflamed the growing anti-Mexican rhetoric in his *Scenes of the Rocky Mountains*, published in 1846 and excerpted here as Document 3. Sage blended common Anglo-American stereotypes about Mexicans into a highly negative portrayal that found a ready audience among those Americans who believed that Mexico deserved to be conquered by a more progressive and industrious United States. Document 4 offers a different kind of window into Anglo-American attitudes toward Mexicans and the Mexican Republic. In September 1841, Thomas Catesby Jones, the commander of the Pacific fleet of the United States Navy, received a message that war between the United States and Mexico was imminent. Jones sailed to Monterrey, where, on October 19, he issued a proclamation announcing the U.S. takeover of California. Jones's proclamation portrays the U.S. Navy not as an occupying force, but as a liberating one, and his list of American blessings reads as an inverse list of Mexican failures. Once Jones learned that war had not broken out, he sailed out of Monterrey.

On May 11, 1846, following a clash between Mexican and U.S. troops on the north side of the Rio Grande, President James K. Polk sent a war message to Congress, which, with overwhelming majorities in both the Senate and the House, declared war on Mexico on May 13. Document 5 is the speech Abraham Lincoln delivered to the U.S. House of Representatives in January 1848, condemning the way the United States had entered the war with Mexico and the way President Polk was leading the war effort. Lincoln, then serving his only

term in the House, centered his criticism on the uncertainty of the exact location of the U.S.-Mexico border before the war, a legacy of Texas's long history as a contested borderland with fluid, undetermined boundaries.

The U.S.-Mexico War ended on February 2, 1848, with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty consisted of twenty-three articles, three of which—VIII, IX, X—concerned the rights of the Spanish-speaking inhabitants who stayed in the transferred lands. Before ratification, however, the U.S. Senate revised Article IX and eliminated Article X altogether. Document 6 includes Articles VIII and IX as ratified by the U.S. Senate on March 19, 1848, and by the Mexican legislature on May 25, 1848. The document also includes the expunged Article X and Article XI, which concerned Indian raiding across the border. Finally, the document includes Article IX prior to the amendment. These articles—the ratified, the revised, the eliminated—invite several questions. If territorial conquest of the Mexican North created the category of "Mexican Americans," the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave that category meaning. Was "Mexican American" an ethnocultural, legal, national, or historical designation? What possible motives did the U.S. Senate have for the revisions of the original treaty? Why would the enforcement of Article XI pose serious difficulties for the United States?

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo decreed that pre-existing land titles from the Spanish and Mexican periods would be protected in New Mexico, Arizona, and California (Texas was exempted), but in reality Mexican Americans lost their land at an accelerating pace. In 1851, three years into the California Gold Rush, Congress passed the California Land Act, which put the burden of proof of titles upon claimants. To confirm their titles, Mexican Americans had to engage in costly litigation in an unfamiliar judicial system and in a foreign language, and many of them lost their lands. Document 7 is a petition of mostly Spanish-speaking landowners to the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives in which they argue that California's process of verifying land ownership violated their rights as defined in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

## 1. Texan Rebels Declare Independence, 1836

When a government has ceased to protect the lives, liberty and property of the people, from whom its legitimate powers are derived, and for the advancement of whose happiness it was instituted; and so far from being a guarantee for their inestimable and inalienable rights, becomes an instrument in the hands of evil rulers for their oppression. When the federal republican constitution of their country, which they have sworn to support, no longer has a substantial existence, and the whole nature of their government has been forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed

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H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1897* (Austin: Gammel Book Co., 1898), 1: 1063-1066.

of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military despotism, in which every interest is disregarded but that of the army and the priesthood, both the eternal enemies of civil liberty, the ever ready minions of power, and the usual instruments of tyrants. When, long after the spirit of the constitution has departed, moderation is at length so far lost by those in power, that even the semblance of freedom is removed, and the forms themselves of the constitution discontinued, and so far from their petitions and remonstrances being regarded, the agents who bear them are thrown into dungeons, and mercenary armies sent forth to enforce a new government upon them at the point of the bayonet.

When, in consequence of such acts of malfeasance and abduction on the part of the government, anarchy prevails, and civil society is dissolved into its original elements, in such a crisis, the first law of nature, the right of self-preservation, the inherent and inalienable right of the people to appeal to first principles, and take their political affairs into their own hands in extreme cases, enjoins it as a right towards themselves, and a sacred obligation to their posterity, to abolish such government, and create another in its stead, calculated to rescue them from impending dangers, and to secure their welfare and happiness.

Nations, as well as individuals, are amenable for their acts to the public opinion of mankind. A statement of a part of our grievances is therefore submitted to an impartial world, in justification of the hazardous but unavoidable step now taken, of severing our political connection with the Mexican people, and assuming an independent attitude among the nations of the earth.

The Mexican government, by its colonization laws, invited and induced the Anglo American population of Texas to colonize its wilderness under the pledged faith of a written constitution, that they should continue to enjoy that constitutional liberty and republican government to which they had been habituated in the land of their birth, the United States of America.

In this expectation they have been cruelly disappointed, inasmuch as the Mexican nation has acquiesced to the late changes made in the government by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who, having overturned the constitution of his country, now offers, as the cruel alternative, either to abandon our homes, acquired by so many privations, or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny, the combined despotism of the sword and the priesthood.

It hath sacrificed our welfare to the state of Coahuila, by which our interests have been continually depressed through a jealous and partial course of legislation, carried on at a far distant seat of government, by a hostile majority, in an unknown tongue, and this too, notwithstanding we have petitioned in the humblest terms for the establishment of a separate state government, and have, in accordance with the provisions of the national constitution, presented to the general congress a republican constitution, which was, without a just cause, contemptuously rejected.

It incarcerated in a dungeon, for a long time, one of our citizens, for no other cause but a zealous endeavour to procure the acceptance of our constitution, and the establishment of a state government.

It has failed and refused to secure, on a firm basis, the right of trial by jury, that palladium of civil liberty, and only safe guarantee for the life, liberty, and property of the citizen.

It has failed to establish any public system of education, although possessed of almost boundless resources, (the public domain,) and although it is an axiom in political science, that unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect the continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity for self government.

It has suffered the military commandants, stationed among us, to exercise arbitrary acts of oppression and tyranny, thus trampling upon the most sacred rights of the citizen, and rendering the military superior to the civil power.

It has dissolved, by force of arms, the state congress of Coahuila and Texas, and obliged our representatives to fly for their lives from the seat of government, thus depriving us of the fundamental political right of representation.

It has demanded the surrender of a number of our citizens, and ordered military detachments to seize and carry them into the interior for trial, in contempt of the civil authorities, and in defiance of the laws and the constitution.

It has made piratical attacks upon our commerce, by commissioning foreign desperadoes, and authorizing them to seize our vessels, and convey the property of our citizens to far distant parts for confiscation.

It denies us the right of worshiping the Almighty according to the dictates of our own conscience, by the support of a national religion, calculated to promote the temporal interest of its human functionaries, rather than the glory of the true and living God.

It has demanded us to deliver up our arms, which are essential to our defence—the rightful property of freeman—and formidable only to tyrannical governments.

It has invaded our country both by sea and by land, with the intent to lay waste our territory, and drive us from our homes; and has now a large mercenary army advancing, to carry on against us a war of extermination.

It has, through its emissaries, incited the merciless savage, with the tomahawk and scalping knife, to massacre the inhabitants of our defenceless frontiers.

It has been, during the whole time of our connection with it, the contemptible sport and victim of successive military revolutions, and hath continually exhibited every characteristic of a weak, corrupt, and tyrannical government.

These, and other grievances, were patiently borne by the people of Texas, until they reached that point at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue. We then took up arms in defence of the national constitution. We appealed to our Mexican brethren for assistance: our appeal has been made in vain; though months have elapsed, no sympathetic response has yet been heard from the interior. We are, therefore, forced to the melancholy conclusion, that the Mexican people have acquiesced in the destruction of their liberty, and the substitution therefor of a military government; that they are unfit to be free, and incapable of self government.

The necessity of self-preservation, therefore, now decrees our eternal political separation.

## 2. Stephen F. Austin's Map of Empresario Land Grants in Texas, 1835



Map of Texas by Stephen F. Austin. Published by H. S. Tanner. Courtesy of Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

### 3. Rufus Sage Condemns the Inhabitants of New Mexico, 1846

The mountains are rich in minerals of various kinds. Gold is found in considerable quantities in their vicinity, and would doubtless yield a large profit to diggers, were they possessed of the requisite enterprise and capital. At present these valuable mines are almost entirely neglected,—the common people being too ignorant and poor to work them, and the rich too indolent and fond of ease.

The Mexicans possess large *ranchos* of sheep, horses, mules, and cattle among the mountains, which are kept there the entire year, by a degraded set of beings, following no business but that of herdsmen, or *rancheros*.

This class of people have no loftier aspirations than to throw the *lasso* with dexterity, and break wild mules and horses.

They have scarcely an idea of any other place than the little circle in which they move, nor dream of a more happy state of existence than their own. Half-naked and scantily fed, they are contented with the miserable pittance doled out to them by the proud lordlings they serve, while their wild songs merrily echo through the hills as they pursue their ceaseless vocations till death drops his dark curtain o'er the scene.

There are no people on the continent of America, whether civilized or uncivilized, with one or two exceptions, more miserable in condition or despicable in morals than the mongrel race inhabiting New Mexico. In saying this, I deal in generalities; but were I to particularize the observation would hold good in a large majority of cases.

Next to the squalid appearance of its inhabitants, the first thing that arrests the attention of the traveller on entering an [*sic*] Mexican settlement, is the uninviting mud walls that form the rude hovels which constitute its dwellings.

These are one story high and built of *adobies* [*adobes*], with small windows, (like the port-holes of a fortification,) generally without glass. The entrance is by an opening in the side, very low, and frequently unprotected by a door. The roof is a terrace of sod, reposing upon a layer of small logs, affording but poor protection from the weather.

The interior presents an aspect quite as forbidding;—the floors are simply the naked ground,—chairs and tables are articles rarely met with. In case of an extra room, it is partitioned off by a thin wall of mud, communicating with its neighbor through a small window-shaped aperture, and serves the double purpose of a chamber and store-house.

A few rags, tattered blankets, or old robes, furnish beds for its inmates, who, at nightfall, stow themselves away promiscuously upon the ground or in narrow bins, and snooze their rounds despite the swarms of noxious vermin that infest

LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen, eds., *Rufus B. Sage: His Letters and Papers, 1836-1847, With an Annotated Reprint of His "Scenes in the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas and the Grand Prairies"* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1956), 2: 82-87. This document is also available in David J. Weber, ed., *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 73-75.

them, (companions from which they are seldom free, whether sleeping or waking,—and afford them, perhaps, in greater number and variety of species than any other known people.)

During the winter months, these filthy wretches are seen, day after day, basking at the sunny side of their huts, and bestowing upon each other certain friendly offices connected with the head, wherein the swarming populace of the pericranium are had in alternate requisition.

The entire business of the country is in the hands of the rich, upon whom the laboring classes are mainly dependent for support; and, as a natural consequence, the rich know no end to their treasures, nor the poor to their poverty.

The common laborer obtains only from four to six dollars per month, out of which he must feed and clothe himself. In case he runs in debt beyond his means, he is necessitated by law to serve for the required amount, at two dollars per month;—thus, once in debt, it is almost impossible ever to extricate himself.

Having faintly depicted the real condition of a large majority of the degenerate inhabitants of New Mexico, it will be expected of me to say something of their intelligence and morality; and here a still more revolting task awaits my effort.

Intelligence is confined almost exclusively to the higher classes, and the poor "*palavro*" comes in for a very diminutive share.

Education is entirely controlled by the priests, who make use of their utmost endeavors to entangle the minds of their pupils in the meshes of superstition and bigotry. The result of this may be plainly stated in a few words:

Superstition and bigotry are universal,—all, both old and young, being tied down to the disgusting formalities of a religion that manifests itself in little else than senseless parade and unmeaning ceremony,—while a large majority can neither read nor write.

These conservators of intelligence and morals are often as sadly deficient in either as those they assume to teach. Gambling, swearing, drinking, Sabbath-breaking, and sundry other vices, are the too frequent concomitants of their practice;—under such instructors, who can fail to foresee the attendant trains of evils? The abject condition of the people favors the impress of unsound instruction and deteriorating example, reducing public morals to a very low ebb.

Property and life are alike unsafe, and a large proportion of the whole community are little other than thieves and robbers. Profanity is their common language. In their honesty, integrity, and good faith, as a general thing, no reliance should be placed. They are at all times ready to betray their trust whenever a sufficient inducement is presented.

With the present of a few dollars, witnesses may be readily obtained to swear to anything; and a like bonus placed in the hands of the *Alcaldi* [*alcalde*] will generally secure the required judgment, however much at variance with the true merits of the cause.

Thus, justice becomes a mere mockery, and crime stalks forth at noon-day, unawed by fear of punishment, and unrebuked by public opinion and practice.



But fear, in most cases, exercises a far more controlling influence over them than either gratitude or favor. They may be ranked with the few exceptions in the family of man who cannot endure good treatment. To manage them successfully, they must needs be held in continual restraint, and kept in their place by force, if necessary,—else they will become haughty and insolent.

As servants, they are excellent, when properly trained, but are worse than useless if left to themselves.

In regard to the Mexican women, it would be unfair to include them in the preceding summary.

The ladies present a striking contrast to their countryman in general character, other than morals. They are kind and affectionate in their disposition, mild and affable in their deportment, and ever ready to administer to the necessities of others. But, on the score of virtue and common chastity, they are sadly deficient; while ignorance and superstition are equally predominant.

One of the prime causes in producing this deplorable state of things may be attributed to that government policy which confines the circulating medium of the country within too narrow limits, and thus throws the entire business of the country into the hands of the capitalist.

A policy like this must ever give to the rich the moneyed power, while it drains from the pockets of the poor man and places him at the mercy of haughty lordlings, who, taking advantage of his necessity, grant him but the scanty pittance for his services they in tender compassion see fit to bestow.

The higher classes have thus attained the supreme control, and the commoners must continue to cringe and bow to their will. In this manner the latter have, by degrees, lost all ambition and self-respect, and, in degradation, are only equalled by their effeminacy.

Possessed of little moral restraint, and interested in nothing but the demands of present want, they abandon themselves to vice, and prey upon one another and those around them.

#### 4. Thomas Catesby Jones Announces United States Takeover of California, 1842

To the inhabitants of the two Californias:

Although I come in arms, as the representative of a powerful nation upon whom the central government of Mexico has waged war, I come not to spread desolation among California's peaceful inhabitants.

It is against the armed enemies of my country, banded and swayed under the flag of Mexico, that war and its dread consequences will be enforced.

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United States National Archives. Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library. Record Group 45. Letters from Officers Commanding Squadrons: 1841-1846, Pacific Squadron: 1841-1846. This document is also available in Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, eds., *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535-1846* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2001), 460-461.

Inhabitants of California! You have only to remain at your homes in pursuit of peaceful vocation to ensure security of life, persons, and property from the consequences of an unjust war into which Mexico has suddenly and rashly plunged you.

Those Stars and Stripes, infallible emblems of civil Liberty—of Liberty of speech, freedom of the press, and above all, the freedom of conscience, with constitutional rights and lawful security, to worship the Great Deity in the way most congenial to each one's sense of duty to his Creator, now float triumphantly before you and henceforth and forever will give protection and security to you, to your children, and to unborn countless thousands.

All the rights and privileges which you now enjoy, together with the privilege of choosing your own magistrates and other officers for the administration of justice among yourselves, will be secured to all who remain peaceably at their homes and offer no resistance to the forces of the United States.

Each of the inhabitants of California, whether natives or foreigners, as may not be disposed to accept the high privilege of citizenship and to live peaceably under the Free Government of the United States will be allowed time to dispose of their property and to remove out of the country without any other restriction, while they remain in it, than the observance of strict neutrality, total abstinence from taking part directly or indirectly in the war against the United States or holding any intercourse whatever with any civil or military officer, agent, or other person employed by the Mexican Government.

All provisions and supplies of every kind furnished by the inhabitants of California for the use of the United States, their ships, and their soldiers will be paid for at fair rates.

No private property will be taken for public use without just compensation.

### **5. Abraham Lincoln Condemns the War with Mexico, 1848**

Some, if not all the gentlemen on, the other side of the House, who have addressed the committee within the last two days, have spoken rather complainingly, if I have rightly understood them, of the vote given a week or ten days ago, declaring that the war with Mexico was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President. I admit that such a vote should not be given, in mere party wantonness, and that the one given, is justly censurable, if it have no other, or better foundation. I am one of those who joined in that vote; and I did so under my best impression of the *truth* of the case. How I got this impression, and how it may possibly be removed, I will now try to show.... The President, in his first war message of May 1846, declares that the soil was *ours* on which hostilities were commenced by Mexico; and he repeats that declaration, almost in the same language, in each successive annual message, thus showing that he esteems that point, a highly essential one.

Now I propose to try to show, that the whole of this,—issue and evidence—is from beginning to end, the sheerest deception.

I now proceed to examine the Presidents evidence, as applicable to such an issue. When that evidence is analyzed, it is all included in the following propositions:

1. That the Rio Grande was the Western boundary of Louisiana as we purchased it of France in 1803.
2. That the Republic of Texas always *claimed* the Rio Grande, as her Western boundary.
3. That by various acts, she had claimed it *on paper*.
4. That Santa Anna, in his treaty with Texas, recognised the <sup>1</sup>Rio Grande, as her boundary.
5. That Texas *before*, and the U. S. *after*, annexation had *exercised* jurisdiction *beyond* the Nueces—*between* the two rivers.
6. That our Congress, *understood* the boundary of Texas to extend beyond the Nueces.

Now for each of these in it's turn.

His first item is, that the Rio Grande was the Western boundary of Louisiana, as we purchased it of France in 1803; and seeming to expect this to be disputed, he argues over the amount of nearly a page, to prove it true; at the end of which he lets us know, that by the treaty of 1819, we sold to Spain the whole country from the Rio Grande eastward, to the Sabine. Now, admitting for the present, that the Rio Grande, was the boundary of Louisiana, what, under heaven, had that to do with the *present* boundary between us and Mexico? How, Mr. Chairman, the line, that once divided your land from mine, can *still* be the boundary between us, *after* I have sold my land to you, is, to me, beyond all comprehension. And how any man, with an honest purpose only, of proving the truth, could ever have *thought* of introducing such a fact to prove such an issue, is equally incomprehensible. His next piece of evidence is that "The Republic of Texas always *claimed* this river (Rio Grande) as her western boundary[.]" That is not true, in fact. Texas *has* claimed it, but she has not *always* claimed it. There is, at least, one distinguished exception. Her state constitution,—the republic's most solemn, and well considered act—that which may, without impropriety, be called her last will and testament revoking all others—makes no such claim. But suppose she had always claimed it. Has not Mexico always claimed the contrary? so that there is but *claim* against *claim*, leaving nothing proved, until we get back of the claims, and find which has the better *foundation*. Though not in the order in which the President presents his evidence, I now consider that class of his statements, which are, in substance, nothing more than that Texas has, by various acts of her convention and congress, claimed the Rio Grande, as her boundary, *on paper*. . . . I next consider the President's statement that Santa Anna in his *treaty* with Texas, recognised the Rio Grande, as the western boundary of Texas.

. . . . I believe I should not err, if I were to declare, that during the first ten years of the existence of that document, it was never, by any body, *called* a

treaty—that it was never so called, till the President, in his extremity, attempted, by so calling it, to wring something from it in justification of himself in connection with the Mexican war. It has none of the distinguishing features of a treaty. It does not call itself a treaty. Santa Anna does not therein, assume to bind Mexico.... He did not recognise the independence of Texas; he did not assume to put an end to the war; but clearly indicated his expectation of its continuance; he did not say one word about boundary, and, most probably, never thought of it.

Next comes the evidence of Texas before annexation, and the United States, afterwards, *exercising* jurisdiction *beyond* the Nueces, and *between* the two rivers. This actual *exercise* of jurisdiction, is the very class or quality of evidence we want. It is excellent so far as it goes; but does it go far enough? He tells us it went *beyond* the Nueces; but he does not tell us it went *to* the Rio Grande. He tells us, jurisdiction was exercised *between* the two rivers, but he does not tell us it was exercised over *all* the territory between them.

If, as is probably true, Texas was exercising jurisdiction along the western bank of the Nueces, and Mexico was exercising it along the eastern bank of the Rio Grande, then *neither* river was the boundary; but the uninhabited country between the two, was.... As to the country now in question, we bought it of France in 1803, and sold it to Spain in 1819, according to the President's statements. After this, all Mexico, including Texas, revolutionized against Spain; and still later, Texas revolutionized against Mexico. In my view, just so far as she carried her revolution, by obtaining the *actual*, willing or unwilling, submission of the people, *so far*, the country was hers, and no farther. Now sir, for the purpose of obtaining the very best evidence, as to whether Texas had actually carried her revolution, to the place where the hostilities of the present war commenced, let the President answer the interrogatories, I proposed, as before mentioned, or some other similar ones. Let him answer, fully, fairly, and candidly. Let him answer with *facts*, and not with arguments.... How like the half insane mumbling of a fever-dream, is the whole war part of his late message! At one time telling us that Mexico has nothing whatever, that we can get, but territory; at another, showing us how we can support the war, by levying contributions on Mexico. At one time, urging the national honor, the security of the future, the prevention of foreign interference, and even, the good of Mexico herself, as among the objects of the war; at another, telling us, that "to reject indemnity, by refusing to accept a cession of territory, would be to abandon all our just demands, and to wage the war, bearing all its expenses, *without a purpose or definite object*[" So then, the national honor, security of the future, and every thing but territorial indemnity, may be considered the *no-purposes*, and *indefinite*, objects of the war!... So again, he insists that the separate national existence of Mexico, shall be maintained; but he does not tell us *how* this can be done, after we shall have taken *all* her territory. Lest the questions, I here suggest, be considered speculative merely, let me be indulged a moment in trying [to] show they are not. The war has gone on some twenty months; for the expenses of which, together with an inconsiderable old score, the President now claims about one half of the Mexican territory; and that, by far the better half, so far as concerns our ability to make any thing out of it. It is comparatively uninhabited; so that we could establish

land offices in it, and raise some money in that way. But the other half is already inhabited, as I understand it, tolerably densely for the nature of the country; and all its lands, or all that are valuable, already appropriated as private property. How then are we to make any thing out of these lands with this incumbrance on them? or how, remove the incumbrance? I suppose no one will say we should kill the people, or drive them out, or make slaves of them, or even confiscate their property. How then can we make much out of this part of the territory?

## 6. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848

ART. VIII.—Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain, for the future, within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove, at any time, to the Mexican republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof, and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, or tax, or charge, whatever.

Those who shall prefer to remain in said territories, may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their selection within one year from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty; and those who shall remain in the said territories, after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy, with respect to it, guaranties equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

ART. IX.—The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the federal constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States. In the mean time, they shall be maintained and protected in the enjoyment of their liberty, their property, and the civil rights now vested in them according to the Mexican laws. With respect to political rights, their condition shall be on an equality with that of the inhabitants of the other territories of the United States, and at least equally good as that of the inhabitants of Louisiana and the Floridas, when these provinces, by transfer from the French republic and the crown of Spain, became territories of the United States.

The same most ample guaranty shall be enjoyed by all ecclesiastics and religious corporations or communities, as well in the discharge of the offices of their ministry as in the enjoyment of their property of every kind, whether individual or corporate. This guaranty shall embrace all temples, houses, and edifices dedicated to the Roman Catholic worship, as well as all property destined to its support, or to that of schools, hospitals, and other foundations for charitable or beneficent purposes. No property of this nature shall be considered as having become the property of the American government, or as subject to be by it disposed of, or diverted to other uses.

Finally, the relations and communication between the Catholics living in the territories aforesaid, and their respective ecclesiastical authorities, shall be open, free, and exempt from all hindrance whatever, even although such authorities should reside within the limits of the Mexican republic, as defined by this treaty; and this freedom shall continue, so long as a new demarkation of ecclesiastical districts shall not have been made, conformably with the laws of the Roman Catholic church.

ART. X.—All grants of land made by the Mexican government, or by the competent authorities, in territories previously appertaining to Mexico, and remaining for the future within the limits of the United States, shall be respected as valid, to the same extent that the same grants would be valid if the said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico. But the grantees of lands in Texas, put in possession thereof, who, by reason of the circumstances of the country, since the beginning of the troubles between Texas and the Mexican government, may have been prevented from fulfilling all the conditions of their grants, shall be under the obligation to fulfil the said conditions within the periods limited in the same, respectively; such periods to be now counted from the date of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty; in default of which, the said grants shall not be obligatory upon the State of Texas, in virtue of the stipulations contained in this article.

The foregoing stipulation in regard to grantees of land in Texas is extended to all grantees of land in the territories aforesaid, elsewhere than in Texas, put in possession under such grants; and, in default of the fulfilment of the conditions of any such grant, within the new period, which, as is above stipulated, begins with the day of the exchange of ratifications of this treaty, the same shall be null and void.

The Mexican government declares that no grant whatever of lands in Texas has been made since the second day of March, one thousand eight hundred and thirty-six; and that no grant whatever of lands, in any of the territories aforesaid, has been made since the thirteenth day of May, one thousand eight hundred and forty-six.

[The above article was expunged by the Senate.]

ART. XI.—Considering that a great part of the territories which, by the present treaty, are to be comprehended for the future within the limits of the United States, is now occupied by savage tribes who will hereafter be under the control of the government of the United States, and whose incursions within the territory of Mexico would be prejudicial in the extreme, it is solemnly agreed that all such incursions shall be forcibly restrained by the government of

the United States, whensoever this may be necessary; and that when they cannot be prevented, they shall be punished by the said government, and satisfaction for the same shall be exacted—all in the same way, and with equal diligence and energy, as if the same incursions were committed within its own territory, against its own citizens.

It shall not be lawful, under any pretext whatever, for any inhabitant of the United States to purchase or acquire any Mexican, or any foreigner residing in Mexico, who may have been captured by Indians inhabiting the territory of either of the two republics, nor to purchase or acquire horses, mules, cattle, or property of any kind, stolen within Mexican territory by such Indians: nor to provide such Indians with fire-arms or ammunition, by sale or otherwise.

And in the event of any person or persons captured within Mexican territory by Indians, being carried into the territory of the United States, the government of the latter engages and binds itself in the most solemn manner, so soon as it shall know of such captives being within its territory, and shall be able to do so, through the faithful exercise of its influence and power, to rescue them and return them to their country, or deliver them to the agent or representative of the Mexican government. The Mexican authorities will, as far as practicable, give to the government of the United States notice of such captures; and its agents shall pay the expenses incurred in the maintenance and transmission of the rescued captives; who, in the mean time, shall be treated with the utmost hospitality by the American authorities at the place where they may be. But if the government of the United States, before receiving such notice from Mexico, should obtain intelligence, through any other channel, of the existence of Mexican captives within its territory, it will proceed forthwith to effect their release and delivery to the Mexican agent, as above stipulated.

For the purpose of giving to these stipulations the fullest possible efficacy, thereby affording the security and redress demanded by their true spirit and intent, the government of the United States will now and hereafter pass, without unnecessary delay, and always vigilantly enforce, such laws as the nature of the subject may require. And finally, the sacredness of this obligation shall never be lost sight of by the said government when providing for the removal of Indians from any portion of said territories, or for its being settled by the citizens of the United States; but, on the contrary, special care then shall be taken not to place its Indian occupants under the necessity of seeking new homes, by committing those invasions which the United States have solemnly obliged themselves to restrain.

### **Article IX Prior to Amendment by the U.S. Senate**

The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding Article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States,

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David J. Weber, ed., *Foreigners in Their Own Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 164-165.

and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States. In the mean time, they shall be maintained and protected in the enjoyment of their liberty, their property, and the civil rights now vested in them according to the Mexican laws. With respect to political rights, their condition shall be on an equality with that of the inhabitants of the other territories of the United States; and at least equally good as that of the inhabitants of Louisiana and the Floridas, when these provinces, by transfer from the French Republic and the Crown of Spain, became territories of the United States.

The same most ample guaranty shall be enjoyed by all ecclesiastics and religious corporations or communities, as well in the discharge of the offices of their ministry, as in the enjoyment of their property of every kind, whether individual or corporate. This guaranty shall embrace all temples, houses and edifices dedicated to the Roman Catholic worship; as well as all property destined to its support, or to that of schools, hospitals and other foundations for charitable or beneficent purposes. No property of this nature shall be considered as having become the property of the American Government, or as subject to be, by it, disposed of or diverted to other uses.

### 7. Antonio Maria Pico and Others Criticize California's Land Policy, 1859

We, the undersigned, residents of the state of California, and some of us citizens of the United States, previously citizens of the Republic of Mexico, respectfully say:

That during the war between the United States and Mexico the officers of the United States, as commandants of the land and sea forces, on several occasions offered and promised in the most solemn manner to the inhabitants of California, protection and security of their persons and their property and the annexation of the said state of California to the American Union, impressing upon them the great advantages to be derived from their being citizens of the United States, as was promised them.

When peace was established between the two nations by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, they joined in the general rejoicing with their new American fellow countrymen, even though some—a very few indeed—decided to remain in California as Mexican citizens, in conformity with the literal interpretation of that solemn instrument; they immediately assumed the position of American citizens that was offered them, and since then have conducted themselves with zeal and faithfulness and with no less loyalty than those whose great fortune it was to be born under the flag of the North American republic—believing, thus, that all their rights were insured in the treaty, which declares that *their property shall be inviolably protected and insured*; seeing the realization of the

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Robert Glass Cleland, *The Cattle on a Thousand Hills: Southern California, 1850-1880* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1951), 238-242.



promises made to them by United States officials; trusting and hoping to participate in the prosperity and happiness of the great nation of which they now had come to be an integral part, and in which, if it was true that they now found the value of their possessions increased, that was also to be considered compensation for their sufferings and privations.

The inhabitants of California, having had no choice but to dedicate themselves to the rural and pastoral life and allied occupations, ignorant even of the laws of their own country, and without the assistance of lawyers (of whom there were so few in California) to advise them on legal matters, elected from among themselves their judges, who had no knowledge of the intricate technical terms of the law and who were, of course, incompetent and ill-fitted to occupy the delicate position of forensic judicature. Scattered as the population was over a large territory, they could hardly hope that the titles under which their ancestors held and preserved their lands, in many cases for over half a century, would be able to withstand a scrupulously critical examination before a court. They heard with dismay of the appointment, by Act of Congress, of a Commission with the right to examine all titles and confirm or disapprove them, as their judgment considered equitable. Though this honorable body has doubtless had the best interests of the state at heart, still it has brought about the most disastrous effects upon those who have the honor to subscribe their names to this petition, for, even though all landholders possessing titles under the Spanish or Mexican governments were not forced by the letter of the law to present them before the Commission for confirmation, nevertheless all those titles were at once considered doubtful, their origin questionable, and, as a result, worthless for confirmation by the Commission; all landholders were thus *compelled de facto* to submit their titles to the Commission for confirmation, under the alternative that, if they were not submitted, the lands would be considered public property.

The undersigned, ignorant, then, of the forms and proceedings of an American court of justice, were obliged to engage the services of American lawyers to present their claims, paying them enormous fees. Not having other means with which to meet those expenses but their lands, they were compelled to give up part of their property, in many cases as much as a fourth of it, and in other cases even more.

The discovery of gold attracted an immense number of immigrants to this country, and, when they perceived that the titles of the old inhabitants were considered doubtful and their validity questionable, they spread themselves over the land as though it were public property, taking possession of the improvements made by the inhabitants, many times seizing even their houses (where they had lived for many years with their families), taking and killing the cattle and destroying their crops; so that those who before had owned great numbers of cattle that could have been counted by the thousands, now found themselves without any, and the men who were the owners of many leagues of land now were deprived of the peaceful possession of even one vara.

The expenses of the new state government were great, and the money to pay for these was only to be derived from the tax on property, and there was little property in this new state but the above-mentioned lands. Onerous taxes

were levied by new laws, and if these were not paid the property was put up for sale. Deprived as they were of the use of their lands, from which they had now no lucrative returns, the owners were compelled to mortgage them in order to assume the payment of taxes already due and constantly increasing. With such mortgages upon property greatly depreciated (because of its uncertain status), without crops or rents, the owners of those lands were not able to borrow money except at usurious rates of interest.

The petitioners, finding themselves unable to face such payments because of the rates of interest, taxes, and litigation expenses, as well as having to maintain their families, were compelled to sell, little by little, the greater part of their old possessions. Some, who at one time had been the richest landholders, today find themselves without a foot of ground, living as objects of charity—and even in sight of the many leagues of land which, with many a thousand head of cattle, they once had called their own; and those of us who, by means of strict economy and immense sacrifices, have been able to preserve a small portion of our property, have heard to our great dismay that new legal projects are being planned to keep us still longer in suspense, consuming, to the last iota, the property left us by our ancestors.

The manifest injustice of such an act must be clearly apparent to those honorable bodies when they consider that the native Californians were an agricultural people and that they have wished to continue so; but they have encountered the obstacle of the enterprising genius of the Americans, who have assumed possession of their lands, taken their cattle, and destroyed their woods, while the Californians have been thrown among those who were strangers to their language, customs, laws, and habits.

It would have been better for the state, and for those newly established in it, if all those titles to lands, the *expedientes* [documents] of which were properly registered in the Mexican archives, had been declared valid; if those holders of titles derived from former governments had been declared perpetual owners and presumptive possessors of the lands (in all civilized countries they would have been acknowledged legitimate owners of the land); and if the government, or any private person or official who might have pretensions to the contrary, should have been able to establish his claim only through a regular court of justice, in accordance with customary judicial procedure. Such a course would have increased the fame of the conquerors, won the faith and respect of the conquered, and contributed to the material prosperity of the nation at large.

## ESSAYS

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Many of the recent histories on the Anglo-American takeover of the Southwest borderlands have been histories from below: They focus on the dynamic tensions between metropolitan designs and local agency and emphasize slow changes in peoples' everyday lives over diplomatic and military interventions. Where does this historiographical shift leave such famous borderlands leaders as Stephen Fuller Austin or Sam Houston, who figured so prominently in the older scholarship?

Is there room for their lofty visions and momentous decisions in the expanded cast of historical agents, or has their historiographical stature become irreversibly diminished? Great figures are still worthy of our attention, argues Gregg Cantrell, professor of history at Texas Christian University, but their historical roles and influence must be placed in proper context. In his essay, Cantrell does just that to Stephen F. Austin, the man who has been mythologized as the "Father of Texas." Rather than trying to determine how Austin shaped history, Cantrell suggests, we might be better served by asking how history shaped him. The Austin he portrays was a southerner, a Missouri slaveholder, and a promoter of plantation agriculture who in Texas reinvented himself as a multicultural borderlander. The "Father of Texas" was a conscientious empresario who became a bilingual land speculator, a loyal Mexican citizen, a political mediator, and, only towards the end, a revolutionary separatist.

The second essay, by Brian Delay, professor of history at the University of California at Berkeley, discusses how three parallel historical tracks—Mexico's internal troubles, Native American power politics, and U.S. expansionism—converged after 1830 to change the history of the Southwest borderlands. As previous chapters have shown, Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, and other native groups had raided Spanish colonial outposts since the early seventeenth century; indeed, along with cross-cultural accommodation through diplomacy, commerce, intermarriage, and mixed communities, raiding is a defining strand of the Southwest borderlands history. Yet, as Delay shows, the 1830s and 1840s witnessed a dramatic increase in intercultural violence, as Indians launched devastating raids on Mexican settlements across nine states. Delay discusses the complex political, economic, and cultural impulses that fueled the violence, but his main focus is on its many and often unexpected consequences. In what ways did violence shape how Americans, Mexicans, and Indians viewed one another, and how did it alter the balance of power among them? How did the Mexico-bound raids serve native communities and why, in the end, did they backfire on them? How do the existing national narratives change if viewed from the vantage point of the borderlands?

### **Stephen F. Austin, Empresario and Borderlander**

GREGG CANTRELL

The Anglo-American colonists who came to Mexican Texas brought with them some heavy cultural baggage. Most came from slaveholding states and subscribed to southern notions of white supremacy— notions that might easily be applied to dark-skinned Mexicans as well as to African Americans. Many undoubtedly embodied the other forms of ethnocentrism peculiar to the Jacksonian era, such as a strident prejudice against Catholics and an intense hatred of Indians. Moreover,

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Gregg Cantrell, "Stephen F. Austin: Political and Cultural Mediator," in *Major Problems in Texas History*, ed. Sam W. Haynes, Cary D. Wintz, and Thomas Paterson, pp. 104–110 (Wadsworth Publishing, 2001).

few settlers would have questioned the basic tenets of the ideology that would someday be called "Manifest Destiny:" the belief that the United States would inevitably spread American-style democracy and cultural institutions westward across the continent. Given these realities, many recent scholars have viewed the Anglo settlement of Texas as little more than an American invasion, a racist land grab of Mexico's northern frontier in which Mexicans and Indians were the chief victims.

At first glance, the foremost leader of this "invasion" seems to sustain these interpretations. Stephen Fuller Austin was a Virginia native who had grown up mostly on the Missouri frontier, where he utilized slave labor on a large scale in his family's lead-mining operation. In Texas, he worked repeatedly to ensure that slavery would be protected by the government. He had also served in the Missouri militia during the War of 1812, participating in a military campaign that burned Indian villages in Illinois. His credentials as a white supremacist seemed secure.

The same might be said for his standing as a proponent of Manifest Destiny. In an Independence Day speech in 1818, he delivered an address extolling the virtues of American civilization and the Founding Fathers. Near the end of the oration, he alluded to Mexico's ongoing independence struggle:

... the same spirit that unsheathed the sword of Washington and sacrificed servitude and slavery in the flames of the Revolution, will also flash across the Gulph of Mexico and over the western wilderness that separates independent America from the enslaved colonies of Spain, and darting the beams of intelligence into the benighted souls of their inhabitants awake them from the stupor of slaves to the energy of freemen, from the degradation of vassals to the dignity of sovereigns.

After emigrating to Texas, he frequently defined his mission as that of "[spreading] over it North American population, enterprise, and intelligence."

In addition to his racial beliefs and his pro-American chauvinism, Austin also seemed typically American in his attitudes toward Mexican Catholicism. On his first trip through the interior of Mexico, he wrote that "the people are bigoted and superstitious to an extreme, and indolence appears to be the general order of the day." And in another, oft-quoted passage, he added, "to be candid the majority of the people of the whole nation as far as I have seen them want nothing but tails to be more brutes than the apes... Fanaticism reigns with a power that equally astonishes and grieves a man of common sense."

Austin's words and deeds seemed to confirm his ethnocentrism when Texas began to wage war against Mexico. Not only did he publicly advocate independence several months before the actual declaration, but he justified the revolution on the grounds that "A war of extermination is raging in Texas, a war of barbarism and of despotic principles, waged by the mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race." He recounted the fifteen years in which he had labored "like a slave to *Americanize Texas*" so that the southwestern frontier of the United States would be safe. "But the Anglo-American foundation, this nucleus of republicanism, is to broken up,"

he declared, "and its place supplied by a population of Indians, Mexicans, and renegades, all mixed together, and all the natural enemies of white men and civilization." In other statements he raised the cry of anti-Catholicism, claiming that the revolution was being fought for "religious liberty" and against the "banner of the inquisition." With such actions and statements coming from the man who initiated the Anglo-American colonization of Texas, who could doubt that racism, imperialism, cultural chauvinism, and greed were the main impulses behind the American occupation of Texas all along?

Despite all of this, the case of Stephen F. Austin—when considered in its entirety—actually tells a very different story. For the better part of fifteen years, the young Missourian served as a political and cultural mediator between Anglo Texans and Mexicans. When examined objectively, Austin's career demonstrates the very real potential for political, economic, and social cooperation across racial and cultural lines. The history leading up to the Texas Revolution emerges as a far more complex story than it appears.

When Austin received permission in 1821 to introduce 300 American families into the region between the Brazos and Colorado, his timing was perfect. The newly independent government of Mexico, as well as the local Tejano leadership of Texas, recognized the need to populate the sparsely settled province with hardworking, taxpaying citizens who would contribute to the economic development of northern Mexico, help fight hostile Indians, and hopefully prevent the loss of Texas to the rapidly expanding United States. Austin's title was *empresario*, which meant that he was responsible for recruiting settlers, surveying and issuing land titles, enforcing the laws, and acting as liaison between his colonists and the Mexican government. From the start, Austin labored tirelessly and took his responsibilities as *empresario* seriously.

One of the first indications of that seriousness was his approach to the language barrier. Austin spoke little or no Spanish when he first arrived in Texas, but he dedicated himself to learning the language not just passably but fluently. Most of this effort took place in 1822 when he was forced to travel to Mexico City to secure confirmation of his grant from the new government of Mexico. Within a few weeks of his arrival there, Austin was conducting business in Spanish and even acting as spokesman for other Americans in their business with the government.

We get a glimpse of Austin's attitudes toward the language issue in his letters to his younger brother, Brown Austin. Stephen had left Brown, who was only nineteen, behind in Texas when he went to Mexico City. But rather than leave Brown with Anglo friends in the new colony, he placed Brown in the household of the prominent Tejano citizen Erasmo Seguín of San Antonio with instructions to spend every waking moment studying Spanish and learning Mexican ways. "Remember," Stephen lectured Brown, "that all your hopes of rising in this country depend on learn[ing] to speak and write the language correctly. Without that, you will do nothing." Ten years later he would take a similar course with his teenage nephew, Moses Austin Bryan.

By the time Austin returned to Texas in 1823, he could speak Spanish and was personally acquainted with a host of major Mexican leaders. Arriving home,

he issued a proclamation reminding the settlers of their obligation to the government. He instructed them "to remember that the Roman Catholic is the religion of this nation" and urged them to "respect the Catholic religion with all that attention due to its sacredness and to the laws of the land." Two years later, when the new national constitution was published, he summoned the colonists to San Felipe for a grand celebration of the new system of government. There, in the village he had laid out in a traditional Spanish pattern with streets named for Mexican statesmen, Austin raised the Mexican flag, read the constitution, and administered the oath of allegiance. Good order prevailed the entire day, and the people expressed "general enthusiasm in favor of the Government of our adopted Country." Austin made the phrase "fidelity to Mexico" his motto and for years preached it like gospel to the colonists, frequently reminding them that they lived under "the most liberal and munificent government on earth to emigrants."

Austin soon formed harmonious working relationships with important Tejanos as well as Mexicans from the interior. When the national congress combined Texas with Coahuila to form one state, he succeeded in forging an effective three-pronged political coalition between Anglo colonists, Tejanos, and a group of powerful Coahuilan politicians/businessmen headed by the Viesca brothers of Parras. Together, they dominated the politics of the vast frontier state for more than a decade, finding common ground on a wide range of issues.

Prominent Tejano José Antonio Navarro of San Antonio was one of Austin's key allies in this coalition. Navarro represented Texas in the 1828 state legislature, at a time when Austin, along with other Anglo colonists, feared that the state was on the verge of enforcing its prohibitions on slavery. Navarro came to the rescue, quietly securing the passage of a bill that allowed Americans to continue to bring their slaves into Texas. Modern sensibilities will condemn the purpose of Navarro's labors, but the point here is to show the close cooperation and identification of mutual interests between these two men who came from such different cultural backgrounds.

Equally telling is the *personal* relationship that apparently developed between Austin and Navarro. Stephen F. Austin was not the sort who formed intimate friendships easily, and he tended to be a very private and reserved man, rarely mentioning personal matters to business or political associates. But in 1829, he faced one of the greatest personal crises of his life when his beloved younger brother, Brown, suddenly died of yellow fever. The stress of this event triggered a severe attack of fever in Austin, who lingered near death for weeks. When he finally was able to sit up in bed and write a few letters, Navarro was one of the first people he contacted—and one of the few in whom he confided. Austin poured out his grief to his Tejano friend, poignantly writing of the "terrible blow" he had received. That Austin would share his anguish with Navarro (who would later sign the Texas Declaration of Independence) says much about the degree of trust and friendship that existed between the two men.

Similarly strong and enduring was Austin's relationship with the Seguín family. Erasmo Seguín was among a group of Tejanos who traveled to Louisiana in 1821 to escort Stephen F. Austin to the site of his grant. The men became

friends, and Brown Austin apparently lived with the Seguíns for the entire year that Austin was gone. Several years later, Austin made efforts to purchase cotton ginning equipment for Erasmo in New Orleans because Erasmo had refused to accept any reimbursement for the time that Brown had boarded with him.

Like the Austin-Navarro relationship, the Austin-Seguín relationship extended into the period of the Revolution itself. In the fall of 1835, when Austin was commanding Texan troops in the field, into the camp galloped Juan Seguín—Erasmo's son—along with a company of Tejano cavalymen, volunteering their services in the Texas cause. Austin welcomed them into the ranks, commissioning Seguín as a lieutenant colonel. Austin would later praise the Tejano troops, saying that "They uniformly acquitted themselves to their credit as patriots and soldiers."

But Austin did not simply cooperate with Mexicans when they were willing to take the side of Anglos in some conflict. There were also times when he stood by the Mexican government in conflicts with other Anglos. Perhaps the most famous case involved the Fredonian Rebellion of 1826-27. In 1825, an Anglo-American, Haden Edwards, received an empresario contract from the state government to introduce 800 settlers into the Nacogdoches area. Edwards, a reckless and undiplomatic man, soon angered both Anglo and Tejano settlers who had long predated him in the region, and finally the Mexican government canceled his contract and ordered him expelled from Texas. He responded by declaring the independence of the "Fredonian" republic, and he made an alliance with a portion of the local Cherokee Indian tribes who had failed in their attempts to gain land titles from the Mexican government. Political chief José Antonio Saucedo assembled Mexican troops from Goliad and San Antonio, marched to San Felipe where they were joined by Stephen F. Austin and his colony's militia, and together the mixed force marched to Nacogdoches and put down the rebellion with minimal difficulty.

In hindsight, the Fredonian rebellion resembles comic opera, but for those willing to read the lessons carefully, it indicates more about the real nature of the Texas frontier from 1821 to 1835 and of racial and ethnic relations than almost any other incident. The temptation is to look only at surface facts and to see the rebellion as a precursor of the 1836 revolution—a land grab by aggressive, ungrateful Anglos. But the realities are much more complex. Consider several points. Before the granting of the Edwards empresario contract, the Nacogdoches region was occupied by an incredibly diverse population of Tejanos and Anglos, with a sprinkling of other ethnic Europeans. The region was also home to a number of indigenous Texas Indian tribes, plus the semi-Europeanized Cherokees, who were themselves recent emigrants from the American southeast. Edwards's contract was granted by a state legislature in far-off Saltillo, by Mexican elites whose own financial interests depended on the economic development of Texas. Edwards antagonized both Anglos and Tejanos in Nacogdoches, and the actual fighting that took place there was by no means an Anglo vs. Mexican affair. When Austin learned of the revolt, he called the Fredonians "a party of infatuated madmen," and Austin's Anglo colonists turned out unhesitatingly to aid the Mexicans in putting down the rebellion. Furthermore,

facts show that the Cherokees themselves were actually sharply divided over the affair, and a sizable portion of them repudiated their comrades who had sided with Edwards and instead aided the Tejanos and Anglos in opposing the rebels. When the revolt disintegrated, the Cherokee leaders who had joined with the Fredonians were condemned by a tribal council, hunted down, and executed by their own people. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Anastacio Bustamante, commandant general of Mexico's northern frontier states, wrote Stephen Austin a letter expressing his gratitude for Austin's colonists' support, saying he wanted personally to give Austin "*un Extrechisimo abrazo*"—a very strong embrace—for "the happy result of the Expedition to Nacogdoches."

Like so much Texas history during this period, the simple dichotomies break down. In the Fredonian episode, Austin and his Anglo colonists marched side by side with Mexican troops against other Anglo-Americans. Even the Indians were bitterly divided. At Austin's suggestion, the Mexicans later granted amnesty to all but the ringleaders of the revolt, and he remained in East Texas several weeks, traveling the region with the Mexican leaders to calm the fears of the inhabitants and restore peace and order. Brown Austin undoubtedly spoke for his brother when he wrote that the insurgents were "treated with a degree of lenity by the Mexicans they had no right to expect from the nature of their crimes—and which I vouchsafe would not have been shewn them in their native country for similar offences." The actions of Austin and his colonists, as well as the response of the Mexican authorities, suggest a degree of cooperation and identification of common interests that transcended cultural differences.

After the notorious Law of April 6, 1830 disrupted the empresario system and initiated a Mexican crackdown on Anglo Texas, Austin once again sought to act as mediator. Although he potentially had more to lose under the law than almost anyone else, he counseled calmness and continued loyalty toward Mexico, even pointing out to his colonists the beneficial aspects of the much-hated decree. Over the next four years, every time that Texans grew dissatisfied with the actions of the government in Mexico City, he tried to forge solidarity between the Tejanos and Anglos of Texas and to encourage the Tejanos to take the lead in petitioning the government for redress. Even after Austin's arrest and imprisonment in 1833, he continued to call for calm in Texas. Indeed, after four months in a dungeon, he was still asking friends in Texas to "Remember me to Ramón Músquiz [the Tejano political chief in San Antonio] particularly—I shall feel grateful to him as long as I live...."

Austin's friendship and respect for a long list of Mexican and Tejano leaders never faltered. His efforts to build a society in Mexican Texas where enterprising men of Anglo and Hispanic backgrounds might live in harmony and prosperity remained constant for fifteen years prior to the outbreak of revolution. He tried to avoid warfare against Indians, and he even accepted a few free blacks as settlers in his colony.

Given these efforts, how are the seemingly bigoted statements that he occasionally uttered to be explained? Take, for example, his famous 1823 complaint about Mexicans being as being as uncivilized apes. It is easy to take such a statement out of context, but if one continues reading that same letter, Austin



predicts optimistically that the Mexican nation would soon "assume her rights in full, and bursting the chains of superstition declare that *man has a right to think for himself.*" In other words, Austin directed his criticism at the Church itself and what he perceived as its oppression of the Mexican people, not at Mexicans for any inherent defect of character. In 1833, he was even more explicit on this theme, actually defending Roman Catholicism as "a religion whose foundation is perfect harmony, a union of principles, & of action." But he condemned the *type* of Catholicism then being practiced in Mexico, saying it was "in theory divine, in practice infernal." These were not the words of a knee-jerk nativist.

But what about the harsh racial invective that he employed in 1835–1836? What are we to make of his support for independence, his 1836 outburst about the "war of barbarism" being "waged by the mongrel Spanish-Indian race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race," and his declaration that the non-Anglos of Texas were "the natural enemies of white men and civilization?" Was this the chauvinistic American finally showing his true colors? How do we reconcile such statements with his actions during the previous fifteen years?

Again, context is everything, and placing Austin's racist-sounding comments in context reveals the great tragedy of Anglo-Tejano relations in the Texas Revolutionary period. Austin wrote these words at a point in the Revolution when he was desperately trying to arouse sympathy and support from citizens of the United States. His main audience was made up of Jacksonian Democrats—and southern Democrats at that. His rhetorical transformation of the Texian struggle into a war against racially inferior Mexicans was carefully calculated to stir the deepest fears and emotions of southerners. One of the tragic consequences of this war—and of almost all others in which the enemy is of a different race, ethnicity, or culture—is that such wars almost inevitably generate this sort of propaganda. Portray your enemies as somehow less than human, and killing them becomes much easier. Recall how Germans were portrayed in American propaganda during World War I, or the Japanese during World War II, and the genesis of Austin's words can be understood. Was he wrong to resort to racist appeals when his actions over a fifteen-year period clearly contradicted such sentiments? Of course he was. In this one instance, Austin sacrificed his principles in a desperate attempt to reverse the tide of a war that by all appearances was about to be lost. We may wish that he had possessed the superhuman strength of character needed to resist such a sellout, but in the end he was only human.

Returning to his beloved Texas in the critical summer of 1836, Austin reverted to his tried-and-true philosophy of seeking reconciliation and national unity. He never had the opportunity to visit his old Tejano friends in San Antonio, but there is no indication that he would have treated them any differently than before. The harsh rhetoric was never repeated at home. Nothing from his short, ill-fated presidential campaign against Sam Houston that September suggests that he would have changed his longstanding policy of working to build a Texas in which Anglos and Tejanos could honorably cooperate and coexist. And his willingness to accept a cabinet appointment from his rival, Sam Houston, and to support Houston in all broad policy matters, further suggests

that he, like Houston, would have resisted the movement toward persecution and recrimination against Tejanos that grew in intensity over the coming years.

However, Stephen F. Austin was a man of his times in one important respect. He believed that American-style democracy—flawed though it may have been by the stain of slavery—was the best system of government yet devised. He only gave up on Mexico when he became convinced that his adopted country had utterly failed to secure the blessings of democracy for its people, Anglo and Hispanic. Having reached that determination, he was willing to employ whatever necessary means to win the Revolution and bring Texas under a better government. That decision—and those means—could give the appearance that he was motivated by an unthinking bigotry against all things not American. But to arrive at such a conclusion, based on a selective reading of the evidence, is to overlook the fifteen-year reality of Austin as a genuine political and cultural mediator.

## How Indians Shaped the Era of the U.S.-Mexican War

BRIAN DELAY

In the early 1830s, following what for most had been nearly two generations of imperfect peace, Comanches, Kiowas, Navajos, and several different tribes of Apaches dramatically increased their attacks upon northern Mexican settlements. While contexts and motivations varied widely, most of the escalating violence reflected Mexico's declining military and diplomatic capabilities, as well as burgeoning markets for stolen livestock and captives. Indian men raided Mexican ranches, haciendas, and towns, killing or capturing the people they found there, and stealing or destroying animals and other property. When able, Mexicans responded by attacking their enemies with comparable cruelty and avarice. Raids expanded, breeding reprisals and deepening enmities, until the searing violence touched all or parts of nine states.

These events had powerful but virtually forgotten consequences for the course and outcome of the U.S.-Mexican War. In pursuing their own material, strategic, and cultural goals, indigenous polities in the Mexican north remade the ground upon which Mexico and the United States would compete in the mid-1840s. Raids and counter-raids claimed thousands of lives, ruined critical sectors of northern Mexico's economy, stalled the north's demographic growth, depopulated much of its vast countryside, and fueled divisive conflicts between Mexicans at nearly every level of political integration. Exhausted, impoverished, and divided by fifteen years of war, and facing ongoing and even intensifying Indian raids, northern Mexicans were singularly unprepared to resist the U.S. Army in 1846 or to sustain a significant insurgency against occupation forces.

Indian raiders shaped how Americans and Mexicans viewed each other in advance of the war. From Texas to Washington, Anglo-American observers

began looking at Mexico *through* the autonomous native peoples of the borderlands, as if these Indians were lenses calibrated to reveal essential information about Mexicans, their lands, and their futures in North America. Schooled in Indian removal—that supreme exhibition of state power over native peoples—Americans watched Indians driving Mexicans backward, and this observation inspired ambitions and tactics for continental expansion. Mexicans living through the conflicts could not afford the same creative detachment, but they too came to gaze through Indians rather than at them. Mexicans saw Americans standing behind *los indios bárbaros*, employing them as proxies in a plan to seize Mexico's territory.

Thus U.S. expansion into Mexican territory should be viewed not as the culmination of one story, but rather as the collision of two.<sup>4</sup> The more familiar tale about competition between a thriving and a faltering republic intersected in neglected but decisive ways with a story—or, more precisely, multiple stories—about independent Indian peoples pursuing their own interests at the margins of state power.

Recovering the significance of Indians to the U.S.-Mexican War advances the project of integrating native peoples into the international history of the Americas.

As nineteenth-century North America's defining international conflict and an event with enduring consequences for all of the continent's peoples, the U.S.-Mexican War is an ideal starting place for reconceptualizing indigenous contributions to the hemisphere's international history. By taking seriously both what Indians did and how their deeds informed discourse in the U.S. and Mexico, it is possible to see how native polities could "powerfully influence political relations" between rival states in North America and beyond.

In 1830, Northern Mexicans enjoyed relatively peaceful relations with most independent Indians. Despite frequent animal thefts, killings and kidnappings were relatively rare and were met more often with negotiation than with organized violence. Conditions deteriorated rapidly during the next decade, until overlapping theaters of war canvassed the whole of the north. By the early 1830s, Apaches in the northwest were raiding in five states: "Western" Apaches in Sonora and Chihuahua; Chiricahuas, in Sonora, Chihuahua, and southern New Mexico; and Mescaleros in Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango. As the decade progressed, New Mexicans became embroiled in renewed war with Navajos, and during the early 1840s they provoked narrower quarrels with Utes and Arapahos as well. Lipan Apaches on the Lower Rio Grande broke a wary peace with Mexicans repeatedly in the 1830s and 1840s, raiding ranches and settlements throughout the northeast. Finally, Comanches and Kiowas dramatically escalated their raids on Chihuahua in the early 1830s, turned to Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Coahuila by mid-decade, and by 1840 were even campaigning across Durango, northern Zacatecas, and parts of San Luis Potosí.

While all of these conflicts had local and regional proximate causes, a few broad changes help explain why violence metastasized across the north when it did. Following independence in 1821, the Republic of Mexico found itself

without the financial and, to a lesser extent, the diplomatic resources that had helped Bourbon New Spain foster a delicate system of alliances, regulated trade, and gift-giving with independent Indians. Presents to Indians became fewer and shabbier, provoking "humiliating" excuses from cash-poor northern Mexican officials and violent outbursts by Indian visitors. The consequences of Mexican parsimony were nowhere more calamitous than in the northwest, where Apaches resorted to widespread raiding only after the cancellation of a decades-old ration program.

For most independent Indians, the costs of conflict diminished along with the benefits of peace. The presidios (garrisons) that had anchored Spanish military force on the frontier went into steady decline beginning in the 1810s.

By making peace attractive and war dangerous, the regional system established in the late colonial era had put a brake on the contest for animals and, to a lesser extent, captives that fueled nearly all organized conflict between independent Indians and northern Mexicans. Native and nonnative economies alike depended on domestic animals for transportation of goods and people, and for hunting and war. Throughout northern Mexico, horses, mules, and (especially for Mexicans and Navajos) sheep also served as markers of wealth, as resources that bound together networks of patrons and clients, and as the gifts most commonly used for bride-price. Without access to animals, then, young men could not participate in basic aspects of economic and social life. Indian and Mexican societies likewise placed a premium on captive women and children, who could be treated as commodities, slaves, or dependent kin. Across northern Mexico, inequalities and unrealized ambitions encouraged men to improve their own fortunes by taking animals and captives from ethnic others.

Meanwhile, maturing connections to outside markets made theft all the more lucrative. American commercial activity in the Mexican north increased dramatically after 1821. Mexican officials denounced U.S. merchants whom they labeled "traders of blood" for supplying raiders with arms and ammunition in return for stolen Mexican animals. There is evidence of such activity among Apaches, and especially on the southern plains, where American and Texan merchants established several trading houses on the edges of *la comanchería* in the 1830s and 1840s.

... Economic explanations for raiding should be situated within a larger political framework. First, changes in Comanche and Kiowa raiding indicate coordination of policy rather than coincidence of ambition. Over the 1830s and 1840s, the geography and intensity of raiding expanded in sharply defined stages, each stage corresponding to geopolitical events on and around the southern plains. Second, large campaigns were the norm rather than the exception. On more than thirty occasions between 1834 and 1846, Comanches and Kiowas sent parties of one hundred men or more below the Rio Grande. More than a third of these groups included at least five hundred warriors, and on four occasions Mexican officials reported expeditions of eight hundred to a thousand men. These largest campaigns involved perhaps half of the total fighting force of the southern plains.

Third and finally, the tremendous destruction of these campaigns often worked against the very material ambitions that seem to have motivated raiders

in the first place. In addition to plundering homes, taking captives, and seizing horses and mules, southern plains men exerted great energy and took great risks to kill Mexicans, slaughter thousands of pigs, cows, goats, and sheep, and set fire to dwellings, barns, and granaries. Comanches and their allies killed at least two thousand Mexicans in the twelve years before the U.S.-Mexican War—a figure that amounts to five Mexicans killed for every two the raiders tried to capture. Indeed, southern plains Indians occasionally became so engrossed with the work of killing people, slaughtering animals, and destroying property that Mexican forces had time to converge on the scene and deprive them of their spoils.

... One feature in particular of the Comanche and Kiowa political traditions helps to explain the coordination, size, and extreme violence of the campaigns into Mexico: vengeance. Like most non-state peoples, individual Comanches and Kiowas could call upon kin to help them avenge loved ones killed by outsiders.

In the abstract, the huge campaigns organized in this way were supposed to be brief, to culminate with an enemy's death, and to remain conceptually distinct from the much smaller and informal "raids" targeting animals and captives. But these distinct endeavors seem to have collapsed into one in the years before the U.S. invasion, thanks to the peculiar manner in which profits intersected with dangers in northern Mexico. While many Comanches and Kiowas made reputations and fortunes raiding Mexicans between 1834 and 1846, at least five hundred southern plains men lost their lives in the attempt.

Rather than simply promote the individualistic, economic benefits of raiding Mexican settlements, then, Comanches and Kiowas united their broader communities in the enterprise in part by submerging economics in a discourse about honor, pity, and, especially, revenge. Doing so enabled them to assemble enough men to penetrate deep into Mexican territory for weeks at a time, to take hundreds of captives and steal tens of thousands of horses and mules. But because vengeance provided the political gravity necessary to organize these armies of raiders, Comanches and Kiowas crossed the river to hurt Mexicans as well as take from them. Hence the vast destruction during the 1830s and 1840s, destruction that often undermined the economic objectives that fueled raiding in the first place.

The scale and intensity of interethnic violence increased at a sickening pace across all of northern Mexico after 1830, but subregions endured significant episodic conflict before then. Texas was one such place. Soon after Mexico's War for Independence began in 1810, Spanish authority went into sharp decline in Texas, Indian diplomacy faltered, and native peoples began raiding *tejano* settlements. Spanish officials saw Indian violence as one important factor retarding the development of Texas, and in 1820 began allowing limited Anglo-American colonization in the troubled province. Following independence in 1821, Mexican authorities expanded the pace of colonization. This decision they soon came to regret, as colonists quickly outnumbered *tejanos*, conflicts mounted, and, finally, Texans declared independence from Mexico in 1836.

The rebels dispatched their most illustrious citizen, Stephen F. Austin, to tour the United States and capitalize on sympathy for the movement. Austin delivered a stump speech in several states, laying out the Texan case.

This story, which we can call the Texas Creation Myth, was retold and refined in books, articles, and pamphlets published in cities across the U.S. Texan ambassadors to the United States chanted the Creation Myth like a mantra, and sympathetic U.S. politicians soon knew it by heart. The myth contained three basic components: First, Texas had been a wasteland before Anglo-American colonists arrived, because the Mexicans, "either through a want of personal prowess or military skill ... were unable to repel the frequent incursions of their savage neighbors." Second, officials in Mexico invited American colonists into Texas both to redeem the wilderness from the Indians and to protect northeastern Mexico from Indian attack. Third, the Americans quickly accomplished these twin tasks. As one author put it, "the untiring perseverance of the colonists triumphed over all natural obstacles, expelled the savages by whom the country was infested, reduced the forest to cultivation, and made the desert smile."

The myth introduced a set of ideas about Indians and Mexicans into American political discourse at a moment when the nation was taking notice of the whole of northern Mexico for the first time.

But while Comanches overwhelmed Mexicans, informants assured their readers, the Indians became craven wretches in the presence of armed Anglo-American men. The popular *New Orleans Picayune* explained that Comanches "care little for the Spaniards, but they dread the Americans." [American trader and historian of the Santa Fe Trail Josiah] Gregg agreed, insisting that Comanches appeared "timid and cowardly" when they encountered Americans. Another author added that Comanches "recede as fast as encroachments are made upon their territory."

In other words, the same Indians who had in American minds so efficiently dismantled northern Mexico supposedly dissolved into hapless cowards in the presence of Anglo-Americans. This idea was as essential as it was self-serving. By denigrating Comanches, critics excoriated the Mexican men who allowed themselves to be bested by such contemptible enemies. As in the Texas Creation Myth, American discourse about northern Mexico made Indians into the great signifiers of, rather than the reason for, Mexico's failures. Like Texas prior to colonization, northern Mexico was in tatters not because Indians were strong, but because Mexicans were weak.

And why were Mexicans weak? Many commentators emphasized deficiencies of courage or intelligence. American observers also tried to explain Mexico's Indian problem as a consequence of Mexican sloth, physical weakness, and stupidity. More holistic thinkers gathered all of these condemnations together under the roof of what during the Jacksonian period had become increasingly sophisticated pseudo-scientific theories about racial difference.

Stories about Indian raids from elsewhere in northern Mexico had the effect of rhetorically invalidating Mexico's claim to the land, only on a much larger scale. Waddy Thompson, who had nothing but contempt for Comanches, thought that Mexico's unending ordeal with Indian raids presented the best evidence against that nation's future in North America. "That the Indian race of Mexico must recede before us, is quite as certain as that that is the destiny of our own Indians, who in a military point of view, if in no other, are superior to them."

Mexicans also arrived at a rough consensus on why Indians had done such damage to the northern third of their nation, but it took them more than a decade to get there. Everyone acknowledged that the once-formidable Spanish defenses had declined and that Indians found it easier to raid than before. But that opportunity spoke more to how Indians accomplished their raids than to why they launched them in the first place. In reaching for ultimate causes, northern Mexicans tended initially to attribute the violence to what they saw as the base, animalistic, evil nature of *los salvajes*, whereas prominent authorities in Mexico City pointed to the Indians' disadvantaged, pitiable condition.

Undoubtedly northerners held a range of shifting views about raiders. Still, by the early 1830s, most northern policymakers and writers began framing the "war against the barbarians" as one pitting civilization, religion, and political organization against savagery, faithlessness, and chaotic individualism. *Los bárbaros* were animal, elemental, something, in the words of political geographer José Agustín Escudero, that "the ground seems to vomit forth in its pain." Editors wrote that the enemy strikes without reason or warning, "kills the poor shepherd ... wretched woodcutter ... washer women ... little children." Hence the only rational, indeed the only possible, response, according to Sonora's legislature, was "destruction and eternal war against these barbarians."

Presidents and prominent ministers in the nation's capital thought the northern rhetoric excessive, and insisted not just that Apaches, Comanches, Navajos, and other raiders were human, but that they were Mexican. This was consistent with the sweeping claim of the Constitution of 1824 that everyone born inside Mexico's territorial limits was *mexicano*, but it was also important because Mexican political elites contrasted their own enlightened, inclusive benevolence with the aggressive exclusionism of the United States, and especially with remembered Spanish cruelties.

The conceptual chasm between these two positions aggravated the security crisis. Northerners viewed their fight against *los bárbaros* as an "eminently national" war, albeit one waged against an incomprehensible enemy. National officials saw raiders as something closer to Mexican "banditti," and hence as domestic agents of local or regional crime waves—not as alien threats to national security. Without a single interpretive framework that situated Indian raiders in an unambiguously national context, frontier defense remained disorganized, ineffective, and hobbled by bitter competition for inadequate resources.

After a decade of disagreement, Mexicans finally began to construct a unified discourse about Indian raiders. As was the case in the United States, the nationalization of Mexico's conversation started with Texas, and emerged from a combination of deliberate political calculation, ideological reasoning, and honest observation. In the early 1840s, as the Republic of Texas adopted more belligerent rhetoric toward Mexico, northern officials observed that the word "Texan" commanded Mexico City's attention in a way that "Apache" or "Comanche" never had. Editors of northern newspapers began discerning heretofore underappreciated links between Texans and *los salvajes*. Northern governors started doing the same, informing their constituents and superiors that the Indian invasions

were "directed by the Texans," and successfully linking the two threats in appeals for resources.

Mexico City felt comfortable with such notions. Observers in the capital had long believed that Texans and Americans provided Indians with their firearms, and pronouncements and policies from the early 1840s suggest that national officials were coming to see connections more sinister still. In 1841, for example, when Texan officials started boasting of plans to make the Sierra Madre their southern boundary, the editors of Mexico's official newspaper insisted that Texans were inciting Indian raiders to prepare the way for a planned invasion.

Once the purported Texan-Indian connection started coming into focus at the frontier and in the capital, two things happened to turn this rhetorical convergence into something resembling a national consensus. First, U.S. president John Tyler presented Congress with a plan for the annexation of Texas in the spring of 1844. Tyler's scheme failed, but Mexico's leaders took it to mean that annexation was only a matter of time. While officials in Mexico considered the implications of this, the second change took place: Indians dramatically escalated their raiding activities across the whole of northern Mexico.

... After a relatively uneventful 1843, Comanches and Kiowas launched several destructive campaigns into Tamaulipas, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Durango, and Zacatecas in 1844 and 1845. This surge in raiding coincided with the consummation of a formal peace between the Republic of Texas and the Hois, the southernmost Comanche tribe. The treaty indirectly encouraged raiding by establishing vigorous new trade relationships and by improving security for the families and fortunes that Indian men would have to leave behind while campaigning in Mexico. But the timing of the attacks convinced Mexicans of a direct relationship between raiders and *norteamericanos*.

As international tension increased, more and more Mexicans started seeing in the security crisis evidence of Indian-*norteamericano* collusion. James Polk won the U.S. presidential election in November 1844 thanks to his strong support for annexing Texas, and the U.S. Congress responded by approving annexation days before his inauguration. Soon after Polk took office, Mexico's minister of war, Pedro García Conde, confidently explained to Mexico's house and senate that the "hordes of barbarians" were "sent out every time by the usurpers of our territory, in order to desolate the terrain they desire to occupy without risk and with perfidy." García Conde described an agreement whereby the U.S. provided Indians not only with arms and ammunition, but also with a political education, with "the necessary instruction they need to understand the power they can wield when united in great masses."

The emerging national consensus on why Indians did what they did—because unscrupulous *norteamericanos* and possibly even agents of the U.S. government encouraged and instructed them to—was as much a fiction as the Texas Creation Myth. Apaches and Comanches doubtlessly obtained some arms and ammunition from Americans, and there is evidence that a few merchants tried to increase business by fomenting raids. But *norteamericano* traders had little or no influence over native policy—Indians in Mexico's far north were much more likely to trade with and seek council from other Indians. And as for the



U.S. government, it had little contact with Comanches and Kiowas in the 1830s and early 1840s, and none with Apaches and Navajos.

Nonetheless, the consensus had its uses. It provided a conceptual framework that finally seemed to promise unanimity of national purpose in coping with Indian raiders. By putting an American stamp on the long lists of dead and the numbingly familiar news stories of empty corrals, burned-out ranches, and childless parents, the new consensus also fueled anti-Americanism in advance of an increasingly likely war.

But consensus came too late. The U.S. Army invaded northern Mexico in the spring of 1846, and Americans won striking victories over Mexican troops due in large part to advantages in light artillery. As Polk's army moved through the north, it found a land already scoured by war. From New Mexico to Tamaulipas, the invaders saw abandoned homes, overgrown fields, and hastily finished graves. Sometimes northern Mexicans confided in the *norteamericanos*, telling tales of perpetual insecurity, lamenting dead or stolen kin, and promising cooperation in return for protection from Indians.

Polk and his war planners had counted on this. While the war would eventually end when U.S. troops took Mexico City and the "Halls of the Montezumas," initially the president intended to wage the war entirely in the north, in those same regions that had been devastated by Indian raids. Polk and his advisors were anxious to obtain the friendship, or at least neutrality, of the northern Mexicans who would fall under U.S. occupation. American generals had to worry about tens of thousands of civilians swelling the ranks of the Mexican army, about coordinated efforts to deny Americans necessary supplies, and, perhaps most importantly, about the possibility of a broad-based guerrilla insurgency against the occupation. Anxiety over such scenarios prompted Polk and his subordinates to craft detailed instructions for commanders on the ground, ordering them to exploit Mexicans' fears and dissatisfaction with their government. Indians would be central to this task. "It is our wish to see you liberated from despots," General Zachary Taylor was to announce at each town conquered or surrendered, "to drive back the savage Cumanches, to prevent the renewal of their assaults, and to compel them to restore to you from captivity your long lost wives and children." General Stephen W. Kearny delivered a New Mexican variant. "From the Mexican government you have never received protection," he proclaimed. "The Apaches and the Navajoes come down from the mountains and carry off your sheep, and even your women, whenever they please. My government will correct all this."

Given Mexican assumptions about the causes of Indian raiding, we can imagine people in the crowds shaking their heads and exchanging knowing looks. But help from hypocrites surely seemed better than no help at all, because conflicts with Indians would only intensify during the U.S.-Mexican War.

Northern Mexicans suffered grievously. "And to think that we owe all this," raged the editors of the *Registro Oficial*, "to those infamous North American enemies who push the bloody hordes of savages upon us and direct their operations with unparalleled astuteness and ferocity! Such are the methods through which a nation that styles itself enlightened and just wages war."

Therefore, when northern Mexicans spoke of the "enemy" in 1846 and 1847, they as often meant *indios* as *norteamericanos*. The ruinous legacy of fifteen years of raiding and the ongoing threat of Indian violence left large segments of northern Mexico's population unable and probably unwilling to resist the U.S. Army. In the northeast, for example, state officials were ordered to muster all males between the ages of sixteen and fifty against the Americans. While the orders exempted those places most exposed to raids, many local authorities still demurred, insisting that their communities needed the men to patrol against Indians. Occasionally this scenario unfolded on a grand scale. In late 1846, Santa Anna labored to amass a huge army and defeat Taylor near Monterrey. Mexico City called upon the states to raise men, but, recognizing the troubles that the north faced from both Indians and Americans, insisted on contributions from only three northern states: Chihuahua, Durango, and Zacatecas. Suspicious of Santa Anna and, more importantly, facing acute threats from Apaches and Comanches, none of the three sent any men. In February 1847, the Mexican army lost the battle of Buena Vista by the narrowest of margins. Had Chihuahua, Durango, and Zacatecas met their quotas, Santa Anna's force would have been increased by one-fifth, perhaps enough to win the battle and shift the entire dynamic of the war.

In defeat, certain Mexican leaders denounced what they saw as northern indifference, even complicity with the invader. Durango's editors assailed those who accused the state's population of treason. "Why? Because we have not fielded armies that have been impossible to raise, because they need be composed of men paid in cash, and our brothers have been assassinated by the barbarians, or else fled far away from their fury?" Chihuahua's representatives likewise tried to defend their honor. They reminded their compatriots that Chihuahua had been "afflicted and desolated for fifteen years by the savages, drowned in the blood of the men and in the lamentations of the widows and the orphans, an ideal theatre in which to showcase the power of the United States."

Subtract the irony, and expansionists in Washington would have agreed. To their way of thinking, Chihuahua and the rest of northern Mexico was not only an ideal showcase for U.S. power, but a land in desperate need of it. By the time senators began openly debating how much territory to demand from Mexico, expansionists could draw on more than a decade of observations to describe a Mexican north empty of meaningful Mexican history, and, by all appearances, increasingly empty of Mexicans themselves.

U.S. leaders turned to tales of Indians attacking Mexicans for more than just rhetorical cover. Congressmen, editors, and administration officials pointed to Mexico's ruinous war with frontier Indians as compelling and, to their minds, honest evidence that Mexicans were incapable of developing their northern lands. This is not to say that everyone subscribing to this view also wanted to acquire Mexican territory. Politicians ambivalent about or even opposed to the war also talked about raiding, but they incorporated Indians into arguments against a cession—for example, invoking the "well-known fact" that raiders had "encroached upon and broken up many of the settlements of the Spaniards" in the north, leaving behind mainly indigenous Mexicans unfit for American political life. In other words, rhetoric about Mexico's Indian war was not so

much part of a calculated expansionist argument as it was indicative of assumptions that by 1846 had become common across the political spectrum.

Northern Mexico's security crisis had therefore become foundational to how U.S. politicians thought about the proposed cession, irrespective of their position on the war. But that was only half of the story. The other half, fully realized in the Texas Creation Myth but as yet only potential in the ongoing conflict with Mexico, concerned the Anglo-American capacity and even destiny to do what Mexico could not: defeat the Indians and provide security to the long-suffering residents of northern Mexico.

Polk had instructed his generals to promise precisely this to Mexicans in the field, and he took pains to assure Congress that this was his intention when he finally made explicit his territorial ambitions in late 1847. The Mexican government should desire to place New Mexico "under the protection" of the U.S., the president explained, because Mexico was too feeble to stop bands of "warlike savages" from committing depredations not only above the Rio Grande, but also upon more populous states below. Thus the cession would improve life for Mexicans north of the line, but more importantly "it would be a blessing to all the northern states to have their citizens protected against [the Indians] by the power of the United States. At this moment many Mexicans, principally females and children, are in captivity among them," Polk continued. "If New Mexico were held and governed by the United States, we could effectually prevent these tribes from committing such outrages, and compel them to release these captives, and restore them to their families and friends."

Confident talk, but did anyone believe it? Every senator had to decide for himself, because Article Eleven of the proposed Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo bound U.S. authorities both to restrain Indians residing north of the new border from raiding into Mexico, and to rescue Mexican captives held by Indians. The article echoed Polk's self-assured rhetoric, but more importantly it called such confidence to task. All the talk about incompetent and cowardly Mexicans, contemptible Comanches, Anglo-Americans easily defeating the Indians and turning deserts into gardens—was this bravado or conviction?

It is telling that the opposition to Article Eleven was led by those who understood Mexico's security problem best. Unlike nearly everyone else in Washington, representatives of the new state of Texas had an appreciation for how difficult it would be to prevent Indian raids into Mexico.

The majority of senators, men better versed in the rhetoric than the reality of Mexico's conflicts with Indians, voted to ratify a treaty that enshrined U.S. obligations for preventing Indian raids into Mexico. They apparently did so because they had persuaded themselves that the United States would indeed save northern Mexico, simply by letting Anglo-Americans and their superior energies flow into the new territories. They would quickly defeat the wandering savages, redeem the helpless Mexican captives, and rescue the vast, derelict garden of western North America from Mexican neglect.

That representatives from both nations felt confident about and pleased with Article Eleven testifies to an essential congruity between American and Mexican

conceptions of Indian raiders. Americans believed that Apaches, Navajos, Kiowas, Comanches, and the like were undisciplined, craven opportunists. Above all, Americans considered these Indians reactive. Mexican weakness, racial impurity, cowardice, and stupidity induced, even compelled, Indians to raid. Most U.S. politicians believed that American strength would quickly reverse the trend. For their part, Mexico's negotiators assumed that *los salvajes* drew much of their strength, most of their weapons, and perhaps even their tactics and political coherence from *norteamericanos*. So it was that Mexican representatives championed Article Eleven as the "only advantage" that could compensate Mexico for all it had sacrificed in the war.

These were vain hopes, born out of a shared nineteenth-century worldview that held only nation-states and empires to be entities of hemispheric significance. Despite an abundance of evidence, national leaders in both Mexico and the United States had been incapable of seeing non-state Indian peoples as consequential political communities pursuing their own collective goals—goals that, however indirectly, might alter the course of nation-states. So it was confusing and infuriating for leaders in both capitals to see raiding surge in the aftermath of the war, and grow progressively worse through the early 1850s. There was evidently more behind raiding campaigns than Mexican incompetence or American provocation. Mexicans responded with outrage and threatened lawsuits into the tens of millions of dollars, based on the violation of Article Eleven. U.S. administrators grumbled about Mexican passivity and asked for patience. Cross-border raids by native peoples would continue in diminished form through the 1880s, but Washington was not prepared to wait nearly that long. Despairing of its ability to honor Article Eleven, the United States bought its way out of it in 1854, with the Gadsden Purchase.

It is unsurprising that nineteenth-century Americans weathered this embarrassment without reevaluating assumptions that had helped them appropriate half of Mexico's national territory. What *is* surprising is that historians on both sides of the modern border retain many of the same assumptions about the capacity of America's indigenous peoples to influence geopolitics in the postcolonial era. But the evidence above suggests that the transformations we associate with the U.S.-Mexican War emerged from a nexus of American, Mexican, and *Indian* politics. U.S. expansion into Mexican territory appears considerably more contingent in its outcome once Indian actors are included in the story. This can only be for the good, given that a perception of inevitability has contributed to collective disinterest in the U.S.-Mexican War, despite its immense and enduring continental consequences.

More broadly, we need to rethink the significance of autonomous native peoples to the interlocked histories of American states. By the early 1820s, more than a dozen generations after Columbus, indigenous polities still controlled between half and three-quarters of the continental landmass claimed by the hemisphere's remaining colonies and newly independent states. The fact that the scope of Indian power is rarely cast this way, in hemispheric terms, speaks to the grip that national teleologies have upon our historical imaginations.

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