



COMMUN IV

Commonwealth School, Boston

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JCC: Mexican- American War

BACKGROUND GUIDE

**Sasha Bates '21,
Crisis Head**

**Sid Holalkere '21,
Chair**

**Avery Wang '21,
Chair**

**Margo Moore '20,
Co-chair**

**Michael Karezin '22,
Co-chair**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Sasha Bates, and I am so excited to welcome you to Mexican American War Joint Crisis Committee! I will be the crisis head for this committee. I am currently a sophomore at Commonwealth and have been doing Model UN since sixth grade.

The strained relationship between the United States and Mexico has been in the news frequently, especially given the current battle over illegal immigration. However, conflict between the United States and Mexico is not a recent development: the US and Mexico have had complex relations for hundreds of years. The Mexican American war was the first formal war between the United States and Mexico, although there had been conflict between the two nations for decades previously.

This is a joint crisis committee, which means there are two rooms, and in each room there are many delegates with competing goals and interests. Your goal as a delegate is to negotiate a solution that will pass in committee while still keeping in mind the goals of your country and the person you are representing.

If you have any questions about the topic, your role, or writing a position paper, please feel free to contact us. Our email addresses are listed below. The USA room will be chaired by Avery Wang, with the help of Michael Karezin, and the Mexico room will be chaired by Sid Holalkere, with the help of Margo Moore.

I hope that this crisis will be fun, informative, and engaging, and I look forward to hearing some amazing debate. Good luck!

Sincerely,

Sasha Bates

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Introduction

This is a historical crisis committee on the Mexican American War. There will be two countries represented, the United States of America and Mexico, along with six different Native American Nations: Western Apache, Eastern Apache, Kiowa, Shoshone, Navajo, and Comanche.

The American, the Eastern Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche representatives will be in the United States room. The Mexican, Western Apache, Shoshone, and Navajo representatives will be in the Mexico room. The rooms of the Native American leaders are assigned by geographical location. As the crisis progresses, allegiances may change; delegates will be moved between rooms accordingly.

History

There were a series of wars, conflicts, and internal turmoil leading up to the start of the Mexican-American War. Britain and Spain claimed different parts of the North American continent. When the United States declared its independence from Britain in 1776 and Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821, both of these new nations struggled to establish a government and authority. However, the United States government was seventy years old by the start of the Mexican American War. Mexico, having been founded only twenty-five years before the start of this conflict, did not have the same political stability. Mexico between its independence and the start of the Mexican-American War went through the Texas-Mexico War, the first Franco-American war, there were constant internal struggles for power.

The Mexican American War was not the first confrontation between Mexico and the United States. As more and more Americans settled in Texas, they were increasingly dissatisfied by the Mexican government. These settlers were required to follow Mexican laws, under which slavery was illegal, all official documents had to be written in Spanish, more Americans were not allowed to immigrate, colonists were subjected to higher taxes, and all people had to follow the Roman Catholic religion. Tensions peaked when the Mexican government sent troops in to stop revolts and protests, causing the Texans to revolt against Mexico to become their own independent nation. These events started the Texas-Mexico War, which lasted from October of 1835 to April of 1836. The United States supported Texas, and Texas eventually won, despite having the smaller army. This surprising victory occurred due to the Texans used different battle tactics. The Texas-Mexico War made Mexico feel threatened by the United States, which later caused the Mexican-American War to start.

During the Mexican American War, the United States faced internal divisions. This was between the President, who belonged to the Democratic party, the majority of the country, which belonged to the

Whig party. The Democratic party believed in Manifest Destiny, the idea that it was the duty of the United States to expand westward while the Whig party believed that the United States was big enough and that Americans should just settle in the land they had. However, both Mexico and the United States continued to expand until their east and west borders met out west. This is where the official border between the two nations was disputed. Mexico wanted the border to be along the Nueces River, while The United States believed it should be along the Rio Grande River. When the United States positioned its troops on the Rio Grande river, Mexico believed that the United States was attacking them and retaliated. This began the Mexican-American War.

Timeline

1821

- Mexico signs the final document ending the War with Spain and declaring its independence.

1830

- The Indian Removal Act is signed into law.
- The Oregon Trail is opened and people in the United States start to move further out west into the states which were part of the Louisiana purchase.

1835

- The start of the Texas Mexico War. This war started because more and more American settlers moved into Texas. These people no longer wanted to be ruled over by Mexico and so they revolted which started the Texas Mexico War. The name of this war can be misleading. Even though the United States never officially declared war on Mexico, they supplied aid to Texas and most of the people fighting in Texas were from the US.

1836

- Battle of the Alamo. This is a deciding battle between Texas and Mexico
- The end of the Texas Mexico War. Texas wins gaining its independence from Mexico.

1838

- The Trail of Tears.
- The Pastry War, also known as the first Franco-American War. As the rioting and turmoil in Mexico continued to grow, multiple French shops were looted and a French civilian was hung in Mexico City. These French citizens complained to their king in France. The French then demanded money from Mexico. When Mexico did not give them the requested money, they declared war. The United States and Texas both sent help to the French. This war lasted three and a half months, ending in 1839. The French won, and the Mexican government had to pay 600,000 pesos to the French government.

1845

- Texas and the United States reach an agreement and Texas becomes an annexed state.

1846

- The American Mexican War begins (crisis starts)



In the map shown above there are the different Native American Nations. On the left there are the Native American nations in the Mexican room, the Western Apache, the Navajo, and the Shoshone. On the right within the United States territory you can see the Eastern Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche.

Positions of Allies

Britain:

Britain wanted to stay out of this war; however, they would have rather allied themselves with Mexico than the United States. America had fought with Britain multiple times before. This included the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Aroostook War in 1838. This led to tension between America and Britain during this period. Additionally, Britain and the United States had disputed claims of the Northwest territories, causing tension between the two nations. Britain had a better relationship with Mexico. They had recently allied themselves with Mexico in the First Franco-American War. Britain would also want to ally themselves with Mexico because they would not want America to become greater than them. Britain was the world's superpower, and they did not want another nation to overpower them. Either the United States or Mexico could win the support of Britain mattering on how they decide to rework history.

France:

France would have probably helped the United States throughout this conflict though it preferred to remain neutral. The United States was France's natural ally throughout the Revolutionary War. However, when France asked for help from the United States later, the United States refused. Mexico and France had just recently fought in the First Franco-American War and were on awful terms. Either nation could win the support of France depending on how they decide to rewrite history.

Mexico

Roles

President Antonio López de Santa Anna: The president almost never governs the country and instead leads the army. The president has control of two-thirds of the army or 60,000 men. The President may move men and armies and order attacks. You can also issue a draft, but bear in mind how that may be difficult to enforce. Only seven of the nineteen states contributed soldiers, arms, and/or money for the war. Federalist.

Vice President Valentín Gomez Farias: Farias helps Santa Anna govern the country and tries to help their cabinet members come to unilateral decisions and preserve the unity of the cabinet. Federalist.

Secretary of Navy: Controls the navy (two ironclads, and twenty or so other ships) and one-third of the military (30,000 soldiers). For research, use statistics based off of the ships from the Texas-Mexican War. You may move your ships and sailors with permission of the Commander in Chief, who is the President. If necessary, the minister of labor can recruit fishermen or other locals at the time. Steamboats were often used at the time for naval vessels. Centralist.

Foreign Minister: Able to send messages to England, France, and any other country without the rest of the committee knowing. You can request soldiers, materials, money, workers, or anything of that sort. You can also work out trade agreements with foreign countries. Your goal should be strengthening relations with other countries while working on updating weapons and supplies. Centralist.

Minister of Religion: Liaison to the church who has power of the people and connections to the Vatican. After the Constitution of 1824, the political power of the Church was reduced and many parishes experienced a lack of leadership. With the liberals of the 1830s, their political power and power in schools was also reduced. But the majority of people were still Catholic. You have power over the morale of the people as well as influence similar to that of the Minister of Media. Monarchist.

Minister of Health: Controls whether doctors can be sent to places and whether research should be done on diseases. Monarchist.

Minister of Media: Member of the cabinet who is able to send press releases to the Mexican public and sway public opinion. Your goal should be trying to unify a national identity, so states will be more willing to help in the war effort. You should also try to keep morale high and encourage more soldiers to enlist and show loyalty to generals. Federalist.

Minister of Agriculture: Controls food supplies and can determine where those resources go. Your goal is to maintain food supplies while ensuring the armies have enough to eat and that farmers aren't angry. Centralist.

Minister of Intelligence: Able to send spies and collect information on the other side. Your goal is to collect information about the Americans, their troop movements, plans, and anything else that could be helpful. You can share this information or keep it to yourself. Monarchist.

Ambassador: This person would be able to send messages to American politicians and generals without the rest of committee knowing. Your goal is to maintain diplomatic relations and help with negotiations over land, treaties, prison swaps, and ceasefires. Federalist.

Doctrines

Centralism: favored strong, centralized national governments with broad powers. They wanted to maintain aspects of colonial society. They wanted the society to be organized (organic). They strove to keep the Catholic Iberian heritage alive.

Federalism: wanted tax and commercial policies to be set by the regional governments, rather than a centralized government. They wanted taxes and commercial policies to be set by the government. They wanted individual rights. They wanted a secular society. They wanted a government modeled after the United States and France.

Monarchism: Believed that a monarch should rule Mexico (some even wanted to return to Spain).

USA

Party Positions

The American public and politicians were divided by political party on the issue of the Mexican American War. The Democratic Party (D) follows the lead of the Democratic President Polk and believes that United States territory should be expanded by attacking Mexico. They believe in the Manifest Destiny, the belief that the expansion of US territory is necessary, justified, and inevitable. The Whig Party (W) is opposed to the war with Mexico, although many Whigs did want America to expand its territory in less violent ways. Their goals are to de-escalate the war and not take any more territory from Mexico. All politicians also want to take actions which will lead to their re-election.

Roles

James K. Polk, President (D): Polk was the president of the US during the Mexican American War. He was extremely supportive of the war and tried to expand US territory as much as possible. He was a staunch supporter of Manifest Destiny. Polk's goals are to escalate the war and win territory for the US. As the Commander in Chief, he has control over all military forces and can enforce his political will.

George M. Dallas, Vice President (D): Dallas was a supporter of US expansion and had an extensive knowledge of monetary policy. His goals are to support the president's decisions and continue the war. He can break ties in the Senate.

James Buchanan, Secretary of State (D): Buchanan supported the president's agenda of expansion through violence. As secretary of state, he particularly supports the president's beliefs through foreign policy. He has control over communicating with Mexico, indigenous nations, and any other countries without the knowledge of the rest of committee.

Robert J. Walker, Secretary of the Treasury (D): Walker supports the president and the annexation of Mexican territory. Walker has control over allocating funds for the war.

John Slidell, Foreign Minister to Mexico: Slidell believed that the use of force was necessary and justified to annex Mexican territories for the US. He can make communications with Mexico, and visit the Mexican room whenever verbal communication is needed.

Sam Houston, Texas Senator (D): Houston was one of the organizers of Texas's provisional government after its original annexation. He agrees with the President's agenda, but he is wary of extreme support of the war, and does not believe that the US should expand its borders indefinitely. He has control over any issue involving Texas.

William S. Archer, Virginia Representative (W): Archer, as a Whig, opposed the expansion of the Mexican-American war and the doctrine of manifest destiny. He disagrees with the president's agenda and believes there are better ways to expand US influence than through violence. He has control over any issue involving Virginia.

John A. Dix, New York Representative (D): Democrat John A. Dix supported the use of military forces during the Mexican-American War. He believed that they must eventually find peace with Mexico and that the only opposition is in the Mexican army not the citizens.

Abraham Lincoln, Illinois Representative (W): The most anti-war politician in America. His very strong view against the war later helps him gain popularity and supporters and be elected president.

Daniel Webster, Massachusetts Representative (W): Webster was elected to the senate for the second time in 1845. He was highly opposed to the Texas Annexation as well as the resulting Mexican-American War. This was mainly because of his fear for disrupting the balance of slave and non-slave states.

Stephen W. Kearny, General: Goals are to win the war against Mexico. Control over a quarter of the American soldiers or 25,000 men.

Zachary Taylor, General: This general's goal is to follow the president's orders and win the war. The president is the one who appointed him and therefore his loyalty should always lie with the president. Controls over half of the American soldiers or 50,000 men.

Winfield Scott, Navy Officer/General: Considered to be one of the greatest American generals of all time. He did not agree with the president that this war should be occurring, and his goal is to end the war as quickly as possible. Full control of the navy and control of a quarter of the army; in other words, control over: 15,000 marines (100 marines per a ship and 150 ships) and 25,000 soldiers.

Native American Nations

Background

Native American tribal leaders' goals are to represent their tribes' interest, natural alliances, and to support the country that they believe will help them the most. They want to continue to own the land that they live on now and have rights within the the borders of the United States or Mexico. These tribal leaders will be put into the rooms by geographical location; however, *they are allowed to switch their alliances between America and Mexico*. If a tribal leader chooses to switch their alliances, they would also switch rooms. Indigenous leaders are free to support either the US or Mexico in their research and position papers.

Roles

US Room:

Indigenous leader of Western Apache: Control over 6,000 soldiers

The Apache homelands have consisted of high mountains, sheltered and watered valleys, deep canyons, deserts, and the southern Great Plains. They are found in the state of Texas within the United States. The Great Plains region allows for fertile land and extraordinary farming. Major rivers include the Colorado River, Rio Grande River, Pecos River, which feeds into the Rio Grande River, and Red River, which feeds into the Mississippi River. The Apache are semi-nomadic, with seasonal living areas to accommodate livestock and agriculture. They also organize trading and raiding parties, which often travel long distances, to interact with neighboring tribes. Allies with both the Comanche, Eastern Apache, and Kiowa.

Indigenous leader of Shoshone: Control over 4,000 soldiers

The Shoshone control a mountainous region, but also with many major rivers. Some include the Missouri River, the Platte River, both of which feed into the Mississippi River, and the Snake River. The Shoshone are primarily hunters and fishers, but also engage in trading with other tribes. Due to the establishment of the Oregon Trail, the Shoshone are worried about American intrusion on their land. The Shoshone are struggling with an outbreak of an infectious disease, and have seen their population decrease.

Indigenous leader of Navajo: Control over 5,000 soldiers

The Navajo live in present-day Arizona and New Mexico, a mostly desert climate. Major rivers include the Colorado River and Rio Grande River. They are distantly related to the Apache. As distant cousins of the Apache, they have a similar way of life. The Navajo came into contact with the United States Army in 1846, when General Stephen W. Kearny invaded Santa Fe, in present-day New Mexico, with around 1,600 men. Santa Fe was close to Navajo territory, and a small group of American soldiers journeyed deep into Navajo territory, encroaching on their land. Because of this, the Navajo worry about American encroachment.

Mexican Room:

Indigenous leader of (Eastern) Apache: Control over 6,000 soldiers. Allies with the Comanche.

Indigenous leader of Comanche: Control over 6,000 soldiers. Has horses, which were important in migration and hunting patterns. This allowed the Comanche to be a prosperous nation since they were

able to sell these horses to other nations for money. With a population of 36,000 people, they had 80,000 horses, over a two to one ratio. This allows for lots of movement and large scale military invasions of other Native American nations. The Comanche would raid Mexico, Texas, and other Native American tribes gaining horses, money, captives, and weapons. Terrible relationship with both the United States and Mexico, which was shown in the Texas-Indian wars. Both the United States and Mexico attacked this group of tribes repetitively starting in 1820 and until the start of the Mexican-American War. During this conflict thousands of Comanche died and a lot of their culture was lost. Your goal as the tribal leader is to save your people, and your culture from destruction.

Indigenous leader of Kiowa: Control over 3,000 soldiers. Strained relationships with the United States, Mexico, and Comanche. Delegate should look closely at the Texas Mexican War. Both the United States and Mexico attacked this group of tribes repetitively starting in 1820 and continuing until the start of this conflict. Allies with the Eastern and Western Apache.

Extra Sources

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