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Treason Town: Cities as Traitors During the U.S.-Mexican War

Kelsey Foster
Utah State University

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TREASON TOWN: CITIES AS TRAITORS DURING THE U.S.-MEXICAN WAR

by

Kelsey Foster

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

History

Approved:

Angela Diaz, Ph.D.  Lawrence Culver, Ph.D.
Major Committee Member  Committee Member

Anna Cohen, Ph.D.
Committee Member

D. Richard Cutler, Ph.D.
Vice Provost of
Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

Treason Town: Cities as Traitors During the U.S.-Mexican War

by

Kelsey Foster, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2022

Major Professor: Angela Diaz
Department: History

Historians have long considered one of the main reasons for Mexico's inability to defend itself against invasion during the U.S.-Mexican War was the disunity of the nation and its population. Historians have propounded various causes of this disunity, including class conflict, partisanship, and the instability of the central government. A closer look at the war experiences of the cities of La Paz, Baja California, and Santa Fe, Nuevo-Mexico, reveals another equally significant factor: localism, the prioritization of the local community over the nation. La Paz and Santa Fe are two of several cities that capitulated to the U.S. army, allowing U.S. troops to occupy the town without a battle—a treasonous action in the minds of many Mexicans. The records created by the leading citizens of these two cities reveal the thought-processes that led to this decision. These thought-processes prove just how critical an analysis of the relationship between the local community and the nation is to fully understand not only historical facts, but human behaviors and identities.

(100 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Treason Town: Cities as Traitors During the U.S.-Mexican War

Kelsey Foster

During the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48) the U.S. army invaded Mexico from several fronts. The Mexican Army was unable to prevent U.S. troops marching into and occupying Mexico City, resulting in the transfer of a vast swath of territory from Mexico to the United States. Historians offer several explanations for Mexico's inability to repel this invasion, and one of them is the disunity of the Mexican nation. Evidence of this disunity can be seen in the response of some local leaders when they were confronted with the invading army: instead of fighting, they elected to surrender, allowing U.S. troops to occupy their town. This decision was viewed as treasonous by many Mexicans. However, local leaders were not motivated by any desire to overthrow their country; rather, their choices were prompted by localism: the prioritization of local community affairs over national affairs. By examining the war experience of two particular towns, La Paz, Baja California, and Santa Fe, Nuevo-Mexico, it becomes clear that localism was a significant factor during the U.S.-Mexican War. Furthermore, it becomes clear that an analysis of the relationship between the local community and the nation is crucial to fully understand not only historical facts, but human behaviors and identities.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

War is notorious for its ability to create no-win situations. The U.S.-Mexican War offers a prime example, as Mexican citizens all over the country confronted a fatal dilemma. The United States army was marching toward their city. Municipal leaders had two options: wage a battle with untrained, ill-equipped citizens for soldiers, or allow the invaders to enter without opposition. When the leaders chose what they believed to be the lesser of two evils, local residents faced a similar quandary, as they were forced to decide whether or not to support their leaders’ choice. Multiple cities found themselves in this predicament; those who made peace with the invaders and permitted the U.S. army to enter the town without resistance became “treason towns.”

“Treason town” is a useful identifier for cities that reacted in a very specific manner to the U.S. invasion. While not everyone would agree that making peace with an enemy to avoid violence qualifies as a treasonous action, during the U.S.-Mexican War, Mexicans who made peace with the U.S. army without putting up a fight were labeled as traitors by their countrymen. There were two kinds of traitors in a treason town: (1) a small minority who actively assisted the United States army, and (2) a somewhat larger group of citizens who did not openly assist, but nevertheless approved of the decision to make peace. Not everyone who lived in a treason town fell under these two headings. The opponents of peace also fell into two categories: (1) citizens who hated the idea of surrender, but nevertheless submitted to the peace, and (2) insurrectionists, who openly opposed the U.S. army’s occupation. It is safe to assume that active traitors were in the minority in a treason town. What is less clear is how many of the compliant citizens were
approving, and how many were resentful. Regardless of their feelings, the compliance of a majority of citizens in a treason town permitted the U.S. army to occupy the city without interruption (though not necessarily without difficulty). Thus, the three qualifications of a treason town were (1) the local government allowed the U.S. troops to enter and occupy the town without a battle; (2) the majority of residents of the city did not violently oppose the ensuing occupation, and (3) a number of citizens actively and willingly assisted the U.S. soldiers.

La Paz, Baja California, and Santa Fe, Nuevo-Mexico, were examples of treason towns. They were not the only two cities to qualify, but they are the focus of this paper. Together they make an interesting study, with several characteristics in common: they were far from the center of Mexico; they were located in territories which the United States desired to possess; and they lacked supplies and men. There were also several differences: one had a significant amount of interaction with foreigners, while the other had limited international contact; one was still battling neighboring Native American tribes such as the Comanche, the Apache, and the Navajo, while the other occupied the land of a people who were virtually extinct; finally, one became part of the United States, while the other was “left...to suffer at the hands of their...brethren” because of their treason.¹

This study focuses on the experiences of traitors and traitorous communities. Similar studies often avoid using these terms, preferring to classify them as rebels. This may be due to a perception that "treason" and "traitor" imply judgment and condemnation. However, it is a mistake to avoid using these terms in certain contexts.

There are several reasons why the term “rebel” does not suffice as a label for the people and communities under consideration here. First and foremost, there were individuals during the U.S.-Mexican War who could accurately be called rebels, but not necessarily traitors. A rebel resisted the enforcement of laws or societal norms. Traitors aided or failed to resist the state’s enemies. A differentiation between traitors and rebels must be preserved in order to better understand the motivations of individuals, the potential effects of their actions, and how they were viewed by other Mexicans. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the majority of those who were considered traitors by their fellow countrymen might more accurately be called "accommodationists;" they did not actively assist the U.S. occupation with arms or information, but they approved of the surrender, and willingly provided food or entertainment. These individuals usually did not consider themselves traitors, even if many of their countrymen did.

Argument

It would be easy to assume any conciliatory actions taken by Mexican citizens during the U.S.-Mexican War were motivated by forced compliance, prompted by a fear for one’s life. Of course, fear played a role, as it does in any war, but it would not be fair to simply conclude traitors were more fearful or cowardly than citizens who chose to resist. Indeed, many traitors put their lives in danger by their treason. They risked

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2 This distinction between the two terms is based on legal and dictionary definitions. A traitor is "one who betrays" or "one who commits treason" (Merriam-Webster, s.v. "traitor," accessed October 10, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/traitor); a rebel "show[s] opposition or disobedience" or "oppose[s]...one in authority or control" (Merriam-Webster, s.v. "rebel," accessed October 10, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rebel).
retaliation from their fellow Mexicans and some even took up arms to fight insurrectionists. There must be more to the story than fear. That ‘more’ was localism.

Localism is an outlook which considers the interests and well-being of the local community over those of the nation. “Local” is a relative term, and the area to which it refers can vary. In the case of La Paz and Santa Fe, I argue that personal and municipal localism shaped the choices citizens made during the U.S.-Mexican War. Preservation and promotion of the city's economy, leadership, and security, or personal economy and opportunity were the driving forces in the decision-making of paceños and santafesinos. Sometimes localism broadened to include the territory in which the community was located, but even this can be traced to the idea that the well-being of a municipality was closely connected to the well-being of the territory.

I am not the first to argue that localism was strong in Mexico, particularly on the frontier. For example, Mark Wasserman asserts in his book, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico: Men, Women, and War*, that the “struggle to protect local autonomy” dominated politics in 19th-century Mexico, and “decisions about which [political] side to support depended on local rather than national situations.” This thesis examines in greater detail localism's central role in fostering the disunity of the Mexican population at the time of the U.S.-Mexican War.

Treason towns existed because there was a conflict of loyalties between the local community and the nation. It has long been argued that Mexico was a disunited nation in the mid-19th century. This disunity was evident in the existence of treason towns. Under normal conditions, the two loyalties did not contradict one another so that loyalty to one

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meant the practical destruction of the other. However, during the U.S.-Mexican War this was exactly the situation that presented itself. Protecting the local community meant betraying the nation; fighting for the nation meant the ruin of the local community. If loyalty to the Mexican nation endangered the local economy, local society, local religion, or local leadership, the citizens of a treason town prioritized the local welfare.

During the U.S.-Mexican War, both traitors and insurrectionists in Santa Fe and La Paz were guided by localism more than by any strong feelings of either love or hate for the Mexican nation. This had little to do with acceptance or rejection of a Mexican identity. When the local community was at risk, its preservation was the priority, regardless of whether it would harm another community or the nation as a whole. There were many reasons why localism prevailed, and they were generally tied to the town’s history and environment. Especially significant factors were: (1) geographic location, which could affect the town’s resources and communication with other areas; (2) the nature of the economy, which determined on whom the people relied for the necessities of life; (3) the policies of the central government with regards to local autonomy; (4) an atmosphere of insecurity, causing a preoccupation with local safety; and (5) demographics, which impacted the town’s culture. All of these factors played a role in La Paz and Santa Fe.

_Historiography_

While the idea that localism was common in Mexico during the U.S.-Mexican War is nothing new, it has not been explored as a major cause of disunity. In _Wars Within War: Mexican Guerrillas, Domestic Elites, and the United States of America, 1846–1848_,
Irving W. Levinson recounts “several wars” that took place within Mexico during the U.S.-Mexican War. The “wars” to which he refers were rebellions: actions taken by a person or group of people challenging the social structure or legislative actions taken by the Mexican government. Based on these rebellions, Levinson argues that Mexican people were disunited as a nation, and this disunity was the primary reason Mexico failed to make an effective defense against the U.S. invasion. In forwarding his argument, Levinson suggests potential causes of the national disunity. He focuses on partisanship (liberals versus conservatives) and certain “powerful and propertied citizens” having a “greater fear of their fellow Mexicans than of the invaders from the north”.

An analysis of treason towns (a prime example of Mexican disunity), casts doubt on these explanations. It was not partisanship which most divided Mexicans, it was localism. Political party did not determine how a person responded to the U.S. invasion. Individuals of the same political persuasion behaved differently, with some choosing to fight and others choosing treason. The role of class is a little more nuanced. While it was not predictive, it was important. The lower class in one town behaved differently from the lower class in another, so one cannot simply say that the lower classes in Mexico were loyal and all traitors came from the upper classes. Nevertheless, a person's class did influence his or her decision to support or not support making peace with the U.S. invaders. For example, in Santa Fe, some members of the lower classes chose sides based on the desires and influence of the dominant caudillo. In La Paz, many in the upper classes felt they had more in common with the U.S. invaders than they did with

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5 Occasionally such rebellions might lead to treason (a rebel might turn into a traitor by helping Mexico’s enemies), but not every rebel was a traitor.
6 Levinson, xvi.
other Mexicans. This affected their choices. So class was certainly relevant in the creation of disunity in Mexico, but it was not the primary cause.

Peter Guardino’s *The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War,* also discusses the disunity that existed in Mexico. The crux of Guardino’s argument is that the most significant reason Mexico failed to repel the U.S. invasion was not disunity, as Levinson claims, but rather a lack of resources. He reasons that the U.S. shared many of Mexico’s problems, such as internal division and leadership issues, so the only way to explain the U.S. victory was the superior artillery of its army and its relative success in keeping its soldiers fed. Guardino discusses disunity primarily as an example of a characteristic which Mexico and the United States shared at the time of the war. In his discussion, Guardino refers to localism, delineating the existence of regional divisions. However, because he is most interested in drawing parallels between Mexico and the United States (which also had its own regional divides), he does not delve much deeper.

In contrast to both Guardino and Levinson, Timothy J. Henderson in *A Glorious Defeat: Mexico and its War with the United States* contends that it was Mexican leadership which most contributed to the country’s losses, rather than the lack of resources emphasized by Guardino, or the disunity stressed by Levinson. “Most of the Mexicans who fought in the war against the United States had little incentive to defend a government that did not represent them, and that, in fact, despised them,” he argues. To some extent, the experiences of La Paz and Santa Fe support the argument that Mexican leadership caused many of the country’s failures. However, Henderson does not

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sufficiently acknowledge the role of localism. Dysfunctional leadership and disaffection with the government forged the spirit of localism, and localism amplified the problems of the Mexican government.

One other piece of work on the U.S.-Mexican War deserves mention. Historian Dennis Berge published an article in the Hispanic American Historical Review called, “A Mexican Dilemma: The Mexico City Ayuntamiento and the Question of Loyalty, 1846-1848.” In this article Berge recounts the experience of the municipal leaders of Mexico City. He examines the conflict of loyalties faced by these municipal leaders, pointing out that the leaders could not be loyal to both town and nation since the best option for their city seemed to directly contradict the best option for their country. Mexico City does not qualify as a treason town based on my definition: although many of the local leaders contemplated or fully advocated capitulation, they were overruled by Santa Anna, and the U.S. army had to fight to take possession. Nevertheless, Berge's discovery that local and national loyalties were in conflict, and that a preference for the safety of local community could override national concerns is very much in line with my own findings.

The U.S.-Mexican War was a borderlands conflict. The military strategy of the United States ensured that the most decisive battles took place in the heart of Mexico, but the fighting had a clear purpose: to turn the borderlands of northern Mexico into the borderlands of the southwestern United States. Since the U.S.-Mexican War so obviously revolves around borderlands issues, and because both cities under consideration were located in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, borderlands historiography is relevant to my analysis. Indeed, the story of La Paz and Santa Fe is a borderlands story. The U.S.-

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Mexico borderlands has a complex history with direct ties to modern politics and society. Because of the rich and varied potential lines of inquiry, there are numerous conversations taking place among historians. This paper will engage with two of them: (1) the characteristics of U.S.-Mexico borderland communities and populations, and (2) the relationship between these communities and the nation to which they belong.

A foundational work in U.S.-Mexico borderlands history, David J. Weber's The Mexican Frontier, was an early attempt to "place[] [the northern Mexico borderlands] squarely within its Mexican context."\(^\text{10}\) This was in contrast to a tendency before the 1980s to study the U.S. southwest solely from the perspective of U.S. national history, ignoring its Mexican national history. Weber's sweeping overview of the period leading up to the U.S.-Mexican War establishes the environment that led towns like La Paz and Santa Fe to choose not to resist the U.S. invasion. One feature of this environment, according to Weber, was the idea that “loyalty to one’s locality...frequently took precedence over loyalty to the…nation as a whole.”\(^\text{11}\) This statement directly parallels my argument. I will expand on this remark and apply it specifically to the experiences of treason towns during the war.

Andrés Reséndez is another historian who considers the northern frontier of Mexico (specifically Texas and New Mexico) during the years leading up to the U.S.-Mexican War. He is most interested in the subject of identity, a common topic among borderlands historians. Reséndez argues in Changing National Identities at the Frontier that it was the collision of the "Mexican state and the American markets" on the frontier

\(^{11}\) Weber, 240.
which "conditioned the identity choices of frontier residents."¹² In other words, economy was more important than nationality. My analysis supports this statement for the most part. Local and personal economy were two of the most significant influences on the choices of both traitors and insurrectionists. It did not necessarily cause them to change their identity—they still considered themselves Mexicans—but it caused them to prioritize one identity over another: they were santafesino first, mexicano second.

In *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century*, historian José Angel Hernández looks at the period just following the U.S.-Mexican War. He explores Mexico’s efforts to repatriate citizens from the territories ceded to the United States. Hernández’s primary purpose is to challenge the theory that Mexico encouraged this repatriation out of concern for the well-being of the Mexicans living in the lost territories. He argues instead that it was primarily “for reasons of...national security, convenience, and territorial integrity.”¹³ The vast majority of Mexicans chose not to repatriate to Mexico, and Hernández offers several explanations for this. Unfortunately he ignores one significant explanation: localism. Hernández fails to explore loyalty to the local community as a clear motivation for Mexican citizens to remain in place. This paper will help to remedy that deficiency, revealing the spirit of localism that prevailed in the territories in question, influencing their decisions both during and after the U.S.-Mexican War.

Besides participating in conversations on borderlands and U.S.-Mexican War history, this paper also contributes the regional or community history of Santa Fe and La

Paz. Interestingly, both towns have limited historiographies. Works devoted entirely to either city are sparse. Of course, as the capitals of their respective territories, the towns are mentioned frequently in any historical analysis of New Mexico or Baja California. Thus I will be engaging most with historical studies of these two states.

Baja California and New Mexico both receive treatment in an anthology of essays edited by Laura Herrera-Serna called *México en Guerra (1846-1848): Perspectivas regionales*. As the title implies, each essay is devoted to the U.S.-Mexican War experience of a particular region of Mexico. Martín González de la Vara writes the chapter on Nuevo-Mexico. González de la Vara is most interested in the resistance that took place in that territory, rather than the capitulation. He admits that most of the population of the territory did not "participate directly in" the insurrection, but claims that "without a doubt they sympathized."14 This conclusion is in line with a common tendency among Mexican historians to minimize non-patriotic actions of Mexican citizens and assume the majority of citizens were patriotic. It is only in the last twenty years or so that this attitude has been challenged.15 Regardless of this tendency, González de la Vara fails to provide not only his reasons for concluding that there was widespread sympathy, but also his analysis of what motivated *nuevomexicanos* to act as they did—either for or against the occupation. A discussion of localism would have strengthened his narrative.

Ray John de Aragón is another historian who attempts to fill the void that exists in New Mexican local history during the U.S.-Mexican War. What little has been written

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about it, he says, is essentially myth. He seeks to refute the myth of a "bloodless conquest." In doing so he spends more time recounting the violence that occurred in New Mexico after the U.S. forces took possession of Santa Fe than he does in analyzing it. Since he is most interested in pointing out the many wrongs endured by *nuevomexicanos*, he does not have much cause to interpret their behavior during the war. Both of the above works are samples of the small body of history that exist on New Mexico during the War, and they prove that it is time to look beyond what *nuevomexicanos* did, and further into why they did it.

The historiography of Baja California is even more limited than that of Nuevo Mexico. In the mid-twentieth century, one historian did his best to begin filling this void. The historian was Doyce B. Nunis, and it is impossible to conduct any historical research related to Baja California without encountering his name. In *The Mexican War in Baja California: The Memorandum of Captain Henry W. Halleck Concerning His Expeditions in Lower California, 1846-1848*, Nunis drafted an introductory essay to provide context for the journal of an American soldier stationed in the area. In doing so, he provides an excellent overview of Baja California's experiences during the war. Nunis is interested in the conflict and uncertainty the locals faced due to the actions of both the Mexican and the U.S. governments. This uncertainty influenced not only the *bajacalifornios*, but also the U.S. army and navy. Nunis's introduction is relevant to my own work because it serves as a basic foundation for any study of Baja California during the War.


For another study of the peninsula during the War, we must return to Herrera Serna's anthology. The chapter covering Baja California was crafted by Ángela Moyano Pahissa. Like González de la Vara in his look at Nuevo-Mexico, Moyano Pahissa chooses to stress the opposition to the U.S. occupation, rather than the cooperation. In doing so, she argues that "to understand the [actions] of the bajacalifornos...requires...a brief characterization of the conditions of that territory."\(^{18}\) Moyano Pahissa recognizes that local conditions were of prime importance in interpreting the behavior of bajacalifornios when the U.S. invaded. However, she does not analyze how or why the conditions caused any particular actions or behavior. In contrast, by examining specific local conditions I will show how they created an atmosphere of localism which influenced the citizens to act either for or against the occupation.

Sources

In a study of traitors and their motivations during the U.S.-Mexican War, primary sources created by the traitors themselves certainly provide the best information. Happily, such documents do exist. The most helpful have proven to be personal and official correspondence and post-war reflections. In one case, an accommodationist became a novelist, and her novels provide interesting insights. Due to the low rate of literacy in Mexico at this time, the majority of these sources represent the more educated or more wealthy classes, whom I call the "elite." Their words are invaluable for learning what traitors thought and believed at the time. However, the elite often had trouble sympathizing with or comprehending the actions of the less educated, who left few

\(^{18}\) Herrera Serna, 131.
records. Consequently, the actions and beliefs of the elite are the predominant study of this paper. There is some analysis of the reputed actions and beliefs of the common people, but lacking their own descriptions, concrete conclusions are more difficult to come by. Furthermore, references to the experience of Native Americans are limited. This is not only due to the record, but due to circumstances. There was not a strong Native American presence within the boundaries of either La Paz or Santa Fe. Since this study is primarily from the perspective of those communities, the experience of Native American individuals and tribes will not be a focus of this paper.

Sources created by the traitors’ countrymen have also proven helpful, documents such as newspapers and political treatises. They provide an outside perspective into the motivations of both traitors and insurrectionists. These sources do contain significant biases arising from political views. For example, a Mexican who subscribed to liberalism would have a relatively-negative attitude toward the existing Mexican government; therefore they were more likely to be sympathetic to traitors' motivations (though not necessarily approbative of the result).

There are numerous journals and reminiscences of U.S. soldiers who served in La Paz and Santa Fe which are crucial to analyzing treason towns. Nevertheless, the bias of these sources can be extreme. Many, if not most, U.S. soldiers believed Mexicans belonged to an inferior race. This often caused them to record incidents emphasizing the negative traits they deemed inherent to that race. Laziness, cowardice, and deception were attributed to Mexican men, and promiscuity to Mexican women. Any stories or judgments related to these ideas must be scrutinized and sometimes ignored. The motivations which U.S. soldiers attributed to both traitors and insurrectionists were
tainted perceptions, and must therefore be used with caution. Correspondence among the U.S. military officers contains many of the same problems as the soldiers’ accounts. However, they had additional reasons to exaggerate or minimize the actions of Mexicans. For example, a failure to truthfully report on insurrections or support received from traitors could lead to the reassignment of troops. If an officer wanted more troops to be assigned to the area, he might overstate the danger caused by an insurrection or understate the support he was receiving from traitors. If he was hoping to make himself look well in the eyes of his superiors, the opposite could be true. Therefore, like the soldiers, officers were susceptible to misrepresenting the motivations of the traitors. Any observations relating to such matters cannot be accepted without question. Reports relating to the actions of traitors or insurrectionists must be interpreted based on what the officer is trying to accomplish through the correspondence, and preferably confirmed by the words of the traitors themselves.

All of the primary sources above, in spite of their various biases, paint a similar picture. That is of “...a society...divided by opposed and incompatible interests.” These incompatible interests were primarily between the local community and the national community. Due to the prevalence of localism, the local community often came first. Of course, localism is not inevitably accompanied by national disloyalty. Furthermore, national disloyalty has many potential causes besides localism. Nevertheless, in the experience of two treason towns, localism was the primary factor guiding the decisions of both traitors and insurrectionists.

This paper is organized into three parts, with a chapter devoted to each treason town under consideration, and a conclusion which contains a brief description of the fate of each community after the war. The town chapters are also divided into three sections. The first demonstrates the existence of localism in the town by exploring its origins and manifestations. The second recounts the U.S. invasion and examines how the citizens’ reactions reflected localism. The third section considers the insurrections that occurred against U.S. occupation, further emphasizing localism’s power to influence not only traitors, but those who opposed them.

The power of localism among the Mexican population during the U.S.-Mexican War should not be ignored. The existence of class conflict and partisanship have received a great deal of attention in studies of Mexican society. However, these were not the main influence on Mexicans’ attitudes during the war. The common tension between the local community and the nation-state was a significant aspect of Mexican life, an observation that is relevant not only to U.S.-Mexican War historians, but to borderland historians, as well. It is crucial to understand the power and influence localism can have on a population. The spirit of localism is apparent in cultures and societies around the world, both past and present. We must be able to recognize and acknowledge it if we are to gain a truer understanding of why people do what they do.
Chapter 2
Santa Fe, Nuevo-Mexico

The town of Santa Fe grew up “in a wide plain, surrounded on all sides by mountains.” It was the capital of the vast territory of Nuevo-Mexico and 3,000 out of an estimated 70,000 nuevomexicanos lived within its borders. If one counted nearby settlements within the town’s jurisdiction, the population doubled to 6,000. From a distance, more than one observer from the United States claimed the buildings of Santa Fe looked like “brick-kilns scattered in every direction.” This was their description of the flat-roofed adobe houses. Pigs and dogs roamed the “irregular, narrow, and dusty” streets, and “three beautiful streams” supplied water to the citizens. In the summer of 1846, this community faced invasion by the United States Army. In the interests of the community, several local leaders elected the path of treason, a decision which a significant number of santafesinos elected to support.

The Community

21 Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the prairies, or, the journal of a Santa Fe trader: during eight expeditions across the great western prairies, and a residence of nearly nine years in northern Mexico, volume I (New York: Henry G. Langley, 1844), 110, https://www.americanwest-amdigital-co-uk.dist.lib.usu.edu/Documents/Images/Graff_1659-1/5#Chapters.
There were numerous reasons why the spirit of localism existed in Santa Fe and they all related to the history and specific features of the community. From the beginning, Santa Fe was a farming settlement; residents received a parcel of land which they were expected to cultivate. Sitting at nearly 7,200 feet above sea level, the town was semi-arid. It received too little precipitation to support a wide variety of produce, and the produce that could grow required effective irrigation to thrive. The most successful crops proved to be the corn and wheat that would eventually blanket the town. The majority of santafesinos were involved in raising these crops, and most were consumed locally. This focus on local subsistence gave the laboring class reason to be more concerned with the health of the local economy than with the health of the national economy. According to a liberal-leaning treatise written in 1848, commercial agriculture within Mexico was stagnant: a bad harvest was devastating, but even “if the harvest [was] good there [was] a great surplus of farm products,” and not enough consumers; storage was too expensive so “the majority [of farmers]...[were] obliged to dump” excess produce.²³ Taxes on interstate trade further isolated the local economy.²⁴ These hindrances to trade meant that a farmer’s prosperity was more immediately connected to the community in which he lived, giving him a localized outlook.

Unlike agricultural trade, mercantile trade in Santa Fe did have outside ties, but they were not to Mexico. The city was a literal transnational crossroad, a critical point along the eponymous Santa Fe Trail. Although the origins of the Santa Fe Trail date from the early 19th century, it was only in the 1830s and 1840s that it became a “major trade route between the

²³ Berge, Considerations, 17.
The 780-mile-long road connected Santa Fe with Independence, Missouri. It took only six weeks for goods to pass from one end to the other. This was significantly less time than it took for goods to travel from manufacturing centers in Mexico. The importance of distance in a time when transportation was difficult should not be underestimated.

Control of trade along the Santa Fe Trail contributed to the creation of a wealthy elite in Santa Fe that, like the lower class, had reason to be concerned with local interests more than national interests. Because of the Santa Fe Trail, santafesinos became less and less dependent on their fellow Mexicans for necessities, weakening direct ties to the national economy. Due to the limited opportunities for trade within Mexico, a merchants’ success was not necessarily dependent the success of the Mexican nation. This did not directly result in the prioritization of the local economy, but it resulted in Santa Fe becoming more and more reliant on the United States, and this gave the citizens an “international outlook.” The fact that the local economy had strong ties to a nation other than Mexico made the citizens less likely to hold a national viewpoint.

The existence of the Santa Fe Trail resulted in international immigration, marriage and business partnerships, all of which contributed to localism. The majority of santafesinos were born in Nuevo-Mexico. Still, there were approximately 300 foreign-born immigrants living in the Santa Fe area (10% of the population); most came from the U.S. (almost two-

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thirds), with the remainder from Canada, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Poland and England. Individuals born in parts of Mexico other than the New Mexico Territory numbered about 150, making a total of 450 santafesinos who were not born in Nuevo-Mexico.\textsuperscript{28} Simply having a populace born within the territory or coming from nations other than Mexico did not create localism, but it did lessen the cultural influence that might have been affected by a large number of Mexicans from other states, perhaps states with stronger ties to the central government. While it is impossible to know for certain how many foreign-born citizens actively supported the U.S. invasion, they did have less cause to consider themselves “Mexican.” As Mexican liberals at the time observed, foreigners in Mexico did not “respond with any interest to the fortunes of [the] country.”\textsuperscript{29} It is impossible to conclude that all foreign-born santafesinos became traitors to Mexico during the U.S.-Mexican War, but it is telling that there is no documentary reference to non-Mexicans joining the insurrection that eventually took place. If a U.S.-born santafesino fought against the U.S. army it likely would have been noted (and strongly resented) in military records or soldiers’ journals. Once again, localism was not necessarily the immediate result of the city’s demographics, but it did create an atmosphere less conducive to a national outlook.

In contrast, the danger of frontier life was a direct cause of local security taking precedence. Nuevomexicanos lacked the military personnel and resources to combat one of their greatest fears: their Native American neighbors. By order of the Spanish crown, Santa

\textsuperscript{28} These numbers are based on the non-military population listed in the 1850 United States Census. No doubt there were changes between 1846 and 1850; for example, there may have been fewer U.S.-born citizens before the war. Nevertheless, the numbers provide helpful insights into the demographics of the city. "United States Census, 1850," database with images, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-6614-6JZ?cc=1401638&wc=95RJ-C6L%3A1031326001%2C1031466901%2C1031481001 : 9 April 2016), New Mexico Territory > Santa Fe > Santa Fe; citing NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.)

\textsuperscript{29} Guardino, 317; Berge, Considerations, 15.
Fe had been founded on land unoccupied by native peoples, and very few Native Americans lived within its boundaries. Those who did primarily worked as house servants. Nevertheless, the city was surrounded by Native American tribes, and it was never completely secure from attacks. One of the largest tribes in the area was the Pueblo, but by the time of the U.S.-Mexican War, they were living in their own settlements and violent conflicts were kept to a minimum. Relationships with other tribes within the territory of New Mexico were more hostile. Nuevomexicanos particularly feared Navajos and Utes from the north, Comanches from the east, and Apaches from the south. The failure of the Mexican government to successfully defend the frontier against these tribes (by providing sufficient military resources and personnel) created a strong dissatisfaction among the populace. As one Spanish-born santafesino wrote in a letter to President of the United States, it would be “‘[f]ar better to become a considerable portion of a powerful Republic’...than to be part of ‘a nation...powerless to defend the citizens of this province from the thousands of hostile Indians who surround them.’”

Another Mexican observed that along the northern frontier “the government of Mexico...lets its Indians live as they please, and its more civilized citizens [must] take care of themselves as best they may.” This local danger weakened ties to the national government. Knowing this, the U.S. army even used it to persuade the populace to accept the U.S. invasion peacefully. The army would not have employed this argument if it did not believe in its power to sway the people. This localized fear motivated some santafesinos to cut ties with Mexico.

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30 Manuel Alvarez to James Buchanan, Santa Fe, September 4, 1846, in Despatches from United States Consuls at Santa Fe, 1830-1846 (microfilm, 179 reels, National Archives Microfilm Publications), M97, quoted in Brian DeLay, War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 265.

Throughout Mexico, religion was a common rallying cry during the U.S.-Mexican War, a means of unifying the people against the invaders. However, even worldwide religions have local aspects. Like other frontier towns, Santa Fe suffered from a shortage of priests. This, along with frequent interactions with foreigners of other faiths via the Santa Fe Trail, affected the religious views of santafesinos. They became “more tolerant and receptive to change” and some of the elite even went so far as to desire a separation of church and state. The formation of local sects like Los Hermanos Penitentes created conflict with the church establishment. Furthermore, a priest’s income depended on “donations...from funerals, baptisms, and weddings,” or “the v[olition of the faithful....” Consequently, priests had reason to take special interest in the local economy and the local populace on whom their livelihoods depended. Priests were tasked with protecting the welfare of the religious adherents in their immediate charge, making a certain amount of local focus inevitable. They also had to vie for influence and power, with each other and with the elite. Controversies would arise revolving around political and religious disagreements over what was best for the local community. Some of these controversies are alluded to in the records. For example, the priest from Taos, Padre Antonio José Martínez, had a history of rivalry with Santa Fe residents Manuel Armijo, Charles Bent and Padre Damasio Taladrid.

Of course, rivalry was not limited to priests. Local rivalries among the elite were manifest in a social structure known as caudillismo or caudilloism. Caudillos were local strongmen who filled the “power vacuum” created by Mexico’s inability to “fund local

32 Weber, 81.
33 Berge, Considerations, 38.
governments.” They were “entrenched in local politics” and their “personal interests superseded Mexican law.” There were two features of caudillismo in New Mexico that had the potential to lead to localism: first, the national government could pose a threat to their power (they often to “resisted centralization”); and second, their influence was tied to the local economy and landownership giving them a strong interest in promoting both. The importance of rivalry in guiding a santafesino’s decision-making was clear in political writings of the time. One prominent local leader, Donaciano Vigil, drafted a pamphlet to explain his opinions and the actions he took with regard to a forced government loan. In the first paragraph Vigil explained why he felt the need to write the pamphlet in the first place; in the second paragraph, he pointed out that Sr. General Mariano Martinez, a primary supporter of the loan, was well-known to have “treated [Vigil] with enmity ever since he came to Santa Fe.” In spite of this, Vigil explained, they were in agreement on this particular issue. Vigil knew his readers would recognize that rivalries were relevant to political decision-making. Rivalries among priests and the elite were a fact of life in Santa Fe, and they only added to the spirit of localism. Navigating local relationships was of more immediate concern than fighting for the Mexican nation.

Santa Fe’s localism violently manifested itself years before the U.S.-Mexican War, in 1837, during the Chimayo Rebellion. In the 1830s, conservative centralists came to power in Mexico City. These were individuals who sought to concentrate authority in the national

35 Alarid, 58.
36 Alarid, 62, 66.
37 Alarid, 4, 67; Wasserman, 3.
government and limit the power of local governments. Some of the changes they implemented were so distasteful to santafesinos that they revolted (with other nuevomexicanos) in the late 1830s. They were particularly unhappy with the appointment of “outsider” governors and “a new system of direct taxation”—both matters of local autonomy. Initially this revolt included individuals from both the upper and the lower classes. Their declared goal was not independence from Mexico, but the removal of a despised leader from power and the preservation of local power. While this reaffirmation of loyalty to the Mexican nation might seem indicative of a national outlook, it actually proved that the concept of local autonomy was more important than a debate over nationality. It did not matter what nation they belonged to, it was the needs and desires of the local community that were important; so important that they were willing to resort to violence. The rebellion was eventually quelled by other nuevomexicanos, mostly from the upper classes. Although the counter-rebels employed “patriotic rhetoric,” their motivations for putting down the rebellion clearly involved local concerns. Elites who initially supported the rebellion turned against it after rebels elected a non-elite as governor. The pronunciamiento issued by the counter-rebels declared their primary purposes were to combat those who were “destroy[ing] the peace, harmony and good order of the citizens, and… [to] suppress the outrages being constantly committed on property.” When the rebellion became a threat to the local interests of the upper classes (their safety, power, and property), it had to be stopped. The counter-rebellion was successful. The rebels were driven out of Santa Fe and peace was restored, with Manuel Armijo (the leader of the counter-rebels) installed as governor.

39 Weber, 262.
40 Reséndez, 196.
Significantly, most of the problems that had caused the revolt remained unresolved. In the minds of *santafesinos* of all classes, certain Mexican leaders and laws were still stifling local prosperity and self-governance. Consequently, the already-existing localism had no cause to abate.

Localism in Santa Fe and Nuevo-Mexico was also evident in the people’s response to the Texas Santa Fe Expedition, in which a few hundred Texans attempted to draw New Mexicans into their Republic. Borderland historian Andrés Reséndez identified two recurring themes in his analysis of *nuevomexicano* accounts of this expedition: one was a repudiation of the character of Texans (they were essentially labeled criminal rejects) and the other was loyalty to the Catholic faith. Reséndez assumes these themes reflect *nuevomexicano* ideas of Mexican national identity. This assumption is not necessarily false, but it is incomplete. It ignores the local focus of *nuevomexicanos*, or, in other words, their preoccupation with the local economy, local society and local security. One might just as easily say that those two themes reflect ideas of New Mexican territorial identity, not national identity. *Nuevomexicanos* saw themselves as a moral people with a sincere Catholic faith, in contrast to the wicked Texans seeking to take away their “‘freedom and interest.’” None of these sentiments were necessarily tied to the Mexican nation; they could simply apply to local identity. Indeed, Governor Manuel Armijo expressed concern that “non-elite Mexicans could easily be persuaded to support Texas” if the Texans were able to convince them it was for their “advantage.” He feared any patriotism or national identity was not enough to overcome more localized interests. Finally, a long-standing “anti-Texas sentiment” that

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42 Weber, 33, 263-5; Reséndez, 174, 189; Alarid 74-75, 82-83.
43 Reséndez, 232.
44 Armijo to the People of New Mexico, Santa Fe, July 16, 1840, Mexican Archives of New Mexico, quoted in Reséndez, 233.
45 Reséndez, 234.
continued even after both territories belonged to the United States implies there was more of local feeling than national loyalty involved.  

*Santafesinos* had many reasons to focus on the local community over the national community. Its agricultural economy was primarily local. Its mercantile economy was tied to the United States. Most of its citizens were born in New Mexico. Foreign immigrants were more assimilated into the city than the nation. Native American tribes threatened the safety of the town, and the nation offered little assistance. The religion of the people had local distinctions and the priests had plenty of local matters to occupy their attention. One of the ways this spirit of localism manifested itself was in the political rebellion that took place in 1837. It would manifest itself again in the actions of *santafesinos* during the U.S.-Mexican War.

The U.S. Invasion

In May 1846, the United States declared war against Mexico. The U.S. military's primary offensive would take them to Mexico City, located in the heart of the country. However, because President James K. Polk's objective was to gain possession of California and New Mexico, troops were also dispatched to those territories. Interestingly, *nuevomexicanos* had long expected such an event. The expansionist designs of the United States were well-known, and when Texas was on the verge of becoming a state in late 1845, the leaders of New Mexico anticipated invasion. In January 1846, Governor Manuel Armijo even went so far as to issue a proclamation to warn New Mexicans of the “potential danger.” The potential for trouble only intensified when General Zachary Taylor moved

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46 Weber, 267.
47 Herrera Serna, 474.
U.S. troops from Corpus Christi to the Rio Grande in March of 1846. Although nearly a thousand miles away, this was "an act of hostile aggression" because the U.S. army now had a fort in territory long recognized as Mexican.\(^{48}\) The Mexican army attacked to drive the soldiers out of Mexican territory. President Polk and the U.S. Congress used this as a pretext to declare war in May 1846. Fighting began in earnest in the disputed territory, and within a month, news reached Governor Armijo that U.S. troops were marching toward Santa Fe.\(^{49}\) The arrival of the army via the Santa Fe Trail was still weeks away, so Armijo had time to prepare the city’s defenses.

During this time, Donaciano Vigil drafted several memoranda providing insight into the state of affairs in New Mexico and implying the existence of localism along the frontier. Vigil was an experienced soldier; he fought Native Americans in his youth and combated the rebellion of 1837 as a sergeant in the Mexican army. Due to some confused circumstances, his loyalty to the Mexican government actually came into question during this time, but the testimony presented on his behalf convinced the judges that he was loyal to Mexico. Writing on June 29, 1846, Vigil lamented the failure of a sister state (Chihuahua) to offer support to Nuevo-Mexico during the impending invasion. Chihuahua’s failure to send support had left him “in a state of uncertainty” whether the two states would be able to fight together.\(^{50}\) He expressed a belief that Chihuahua was “envious” of the territory of Nuevo-Mexico (he did not specify why), and that this resulted in “divided opinion that has abated the public spirit to the point of...indifference toward the disgraces which the patria suffers.”\(^{51}\) Vigil clearly

\(^{48}\) Crawford, 238.
\(^{49}\) Weber, 12-13; Herrera Serna, 473, 475.
\(^{51}\) Vigil, Drafts, June 30, 1846, image 2; Ralph Emerson Twitchell, The History of the Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico from 1846-1851 by the Government of the United States (Chicago: The Rio Grande Press Inc., 1963), 207-211.
recognized the tendency of people in borderland territories to put the well-being of their own communities first, and acknowledged that this could prevent Mexicans from uniting. It is important to note that although the word “patria” might refer to the Mexican nation, it was frequently used to describe any place which a person considered their “homeland.” This was just as often the state or territory in which the person was born. Either way, Vigil saw the existence of localism and recognized its power to hinder cooperation.

In late June or early July, a U.S. Major arrived in Santa Fe on a reconnaissance mission; what he found convinced him that the “common people” were not interested in opposing the invasion, but the “patricians” were. Mexican observers from elsewhere in the country attributed this lower class “ambivalence” toward the Mexican national government to the prevalence of localism among the population. A liberal-leaning Mexican newspaper explained, the people “think...much about local conveniences” at the expense of the “common good” because “after...years of sacrificing their particular interests” for the country, they received in recompense nothing but “indifference” and “abandonment.” Mexican liberals recognized that a prioritization of local matters predominated because the people had been forced to rely on the local community for any benefits and protection. As one historian put it, these people saw “community loyalty [as] the path to survival.”

52 John Taylor Hughes, *Doniphan's expedition: containing an account of the conquest of New Mexico; General Kearney's overland expedition to California; Doniphan's campaign against the Navajos; his unparalleled march upon Chihuahua and Durango; and the operations of General Price at Santa Fé: with a sketch of the life of Col. Doniphan*, 23, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/doniphanexpedit02hugh/page/n5/mode/2up?q=santa+fe.


54 “El Estado de Veracruz a Todos de la Federacion Mexicana,” *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City, Mexico), December 23, 1847, https://infoweb-newsbank-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=WHNPLAN1&sort=YMD_date%3AA&fld-nav-0=YMD_date&val-nav-0=1846%20-%201850&fld-base-0=alltext&val-base-0=%22nuevo%20mexico%22&val-database-0=&fld-database-0=database&docref=image/v2%3A12859D1B768074BA%40WHNPLAN1-12AC2112BD01F7928%402396019-12AC2112CCAC2BD0%401-12AC2112CCAC2BD0%40&firsthit=yes.

55 Alarid, 7.
protection of the local community was the equivalent of self-preservation. The lower classes were unsure whether fighting the United States was the best way to protect the local community—hence their ambivalence.

The fact that elite members of the New Mexican population were more interested in resisting the invasion was not necessarily because they were more patriotic than the lower classes; it is just as easily explained by presuming that at this early stage the elite felt more assured than the lower classes that opposing the United States was the best way to preserve their local, personal interests. Many of the elite had initially supported the 1837 rebellion almost 10 years earlier because, in the words of one Mexican observer, the governor at the time had “neglected to consider influential men of wealth” when choosing his advisors.\textsuperscript{56} They switched sides when their interests were better served by putting down the violence. The same \textit{nuevomexicano} writer admitted that many of the elite were motivated in their actions by threats to their influence and pride: the "capitalists" were "afraid of losing their property" and the clergy "feared...that they would lose their privileges and power."\textsuperscript{57} There had been little to no change in that tendency between 1837 and 1846. Conquest by the United States threatened local, “personal interests.”\textsuperscript{58} Any insult to Mexico as a nation was secondary. It just so happened that at this stage, the interests of the nation and the local community coincided.

Governor Armijo issued a proclamation calling for volunteers to fight the invasion; this proclamation further demonstrated that fighting for the Mexican national government

\textsuperscript{56} Address of Donaciano Vigil to the Departmental Assembly of New Mexico, June 22, 1846, published in Janet Lecompte, \textit{Rebellion in Rio Arriba 1837} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985), 86.

\textsuperscript{57} Donaciano Vigil, Statement concerning historical events in New Mexico, William G. Ritch Papers Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885, \url{https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/6890/rec/49}.

\textsuperscript{58} Guardino, 319.
was not a primary motivation. References to the Mexican nation were virtually absent from
the document. Men were called upon to be “Defenders of Independence and the Laws.”
They were ordered to defend the “Department” and to obey the “Government of the
Department.”\footnote{Proclamation by Santiago Flores of Manuel Armijo’s edict, William G. Ritch Papers
Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885, https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/1438/rec/32.}
The uniting cry was not to defend Mexico, but to defend Nuevo-Mexico. These men were interested in thwarting the invasion of the United States just as they had
desired to thwart the invasion of the Texans, not necessarily because their ties to Mexico
were strong, but because they resented any attempts by outsiders to interfere with the
independence and laws of Nuevo-Mexico.

Significantly, the United States sought to counter efforts to organize resistance by
displaying a respect for local interests. Santafesino merchants who were in Missouri for
business sent word back to Donaciano Vigil that the U.S. commander had “offered his
protection...so that [the merchants] are conducted [back] to their country with all security.”\footnote{Vigil, Breve, image 5.}
It was U.S. strategy to avoid disrupting local business as much as possible. U.S. leaders
knew that such disruptions would only give the locals more cause to violently oppose the
invasion, whereas helping local businessmen continue to pursue their trade showed they
respected the local economy.

Early in August Santa Fe saw the arrival of three Mexicans who had been captured
and released by the U.S. army to give the locals an account of the U.S. army’s artillery. The
commander of the troops, General Stephen W. Kearny, hoped that word of his army’s
superior weapons would deter Governor Armijo from mounting any resistance. Kearny also
sent a letter to the Governor that officially communicated his intention “to take possession of
the territory of New Mexico.\textsuperscript{61} This communication prompted Armijo to gather with elite santafesinos to determine an official course of action. Only one person voiced an opinion against resistance: a Spanish-born priest named Damasio Taladrid.

Why would Taladrid, a Catholic priest, prefer cooperation? Priests had reasons to actively oppose the occupation: besides being concerned about the people’s souls if they became subjects of an anti-Catholic country, the priests had local concerns making a U.S. occupation something to be avoided. For example, a change to U.S. authority could lead to the confiscation and redistribution of church properties, which comprised one half to two-thirds of Mexican real estate. One priest in particular, Padre Antonio José Martinez from Taos, had long fought the encroachment of foreigners in New Mexico, especially when they were granted land. Priests had to consider both the practical and the spiritual welfare of the Church and the people. Taladrid had the same reasons to fear U.S. encroachment, yet he chose a different course. The most likely explanation for this discrepancy was local rivalry. Padre Taladrid had a strong, documented feud with Padre Martinez.\textsuperscript{62} Consequently, personal feelings probably played a role in his decision to advocate for peace instead of war. The actions of all priests had a basis in some form of localism, though they manifested themselves in opposite ways. One priest was not more devoted to the Mexican national government than the other; rather, one put the local interests of his Church first, while the other may have been more interested in personal local interests.

\textsuperscript{61} Herrera Serna, 476.
\textsuperscript{62} Hughes, 25; Herrera Serna, 476; Guardino, 319; P. Gonzales, 53, 81; Antionio, Pascual, and Benigno Martinez to Governor W. W. H. Davis, June 8, 1857, Letters Received by the Office of the Adjutant General Main Series 1822-1860, National Archives, Washington, D.C., available digitally through Fold3, \url{https://www.fold3.com/publication/791/letters-received-by-the-adjutant-general-1822-1860}. 
Outside of this council of elite, there was a resident of Santa Fe who was going out of his way to “argue[...] that it would be better [to] ‘capitulate’ and become U.S. citizens” because he believed doing so would be good for the local community.63 His name was Manuel Alvarez. Alvarez had moved to Santa Fe in the 1820s, after becoming a trader on the Santa Fe Trail. Born in Spain, he had migrated to the United States and lived there for a few years before becoming a santafesino. His ties to the United States were so strong he was appointed U.S. consul even though he was not a U.S. citizen. Furthermore, he began “subversive activities” in favor of the United States even before the U.S.-Mexican War began.64 While Alvarez certainly had a strong respect for the United States and its institutions, his eagerness to promote U.S. interests in Nuevo-Mexico was not simply due to a love of the United States, but rather to a resentment against the Mexican government for not fully developing the great potential of Santa Fe and New Mexico. In a letter to a U.S. citizen, Alvarez described the mining prospects in Nuevo-Mexico. He declared it was full of untapped mineral wealth, and he blamed Mexico for preventing mining from becoming a thriving local business. He explained that mining labor was generally left to the “poorer classes” because “the jealousy and oppression” of the Mexican government “restrained [men of wealth] from investing capital to any amount;” the poorer classes “cease[d] to work so soon as they obtain a supply for present wants and vices.” 65 Alvarez thought U.S.

64 de Aragón, 49.
jurisdiction and culture would serve the local community (and, no doubt, his own local
interests). Mexico was not fostering the local economy as he thought it should.

Those who advocated for battle instead of cooperation were motivated by localism
just as surely as men like Alvarez or Taladrí; they only disagreed as to what was best for the
local community. Santa Fe was “filled with soldiers and citizens gathered for the
organization of a force to resist the American advance.”66 Donaciano Vigil’s notes on the
history of New Mexico mentioned two reasons santafesinos were initially interested in
resisting the U.S. invasion: “defend[ing] the integrity of the Territory” and “assert[ing]...their
rights.”67 It was New Mexican territorial pride, not national pride. It was personal rights, not
national identity. As the resistance formed, the U.S.-born residents in Santa Fe began to fear
for their lives. They locked themselves in their houses, thinking their neighbors would
become violent towards them as enemies. No doubt they remembered the events of 1841,
when santafesinos had reacted violently against their U.S.-born neighbors on the occasion of
the Texas-Santa Fe expedition. This fear proved ungrounded; the most they had to endure
was insults.68 The fact that there was no violence was actually evidence that keeping the
peace in the local community was more important than asserting national pride. Indeed, it is
indicative that the previous response to the Texas invasion had more to do with anti-Texas
sentiment than it did with nationality. Five years had strengthened community ties between
Santa Fe and the United States. Whether they liked it or not, santafesinos had shared
interests with their U.S.-born neighbors that would be harmed by violence.

66 Hughes, 23; Crawford, 17, 25; Twitchell, 41-43.
67 Donaciano Vigil, Statement concerning historical events in New Mexico, William G. Ritch
Papers Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885,
68 Hughes, 35.
In August, Armijo and several thousand men, armed and unarmed, set forth from Santa Fe to meet the U.S. army fifteen miles from the city. Within a week, the U.S. army raised its flag in the plaza of Santa Fe—“without firing a gun or spilling a drop of blood.”

What happened to Armijo and the thousands of men who had marched with him? They had dispersed without ever meeting the enemy. Some contemporaries and historians have blamed Manuel Armijo for disbanding the troops, while others have claimed he acted upon the urging of his fellow commanders. Regardless of whether it was his own decision or the influence of others, Armijo dismissed the men and returned to Santa Fe with a guard of presidial soldiers before fleeing to Chihuahua. An account written by the elite to the President of Mexico certainly gave the impression that the locals were eager to use Armijo as a scapegoat. It does not seem logical that the other commanders would have accepted Armijo’s decision if they did not agree with it. They could have taken the matter into their own hands, especially after he fled the department and appointed a successor. They gave no excuse for their own behavior except that Armijo had refused to lead them.

Consequently, it is likely that the disbanding of the troops was supported by at least some of the other leaders, even if they blamed Armijo for not having prepared a force capable of repelling the invaders.

Around the time of his flight, Governor Armijo wrote a letter to General Kearny protesting the invasion; his letter proved local independence preoccupied the people more than national preservation. Its focus was on countering any claim by the United States that


Nuevo-Mexico was actually part of Texas: “I say to you that the N. Mejico never has been part of Texas,” Armijo declared.\textsuperscript{71} Nuevomexicanos were ever eager to thwart attempts to unite them with Texas. Armijo emphasized this claim rather than the injustice of the invasion, even though the idea that New Mexico belonged to Texas was not a justification which Kearny used upon his arrival in Santa Fe; it was not even mentioned in proclamations he issued or in his correspondence. One might speculate that from communications such as this Kearny learned that such a claim was not only unwarranted, but also highly offensive to the local population.

A group of santafesinos also sent a letter to the President of Mexico, excusing their failure to resist the U.S. occupation, and one statement in the epistle revealed their localistic view of their relationship with the Mexican nation: “at no time may it be said that we have been unfaithful to the Mexican Nation, with which we have so many ties.”\textsuperscript{72} The last seven words are intriguing. They could have been left out entirely. They chose to acknowledge their “ties” to the nation rather than Mexico’s direct sovereignty over or possession of the territory. This reflected a strong federalist view, in which each state or territory is an independent sovereignty, equally joined in confederation with other states. Federalism was a broader form of localism.

The evening of August 18, 1846, brought the U.S. army within Santa Fe’s city limits. After meeting “amicably” with the town leaders and planting a flag above the governor’s palace, Kearny ordered construction of a camp on a hill to the east of the city in preparation for the long-term occupation and defense of the capital.\textsuperscript{73} Soon after the arrival of the troops,

\textsuperscript{71} Governor Armijo to General Kearny, Aug 16, 1846, William G. Ritch Papers Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885, \url{https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/1482/rec/36}.

\textsuperscript{72} Cutts, 52; Report of people of Santa Fe to President of Mexico.

\textsuperscript{73} Herrera Serna, 481-482.
Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, the man Armijo appointed to replace him, published a statement seeking to reassure the people that the U.S. forces intended no harm if the citizens remained peaceful. He was eager to forestall an exodus from the city, almost reproaching the people for “leaving their homes...[for] the deserts as if [the U.S.] forces” were “cruel and bloodthirsty savages.”

Vigil y Alarid's primary concern was to keep the local community safe and prevent its dispersal. Flight was dangerous for everyone. It would not only put those who departed in danger, by traveling unprotected through territory occupied by Apache and Navajo tribes, but it would disrupt the local economy. Vigil y Alarid was not pleased with the U.S. occupation, as will be seen below, but he thought submission was better for the local community than dispersion. In a letter to Kearny, Vigil y Alarid expressed his sorrow that the territory was obliged to submit to the occupation but the only practical path at this point was submission: “no one in the world has with good success resisted the power of the stronger.” Vigil y Alarid also indicated what he thought about the local community being the primary consideration. Mexico was like a parent, and that parent had now “died in politics.” Regardless of personal opinions, it was for the local population “to obey and respect the established authorities.” What mattered was what was happening immediately around them. While the two nations “arranged their differences,” the authority presently established in the local community was that of the United States due to their presence there. The “particular opinions” of individuals did not matter; a community might consider itself “Mexican” in

74 Proclamation by Acting Governor Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid to the people, August 17, 1846, William G. Ritch Papers Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885, https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/1486/rec/6; Hughes, 33; Cutts, 52; Herrera Serna, 481.
theory, but what really guided local decision-making was the authority which had direct influence over the local community’s well-being.\textsuperscript{75}

*Santafesinos*, like many other Mexicans, had been taught to expect the absolute worst from U.S. soldiers. Anything less than immediate murder, rape, and desecration of their churches was a pleasant surprise, and resulted in a certain amount of rejoicing. The day after the arrival of the U.S. army, *santafesinos* assembled in the plaza to hear what the commander of the army had to say. Kearny’s words caused some citizens to shout for joy. Many U.S. soldiers attributed such shouts to happiness at the prospect of leaving the Mexican nation and joining themselves to the United States. They were more likely shouts of relief. Kearny’s words promised a better situation than they expected.

Kearny spoke to the matters of greatest concern to *santafesinos*, and at least three of them were localized: (1) fear of violence, (2) protection from Native Americans, and (3) local governance. For the first, Kearny promised that safety and security was guaranteed for the local community through cooperation. For the second, he declared that the U.S. army was going to assist the locals in the long-standing conflicts with the Comanche, Ute, Apache and Navajo tribes. For the third, he stated that the people’s right to govern themselves would be preserved. Town leaders were permitted to keep their offices so long as they took an oath of allegiance to the United States. Governor Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, Secretary Donaciano Vigil, Alcalde Francisco Armijo y Ortiz, and Prefect Julien Tenoira all submitted to this requirement. However, only one retained office over the long term. Possibly due to a lack of faith in their willingness to cooperate, Vigil y Alarid, Armijo y Ortiz, and Tenoira were eventually replaced. Kearny appointed Charles Bent, a U.S.-born *nuevomexicano*, to be

\textsuperscript{75} Vigil y Alarid to Kearny, August 19, 1846, William G. Ritch Papers Concerning the History of New Mexico, 1539-1885, [https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/1490/rec/22.](https://nmdc.unm.edu/digital/collection/ritchpapers/id/1490/rec/22)
Governor. Francisco Sarracino became the new prefect, and Miguel Romero the new alcalde. Donaciano Vigil remained the Secretary. Two other notable positions were filled by native nuevomexicanos: Tomas Rivero became the collector, and Antonio Jose Otero was one of three judges. While Kearny had to ensure the government leaders were cooperative with the U.S. army, he did his best to appoint local citizens whenever possible, knowing the preference for local governance. A desire for local self-governance and independence had long been a point of contention between santafesinos and the Mexican government; foster this and the people had less reason to resent the change in national authority.

Within the capital, Kearny was doing all he could to keep the santafesinos content, primarily by supporting local interests. He attended Mass and “put on a ball” for the citizens. Respect for and promotion of the local religion and local recreation fostered cooperation. Kearny also reduced taxes and injurious duties. He abolished a hated law imposed by Mexico, the requirement to use “stamped paper” for “certain transactions.” He issued orders regarding the collection of licensing fees, and declared that the money collected would “be turned over to the treasurer of [Santa Fe] for the benefit thereof.” This gave santafesinos less reason to fight against the U.S. army to protect their “material interests,” a motivation other Mexicans realized was practically necessary if one was to expect them to be active in the defense of Mexico. Perhaps most important of all, Kearny diligently worked to make peace with the neighboring Native American tribes, and was to some extent successful (temporarily). This local concern had particularly strong persuasive power. If Kearny was able to solve this long-standing issue, the hearts of the people would be more

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76 Hughes, 34-35; Cutts, 65; 499 H. Exec. Doc. 19, pp. 21-22, 26-27.
77 Crawford, 154.
80 Berge, Considerations, 27; Cutts, 52; Hughes, 41, 49; Crawford, 203; P. Gonzales, 114.
inclined toward their protectors. Kearny was well aware that as long as the people did not see him and his men as a threat to their religion and their daily life, they would have little cause to rise against him. If they saw him and his men as protectors of lives and property, they had little reason to oppose the occupation. It was not that the people lacked a national identity as Mexicans, but local feelings were stronger and more persuasive.

In taking all of the above actions, Kearny was following a strategy which the U.S. Secretary of War W. L. Marcy had suggested to General Taylor. Marcy wrote:

[A]mong the departments there are local antipathies and dissensions. In all this field of division...there must be openings to reach the interests, passions, or principles of some of the parties, and thereby to conciliate their good will, and make them co-operators with us in bringing about an honorable and a speedy peace.\textsuperscript{81}

The prevalence of localism—in particular, the significance of local societal relationships—was apparent enough to the U.S. Secretary of War to serve as a basis of the strategy for the war. He recognized “local antipathies and dissensions,” which could refer to both the conflict between localism and centralism and to rivalries among the elite. Exploiting local circumstances would assist in conquest.

Unfortunately for Santa Fe, Kearny and his men did not remain in the city for long. Since the territory was “perfectly quiet” Kearny determined it was safe to move on to California at the end of September.\textsuperscript{82} U.S. troops had occupied Monterey, California, since July. Because the people of New Mexico seemed little disposed to violence, and because the annexation of California was a primary goal of the War, Kearny felt comfortable leaving the management of Santa Fe to lower-ranking officers so he could go and provide support in California. Even his successor, Colonel Alexander Doniphan, left Santa Fe the following

\textsuperscript{81} 499 H. Exec. Doc. 19, p. 8.  
\textsuperscript{82} 499 H. Exec. Doc. 19, p. 25.
month to lead troops to Chihuahua. Doniphan appointed a volunteer colonel to serve as the occupation’s commanding officer in his absence, a man named Sterling Price. Price had just under 2,000 volunteer troops to manage. Volunteer troops were notoriously rowdy and sometimes cruel. Occasionally an experienced professional officer could manage them, but when the commander was a volunteer himself, it was a recipe for disaster. Price’s “slack discipline resulted in disorderly troops, which increased [the] resentment [of] the local citizens.”

Mistreating the local community had the potential to turn peaceful citizens into insurrectionists.

Nevertheless, some santafesinos not only continued to accept the occupation, but they took their new allegiance to the United States very seriously. The most conspicuous example of this was Donaciano Vigil. In December of 1846, Vigil heard from the owner of a local gambling house that meetings against the U.S. occupation were taking place. Vigil had three options: he could keep silent, he could offer to join the insurrection, or he could warn Price. He chose the third option, confirming himself a traitor to Mexico. The leaders of the plot were imprisoned. It was no wonder that Vigil did not elect the first course. As an officer in the occupational government, he was in line to become one of the insurrection’s victims. But why did he not choose to participate in the plot? What made his situation different from two of the potential insurgency’s leaders, Tomás Ortiz or Diego Archuleta? Perhaps it was because one of Vigil’s main excuses for cooperating with the United States—the impracticality of fighting without sufficient resources—had not changed.

But there was another major difference between Vigil and the insurgents, and that involved the local relationships and rivalries that often guided santafesinos’ choices. Charles Crawford, 221.
Bent, the U.S.-appointed governor, was the rival of many of the insurgent leaders. Kearny had “accidentally offended” many powerful *nuevomexicanos* by choosing Bent to replace Vigil y Alarid.\(^8^4\) Vigil was not offended; not only did he have a place in the government but he felt no personal hostility toward Bent. In contrast, Archuleta resented not receiving an appointment in the occupational government and therefore had more reason to participate in an insurrection.\(^8^5\) Local self-interests guided not only those who chose to cooperate, but also those who chose not to.

Within the town of Santa Fe plans to revolt did not being in earnest until two very local issues prompted them: the creation of an occupational government that excluded a number of powerful local elites, and the absence of effective military discipline resulting in the misconduct of U.S. soldiers. Local matters gave rise to insurrection; it was not that suddenly the insurgents became more patriotic toward the Mexican nation. Local interests once again aligned with national interests, making opposition to the U.S. occupation much more appealing.

*The Insurrection*

There were no major battles fought by the main branch of U.S. troops under General Zachary Taylor between September 1846 (the Battle of Monterrey in Nuevo Leon) and February 1847 (the Battle of Buena Vista in Coahuila). Taylor's "reluctance to advance deeper into Mexico" prompted President Polk to dispatch the U.S. navy to Veracruz to "open a second front" for the main assault on Mexico.\(^8^6\) The Northeastern front was relatively quiet

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\(^{8^4}\) Alarid, 94.

\(^{8^5}\) Hughes, 139; Twitchell, 314; Henry G.A. Caspers journal, M-021, St. Louis Mercantile Library, 5, [https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu/umsl/islandora/object/umsl%3A65478#page/1/mode/2up](https://dl.mospace.umsystem.edu/umsl/islandora/object/umsl%3A65478#page/1/mode/2up); Alarid, 247; P. Gonzales, 123.

\(^{8^6}\) Crawford, 24.
that autumn, but the winter of 1846-47 was much more eventful in the occupied territories of New Mexico and California.

Although an insurrection within Santa Fe had been averted, other areas of New Mexico eventually rose against the U.S. army’s presence in the territory. The most notable of these uprisings took place in Taos, 70 miles north of Santa Fe. In January 1847, while Governor Charles Bent was visiting his home in that city, insurrectionists attacked. They scalped, killed, and decapitated him. This began an uprising which took the lives of 17 Anglo-Americans and *nuevomexicano* traitors and approximately 150 insurgents. As part of the efforts to suppress this uprising, Colonel Price formed a battalion of Santa Fe residents to go to Taos with U.S. soldiers. At least three of those who had been arrested for planning the insurgency in Santa Fe “switched sides and helped suppress” the Taos rebellion.”

The decision to switch sides, like so many other decisions among the elite, had to do with personal interests and local rivalries. According to Donaciano Vigil, the local elite were concerned with “losing their property,” and acted accordingly. Interestingly, he attributed the Taos insurrection to the “influence” of priests on a “superstitious and fanatical people,” because the priests “feared...with reason...that they would lose their privileges and power.” This gave the elite of New Mexico another local reason to dislike this particular insurrection. They competed for influence not only among themselves but also with the priests. Those who joined the U.S. army, including those who switched sides, did not like the direction the insurrection was going in more ways than one: it was being guided by rival religious authorities and it was threatening their personal property.

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87 Crawford, 76-77; P. Gonzales, 130; Hughes, 140; Crawford, 40, 267; Twitchell, 300, 333.
88 Vigil, Statement; Crawford, 76; Alarid, 1-2.
One might wonder why Taos and its inhabitants reacted so differently from Santa Fe during the U.S. occupation of New Mexico, since the two towns shared many of the same characteristics; they were about the same size, they were centers of trade, and they were borderland communities. In fact, it was the U.S. invaders' neglect of Taos's local interests which gave that city a stronger motivation to rebel. The occupational army focused on creating allies among the merchants of Santa Fe, thereby neglecting the elites of Taos. Taos was not completely overlooked, but the taoseños who had been invited to join the occupational government (like Charles Bent) had powerful rivals. Eventually recognizing the mistake they had made, the U.S. military would not prosecute the “strongmen who fomented the rebellion,” and instead directed all the punishment at their followers.\textsuperscript{89} Local leaders had to be appeased if they were to be persuaded to put an end to the rebellion. Once the insurrection was suppressed, there remained a great distrust between the occupying army and nuevomexicanos. As a result, all nuevomexicanos were disarmed. In Santa Fe there was a “stubborn and sullen quiet which superior force alone compels.”\textsuperscript{90}

Starting in March of 1847, U.S. troops under General Winfield Scott carved a path toward Mexico City, a march that culminated in the occupation of the Mexican capital by U.S. forces in September of that year. Nuevomexicanos were weeks behind in their receipt of news from the center of the country. Nevertheless, fighting within New Mexico territory would diminish over the same period, with the last major fight taking place in August. Also in August, a “mass” of santafesinos and their fellow nuevomexicanos participated in the first U.S. version of an election. They were to select the men who would serve as territorial legislators.

\textsuperscript{89} Crawford, 266; Alarid, 93, 96.
\textsuperscript{90} Cutts, 234; Twitchell, 219; Caspers, 15; Hughes, 142-143.
Donaciano Vigil succeeded Charles Bent as governor of New Mexico Territory, and he used his position to appeal to the population's localism to encourage acceptance of the new order. Throughout 1847, Donaciano Vigil would be “the critical collaborator” with the U.S. invaders as he did his best to discourage resistance and promote “friendly relations.”

He expanded the right to vote, so there was a larger “democratic base” than the people had seen under Mexican law. He also worked hard to convince Price to resolve the most common complaints of the populace; these complaints were predictably localized. For example, he pointed out the need for regular soldiers to be stationed in Santa Fe instead of volunteers, and he urged the discontinuance of martial law. Vigil knew that the treatment of the citizens and the maintenance of order in the local community affected the people’s decision-making and behavior. Vigil was essentially saying that removal of local disturbances would ensure the cooperation of the population.

Near the end of the war, former governor Armijo wrote a letter to Vigil emphasizing Vigil’s focus on the welfare of the local community. Having returned to his Albuquerque home, Armijo thanked his “old friend” for the “good services he [had] lent [their] country.” Given that Vigil had spent the last year cooperating with the United States, Armijo must have been referring to the “country” (“paiz”) of Nuevo-Mexico. He attributed Vigil’s actions to “humanity” and “philanthropy,” and commended him for taking care of “afflicted families” like Armijo’s. Armijo recognized that Vigil was looking out for the local people. There was more than one “country” to which a man could be loyal. Vigil was doing good work for the territory of New Mexico, even if he was not necessarily doing good work for the Mexican nation.

91 P. Gonzales, 140-41, 143, 145. (emphasis in original)
By January 1848, when the newly elected territorial legislature met, it was clear that the U.S.-Mexican War would soon be over and that New Mexico would belong to the United States. The last notable battle had taken place in October 1847, and U.S. forces still controlled Mexico City. In his address to the legislative body, Governor Vigil focused on local issues. While this was not surprising in an address to a territorial legislature, it provided interesting insights into the matters which were most important to the local community. First, Vigil urged that any elected representatives should “have resided among us for a sufficient time previous to their nomination” to allow them to understand the local situation. This hearkened back to the longstanding objection to outsider appointees. They now had an opportunity to remedy this problem. Vigil denied that this recommendation had anything to do with “local spirit.” It was based on past experience, he said, with past “administrations.” In other words, Vigil’s localistic attitude toward government was not arbitrary or founded only on personal feelings and preferences; New Mexico's own history proved localized leadership was the only means to preserve the “tranquility and security of the country.” Vigil recounted some of the territory's history, beginning with the rebellion in 1837. He lamented that then-Governor Perez, in spite of “good intentions,” had committed “errors” due to his “lack of knowledge of the character, interests, and traditional customs of [the people] of New Mexico.” A person who was not thoroughly familiar with the local community had no chance of successfully serving the populace.

The apparent success of this legislature had an impact on public opinion, particularly due to the perceived benefits to the local community. The legislature would pass numerous laws during its short session. Since *nuevomexicano* legislators were in the majority, they

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could ensure that nuevomexicano “interests [were] met in particular.”94 Even those who had been strongly opposed to the U.S. occupation issued a statement praising the new local government for its effectiveness. This statement mentioned two points in particular: it commended the fact that local communities would better “enjoy the common resources of the territory they inhabit” (as opposed to losing many of them to the central government), and it expressed gratitude that Native American aggressions had been quelled.95 Due to a strong local sentiment, it was positive progress on these local matters which had persuasive power.

The January legislature called for an annexation convention which would deliberate making a formal request to the United States to accept New Mexico as a territory. Soon after this, an anonymous Mexican elite outlined the local benefits of annexation and the negative effects of a return to Mexican authority: “[e]xorbitant taxes,” a centralist governor who took away local power, and a “label of traitor” for those who had any friendly dealings with the occupying army or who had participated in the recent election. The writer acknowledged the problems caused by the U.S. volunteer soldiers, but said that an effective government and court system had been put into place in spite of that.96 This elite nuevomexicano appealed to what he knew were the prevailing interests of the citizens: the local economy, local autonomy, and local security. Also during this time, Armijo and Vigil exchanged letters which repeatedly referred to New Mexico as their “native country.”97 Armijo and Vigil strongly identified as nuevomexicanos. It was the land of their birth as much as the Mexican

94 P. Gonzales, 153.
95 P. Gonzales, 155-56.
nation, and a land with which they had a more direct relationship. As they lost their identities as “Mexicans” they were pleased to cling to their identity as *nuevomexicanos*.

The annexation convention included delegates both for and against annexation to the United States, but those in favor were the strong majority. A resolution in favor of annexation was passed. The convention met in February of 1848, a week after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, though knowledge of the treaty did not arrive in Santa Fe until mid-March. The ratification of the treaty by the U.S. Senate in March and the Mexican Congress in May officially transferred Santa Fe to the United States.

*Conclusion*

It is not unusual for historians to take exception to Kearny’s claim that the U.S. army conquered New Mexico without shedding any blood, given the insurrection of 1847 which resulted in a number of deaths. Nevertheless, at the time Kearny made his statement, it was accurate. The U.S. army marched into and occupied Santa Fe without firing a gun or killing a citizen, and the *santafesinos* showed themselves inclined to peace. Although the emotions expressed by *santafesinos* were “by turns cheery, sullen, resigned, and smolderingly resentful,” it was not “violently resistant.” That is why Santa Fe is on the list of treason towns.

The varying reactions to the U.S. occupation had a unifying theme: localism. *Santafesinos* exhibited a localistic attitude. Their well-being was directly tied to the well-being of the local community, so naturally the local community was their primary concern. They may have disagreed among themselves as to what was best for Santa Fe, but they all

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98 P. Gonzales, 167, 169.
agreed that Santa Fe and New Mexico were the priority. The interests of national patriotism and pride were secondary to territorial and municipal patriotism and pride.
Chapter 3
La Paz, Baja California

Over the last two centuries historians and observers have used similar words to describe the territory of Baja California: "barren," "backwater," "rugged," "forbidding," and "unattractive." Upon arriving on its shores in 1846, many U.S. soldiers agreed with this description, but some did not. Twenty-five year old New Yorker, Edward Gould Buffum, wrote that La Paz was "the prettiest town [he] had...seen in California." Another soldier, William Redmond Ryan, declared La Paz to be "of great extent and beauty." So what made La Paz appealing to men like Buffum and Ryan, in spite of its rugged and forbidding nature? Besides being located near an excellent harbor with an abundance of fish, the main streets of La Paz were lined with willow trees providing "delicious shade." Palm and fruit trees lined the beach and there was a quantity of tropical fruit. Cactus, large and small, added to the "novelty of the scene" for New Yorkers like Ryan and Buffum. The two soldiers also described rows of adobe houses painted white, with roofs of thatched palm leaves and oyster shells. Although most dwellings had only one room and mud floors, the wealthier citizens built multiple stories alongside pleasant gardens and vineyards. This small community of approximately 1,500-2,000 faced invasion and occupation by the United States in 1846. As in Santa Fe, the local leaders elected to cooperate with the invaders, and many paceños followed suit. The reasons which prompted them to do so stemmed primarily from localism.

Like Santa Fe, localism in La Paz was rooted in its unique history and characteristics. This localism is evident in the writings of observers and paceños. In particular, government neglect, minimal immigration, a seaside location and maritime economy, demographics, and even religious characteristics contributed to a localistic attitude and culture that would influence the people’s decisions during the U.S.-Mexican War.

The Community

There was a pattern of failed Spanish settlement all over the Baja California peninsula until 1697 when the Jesuits took charge of the process. The settlement of La Paz was no exception. Before the arrival of the Spanish, native tribes such as the Pericú, the Cora, the Aripe, and the Guaicura competed over access to the area due to the bounteous harbor and the availability of fresh water. In a peninsula where water, vegetation, and game animals were not abundant, access to freshwater and good fishing grounds was greatly prized. The Spaniards landed in La Paz early in their exploration of the New World, but attempts to create a permanent presence failed time after time due to opposition from the native population and an insufficient water supply for the agricultural lifestyle the Spaniards desired. Once religious orders took over the settlement of the peninsula, the only support bajacalifornios received from the Spanish government was a few soldiers for protection. This set a standard of Mexico City ignoring Baja California, a standard that did not change when Mexico won its independence from Spain.¹⁰¹

This was not just a matter of carelessness on the part of either Mexico or Spain. It can certainly be argued that places like Baja California were less of a priority, but they might have been a bigger priority had there not been so many obstacles preventing the implementation of effective, direct national authority. Besides the financial struggles which plagued Mexico, communication was hindered by distance and the arduousness of travel. There was also the matter of the strikingly different environment that existed in Baja California when compared to Mexico City. Mexico City was not a port town, nor was it a desert (it is considered sub-tropical). How were the nation's officials supposed to understand the needs of a people living in an environment that was completely unfamiliar to them? Perhaps the most significant impediment, however, was Mexico’s inability to promote settlement in places like Baja California, and the related difficulty of finding government officials willing to serve there. This resulted in a population born and raised on the peninsula with little personal knowledge of or contact with the rest of the country. Those few recent immigrants to the peninsula came with a strong motivation to advance the local community in order to make their relocation a success.

Besides creating a highly isolated population with limited contacts outside the local community, the writings of Baja California’s governor showed that the neglect of the Mexican central government encouraged the people to focus on local matters. The territorial governor at the time of the invasion was Francisco Palacios Miranda. When Palacios Miranda was appointed the governor of Baja California in 1844, he had his work cut out for him; he was the third governor of the territory in as many years. Born in the Canary Islands in 1790, he migrated to Mexico in 1809 and fought for Mexican Independence. Eventually

*in the Rio de la Plata Region and on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Scottsdale: Pentacle Press, 2005), 47.
he received the rank of colonel in the Mexican army. By the time the U.S. navy appeared in La Paz harbor, Palacios Miranda was in his fifties, and he had become "terribly embittered" toward the Mexican government. He complained that the peninsula had been “abandoned” by Mexico.\(^{102}\) It had been two years since he or any other leader in the territory had received an official communication from the central government, making it “two years since Baja California has managed for itself alone.”\(^{103}\) This was one of several complaints the governor sent in a letter to a U.S. commander. The letter’s purpose was to expound Palacios Miranda’s reasons for submitting to the U.S. occupation without a fight. The essential theme was that since Mexico had left the peninsula to fend for itself, the peninsula would do just that. Local circumstances would dictate their actions, not loyalty to a government that had neglected them. No doubt Palacios Miranda would have agreed with a Mexican liberal treatise that stated that a people who would “sacrifice[] themselves in defense of an order representing nothing but ruin and misery...would richly deserve the ridicule directed against them.”\(^{104}\) Ties to the national government that might have been fostered by communication and gratitude were practically non-existent; therefore the ties to the local community became that much stronger. The “order” that aided survival or prosperity was the one deserving the most consideration, and for paceños, that “order” was the municipality and the region.\(^{105}\)

One U.S. soldier observed that government neglect caused the paceños to “assume[] a sort of independence of thought and action.”\(^{106}\) This independence did not mean that they no longer considered themselves Mexicans; it meant their thoughts and actions were not dictated

\(^{102}\) Palacios Miranda to U.S. Commander, September 20, 1846, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons, National Archives, available through Fold3, https://www.fold3.com/image/624258533.

\(^{103}\) Ibid.

\(^{104}\) Berge, Considerations, 29.

\(^{105}\) Nunis, 19-20, 140; Ulisses Urbano Lassépas, De la colonizacion de la Baja California y decreto de 10 de marzo de 1857 (Mexico: Impr. de V. Garcia Torres, 1859), 110-111.

\(^{106}\) Buffum, 162.
by the expectations of the national government. María Amparo Ruiz was a young paceña at the time of the U.S. occupation. Ruiz was the younger daughter in an elite family who supported the U.S. occupation. Ruiz’s writings in later life provide insights into why they might have done so. Localism was prominent among them, especially the identification and preoccupation with local societal relationships. Although the family was not wealthy, they were still numbered among the elite due to "political recognition," influence, and land ownership. Contemporaries described María Amparo Ruiz as very beautiful, with an "aristocratic air." She also proved to be highly intelligent, observant, and ambitious. She eventually fell in love with one of the U.S. commanders who oversaw the occupation of La Paz.107 Ruiz’s letters showed that she conceived her “patria” to be California more than Mexico.108 Also evident in Ruiz’s writings was the “bitter resentment” against the Mexican government for its neglect. This resentment was later transferred to the United States when that country’s leadership also failed to show proper “sympathies” for californios.109 It was difficult to love someone or something neglectful or unknown. So long as the local community proved more immediately connected to the health and well-being of its people, it was the local community that received the most loyalty.

Ruiz would later become a novelist, and the heroes and heroines of her novels (many of them born in Mexico) portrayed localistic attitudes. For example, in The Squatter and the Don, Don Mariano Alamar criticizes an American from the southern United States for

108 Sánchez and Pita, Conflicts of Interest, 73.
“deceiv[ing]” his fellow Southerners: “If he had been sent to deceive the North...the errand would have been—if not more honorable—at least less odious..., not so treacherous.” As narrator, Ruiz left no doubt which characters she sympathized with and which she did not. The Don represented enlightenment, reason and understanding. Although the novel takes place in the United States, the issues the characters face are universal. When Ruiz criticized the actions of U.S. citizens through Alamar, she was no hypocrite: the citizen of any nation who behaved in the same way merited the same disapproval. Don Alamar sees the Southern States as a neglected region after the Civil War. In his view, a man’s interests are or should be tied to the region whence he comes. Bajacalifornios were well aware that what was best for their neglected region was not necessarily what was best for other parts of Mexico. Nevertheless, a person’s loyalty was logically tied to his or her region. Ignoring the well-being of one’s local community was “odious” and even “treacherous.”

La Paz’s shoreline position affected security and fostered a preoccupation with local security. First, it created a certain vulnerability which the Mexican government was unable to remedy, once again forcing the local community to look out for itself. The situation was similar to Santa Fe’s experience with Native Americans. Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century did not have an “effective naval force.” There were less than twelve small ships guarding over 8,000 miles of shoreline. Since the local community could not rely on the national government for protection, any assistance had to come from other Mexican states across the Sea of Cortez. However, these states had their own interests and their own borders to protect, so in time of war La Paz could only count on what those states were willing to spare. After the war, paceños would complain about this vulnerability, declaring their

111 Crawford, 195.
intention to leave Mexico and join themselves to a “maritime power” like the United States or England.\textsuperscript{112} Protection of the local community from attack was more important than remaining loyal to a nation which provided no protection. Preservation of the local community was paramount.

As a port of trade, La Paz’s economy was dependent on other Mexican communities. Not only did it need buyers for its goods, but it relied on its fellow Mexican states for supplies. One might expect this to create strong ties to the Mexican nation, but it did not. Because maritime trade was so crucial to the local economy, \textit{paceños} had cause to resent the central government. While the scarcity of water made food production in Baja California difficult, it was not impossible. The territory managed to produce goods for export such as dates, figs, grapes, lemons, olives, wine, beef, soap, cheese, maize, and pearls. U.S. observers and Mexican liberals noted the negative local effects caused by the state of Mexican trade. According to one Mexican treatise, trade was "variable" due to "an irregular and fluctuating tariff, which differs for each port and changes with every change of...administration."\textsuperscript{113} They were "confined to a coasting trade with the ports of Mexico," and interstate tariffs hindered trade even with these communities.\textsuperscript{114} High tariffs and “countless” regulations on foreign trade prevented \textit{paceños} from receiving imports from outside of Mexico without resorting to deals with merchants who “flouted the law.”\textsuperscript{115}

María Amparo Ruiz’s novels reflected the tension that could exist between local and national economic interests. In \textit{The Squatter and the Don}, the characters fight for their small

\textsuperscript{112} Letter from Lower California Assembly, July 8, 1848, Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy from Commanding Officers of Squadrons, National Archives, available through Fold3, \url{https://www.fold3.com/image/624229247}.

\textsuperscript{113} S. Exec. Doc. No. 18, p. 586.

\textsuperscript{114} Lassépas, 45, 97; Forbes, 63; 557 S. Exec. Doc. No. 18, p. 585-86.

\textsuperscript{115} Berge, \textit{Considerations}, 15.
town, San Diego, to become the terminus for a transcontinental railroad. San Diego is economically neglected by the national government and businessmen because it is considered “a most arid luckless region, where it never rains.”\textsuperscript{116} (This description is quite similar to outsider descriptions of Baja California.) In the book, Ruiz condemned U.S. legislators for this neglect and the resulting stagnation of San Diego’s economy.\textsuperscript{117} A government that did not foster the local economy forfeited respect. A government that actively harmed the local economy was worthy of contempt. Beyond this, the characters show a strong devotion to their municipality and a belief that their economic well-being resides with the prosperity of the city, not the state or the nation. Without the immediate development which a railroad would offer the town, one character laments, “Our merchants, our farmers, all, the entire county will suffer great distress or ruin….”\textsuperscript{118} Paceños relied on local development and the prosperity in the city where they invested their money and built their homes. That was where their hopes lay. The prosperity of the nation in general was not enough; there was no guarantee it would trickle down to their benefit.

As in Santa Fe, local autonomy was important to the people. Being limited in their trade made paceños subject to the interests of the states on which they depended. Elite bajacalifornios expressed their disgust when leaders in Sonora took it upon themselves to appoint a leader for the territory both during and after the U.S.-Mexican War.\textsuperscript{119} This followed a long-standing pattern observed by Governor Palacios Miranda that bajacalifornios were forced to “deliver themselves with full trust into the hands of leaders” they had not chosen for themselves.\textsuperscript{120} Outsiders had agendas and goals which might or

\textsuperscript{116} Ruiz de Burton, \textit{Squatter and the Don}, 290.  
\textsuperscript{117} Ruiz de Burton, \textit{Squatter and the Don}, 297.  
\textsuperscript{118} Ruiz de Burton, \textit{Squatter and the Don}, 293.  
\textsuperscript{119} Letter from Lower California Assembly.  
\textsuperscript{120} Palacios Miranda to U.S. Commander.
might not benefit the local community. As localists, *paceños* assumed those with strong ties
to the municipality or the territory could provide the best leadership. Any perceived harm
caused by a leader appointed by Mexico City or another state only served to strengthen this
belief. María Amparo Ruiz commented on the tendency of outsider leaders to neglect local
needs: “Congressmen know that they are expected to watch the materials interests of their
States or counties, but they do not feel any moral responsibility to see that other
constituencies do not suffer injustice.”¹²¹ In other words leaders looked out for those who
appointed them. If a local community did not appoint or remove their leaders, those leaders
had no motivation to cater to local wants or needs. Hence the strong desire for local
autonomy.

While demographics do not necessarily cause localism, they can be relevant, and they
certainly were in La Paz. The residents of La Paz were mostly Spaniards, creoles, *mestizos*,
and a few foreigners. Tribal identities native to the area were essentially extinct due to
epidemics or absorption into other populations. As in most parts of Mexico, Spaniards and
creoles were more likely to be affluent and to hold positions of power in the town, and they
often identified as white.¹²² The lower class was predominantly *mestizo*. However, unlike
Santa Fe, it was the upper classes in La Paz who were most friendly to the invaders. The
*paceño* elite did not feel as threatened as the *santafesino* elite when it came to their influence
over the populace. In part this was because their influence was not of the same kind:
caudilloism was not a feature of La Paz society. Furthermore, the creoles and Spaniards felt
more racial ties to those of European descent than they did to those with Native American

¹²¹ Ruiz de Burton, *Squatter and the Don*, 201.
¹²² S. F. DuPont, *Extracts from private journal-letters of Captain S. F. Du Pont: while in
command of the Cyane during the war with Mexico, 1846-48* (Wilmington: Ferris Brothers,
blood. This feeling was not limited to La Paz, but lacking the strong demarcations created by a caudillo society, the paceño elite were more susceptible to outsiders classing them with the mestizo population; consequently, they needed to assert their European ancestry with more urgency. Once again María Amparo Ruiz’s novels provide evidence of this state of mind. One of several trials which the Mexican-born heroes and heroines must overcome in her novels is being mistaken for Indian, Black, or mixed race: Lola, in *Who Would Have Thought It?*, “was crimson with shame and resentment” when one of her guardians refused to recognize that she was a pure-blooded Spaniard, not mestizo.123 In *The Squatter and the Don*, Don Mariano Alamar calls himself a Spaniard, although he was born in Mexico.124 This tendency to identify more closely with literal blood descent as opposed to nation of birth was simply one less tie to the national community and one more tie to local and personal interests.125

The Catholic religion of La Paz was similar to that of Santa Fe, with a shortage of priests and frontier variations in practice and doctrine. A story from one U.S. soldier exemplified the tendency of frontier priests to adjust policy and practice to fit the local situation. In the absence of another easy option, one Padre asked a U.S. soldier to serve as a godfather for a baby he was baptizing, although the soldier was a Protestant.126 There were two priests who had residence or influence in La Paz, and they both proved that the local concerns of religious leaders could eclipse the national. The padre presidente of the

123 Ruiz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?*, 84.
126 Buffum, 165.
peninsula, Padre Ignacio Ramírez y Arollona, was among those who chose to be openly friendly with the U.S. army. Captain DuPont of the U.S. navy stated that he was simply a man “who can understand the propriety of yielding to circumstances.” In other words, he was practical. He had looked at the situation and determined that local conditions warranted neutrality. Another influential priest did not support the occupation, although he initially pretended to do so. U.S. soldiers did not know what to make of Padre Gabriel González. They marveled that he openly violated of his vows of chastity by living with a woman and having several children. They wondered at his being an "inveterate gambler." One U.S. captain decided that “he [was] the most shrewd and cunning man in Lower California, as well as the most dissolute.” Although Padre González was not a resident of La Paz (he hailed from Todos Santos and Loreto), he traveled to the capital regularly. Setting aside any debate whether Padre González had legitimate concerns about the spiritual welfare of the people, there is evidence his actions were motivated by a desire to preserve his local influence and property. This was a common criticism Mexican liberals advanced against priests during the war. They complained that priests acted in their own self-interest instead of considering the interests of the nation, accused priests of being more worried about preserving their “unique and absolute power” over the populace and defending “their own property.”

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128 DuPont, 295.
129 Buffum, 164.
130 Buffum, 164.
131 DuPont, 273.
132 Nunis, 29, 139; Buffum, 164.
133 Berge, *Considerations*, 36.
dismissed as baseless. Like other citizens, priests had their own interests to consider. These localized concerns could carry as much weight with them as their religion, and they almost certainly carried more weight than a need to fight on behalf of the Mexican national government or on behalf of the Catholic Church. The independence of frontier priests from constant oversight only increased this tendency.  

The U.S. Invasion

The features of the local community and the localism they inspired were clearly evident in the paceños’ response to the U.S. occupation. The invasion of Baja California took place a few weeks after the invasion of New Mexico; unlike Santa Fe, the invasion required a naval force. Indeed, the invasion of Baja California provides a glimpse into U.S. naval history. On August 17, 1846, U.S. Commodore Robert F. Stockton issued a proclamation from Los Angeles, Alta California, claiming both upper and lower California as a territory of the United States by conquest. A month later, military boats appeared in the Bay of La Paz. They were carrying a message from the Cyane, a U.S. ship anchored approximately six miles away. The ship's captain, Samuel F. DuPont, sent the following demands to Governor Palacios Miranda: (1) the population of Baja California was to cease commerce with Mexico, (2) the people must agree to remain neutral in the war, and (3) all local vessels needed to be turned over as prizes. Governor Palacios Miranda traveled to the Cyane the next morning to make terms with Captain DuPont. He had received no communications from the Mexican central government regarding the invasion, and there was no evidence that military aid would be forthcoming.

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135 Nunis, 18-19; 477 H. Exec. Doc. 19, p. 109; DuPont, 57, 59; Herrera Serna, 133.
Palacios Miranda’s words and actions during this time reflect a localistic attitude. For example, he and his fellow municipal leaders expressed “disappointment all around that [Lower California] had not been included in the proclamation[s]” issued in Upper California.\textsuperscript{136} Lower California had certainly been mentioned in these proclamations, but only as an appendage of Alta California. This offended local pride. Baja California had been lumped together with a neighboring territory to the north, when naturally they saw themselves as distinct and independent. Conquering one was not conquering the other, and Baja California expected to be recognized as the separate locality that it was. Further evidence of the predominance of local concerns could be seen in Palacios Miranda’s offer to “assume the safekeeping” of nine local vessels that the \textit{Cyane} had claimed as prizes of war.\textsuperscript{137} DuPont did not have the means to keep and protect the vessels at the time, so if Palacios Miranda had not offered to do this, the U.S. commander would have been obliged to burn them. These vessels were crucial to the local economy. Rather than have them destroyed, Palacios Miranda was willing to keep and protect them on the enemy’s behalf.\textsuperscript{138}

As someone with military experience, Palacios Miranda was keenly aware that La Paz and Baja California lacked the military supplies necessary to battle the U.S. forces with any hope of success. La Paz’s vulnerability to attack from the sea made prioritizing the local community a necessity. By September 1846 there had been two major battles between Mexico and the United States, one at Palo Alto and the other at Resaca de Palma. The casualties on the Mexican side far outweighed those of the United States: 400 to 55 in one and 700 to 121 in the other. The battles also resulted in the occupation of the city of

\textsuperscript{136} DuPont, 60.
\textsuperscript{137} DuPont, 59.
\textsuperscript{138} 499 H. Exec. Doc. 19, p. 109; DuPont, 59, 169.
Matamoros, where the "inhabitants were treated roughly by the U.S. army."\textsuperscript{139} The rough treatment was presumably made worse because the locals had put up a fight. If Mexicans were at a disadvantage even on the mainland, how could Baja California hope to do any better? Palacios Miranda bluntly explained that his willingness to submit to the \textit{Cyane} was inspired by the fact that the territory had few "supplies and munitions" and no "military and naval resources."\textsuperscript{140} Local circumstances advised neutrality. The local situation guided his choices, even if it made him a traitor in the eyes of the national community.

During the two weeks after Palacios Miranda met with Captain DuPont, the \textit{Cyane} remained in and around La Paz. DuPont made contact with foreign residents of the city. He noted that while they were not friendly to the United States, they were very concerned about their property. Personal feelings were not as important as the well-being of the local community. As for Mexican-born \textit{paceños}, DuPont expressed appreciation for and approval of the treatment he and his men received from them. The people willingly resupplied the \textit{Cyane}, even providing "fresh bread" for the sailors. DuPont noted in his records that the "neglect" of the Mexican government and local poverty made \textit{paceños} more willing to cooperate.\textsuperscript{141} The safety and well-being of the local community was the priority. Both of these were better assured by being friendly with the U.S. invaders. DuPont was not ignorant of the role fear played in the decision-making of the \textit{paceños}. What mattered was what people feared most and what was most important to them. At this point their lives did not depend on actively or willingly assisting the U.S. navy, but only on not taking up arms. The sailors could have commandeered what they needed without loss of life. Nevertheless, citizens showed themselves disposed to help the sailors without offering even passive

\textsuperscript{139} Crawford, 174, 208, 233.
\textsuperscript{140} Nunis, 20.
\textsuperscript{141} Nunis, 20.
resistance. Based on DuPont’s observations, this was because of the Mexican government’s failure to protect and prosper the local community. Recognizing this, DuPont and subsequent U.S. commanders urged the necessity of promoting the local economy in order to maintain the support of the city. “[I]f anything could rouse [the paceños] to levé en masse” in spite of their initial willingness to cooperate, it would be interfering with local trade, one commander warned.\footnote{DuPont, 312-313; 557 S. Exec. Doc. 18,p. 443.} If the U.S. conquest benefited the local economy, or at the very least did not make it worse, the people were much more likely to remain neutral.

On September 28\textsuperscript{th}, DuPont and the Cyane departed, leaving "only a small force" of U.S. soldiers in the city. Palacios Miranda's words and actions convinced DuPont that he only needed to leave a few men behind. However, the governor’s cooperation alone would not have been enough to satisfy Captain DuPont. The U.S. commander had been convinced by the "friendliness and cooperation" of the citizens in general. Nevertheless, La Paz’s quick and easy cooperation did not sit well with everyone in the city or on the peninsula. A group of paceños asked the governor "to convene a junta" to determine a course of action after the majority of the U.S. forces had departed. Palacios Miranda agreed to do so, although in the eyes of the U.S. navy this violated his agreement to avoid “indirectly ... countenanc[ing] ... others in resisting or opposing the authorities of the United States.”\footnote{House Executive Document No. 1, 30th Congress, 2nd Session, 1848, Serial 537, p. 1060.} In February 1847, representatives from various locales in Baja California met near San José del Cabo. Palacios Miranda may or may not have attended the council, but he certainly had enemies among the representatives. These representatives took the opportunity to label him a traitor, remove him from office, and appoint another political leader in his stead. The council’s vote to remove Palacios Miranda from office had no practical effect in La Paz. The U.S. army continued to
treat Palacios Miranda as the Mexican leader in Baja California, and in La Paz he still "held sway," meaning paceños in general were willing to follow his lead.\textsuperscript{144}

Why did some individuals and communities react differently from Palacios Miranda and the paceños? Did they feel more loyalty to the nation? Those who actively opposed the U.S. invasion certainly made expressions of patriotism. The self-appointed commander of the town of Guaymas told DuPont that “no hostilities would be undertaken” there, but neither would he cooperate the way Palacios Miranda had done because it would be an offense to “national and military honor.”\textsuperscript{145}

Without entirely discounting patriotism as a motivation, it is important to consider other possible reasons some on the peninsula refused to follow La Paz’s lead. Local interests, both communal and personal, were certainly among them. One Mexican treatise observed the role of personal “honor” in driving Mexicans to fight, as opposed to any desire to defend the national government.\textsuperscript{146} A person does not need to feel any real pride in or loyalty to one’s nation in order to feel bound to fight for it. It can simply be a matter of duty. Furthermore, honor can have a selfish side. Captain DuPont believed that men like the commander in Guaymas were motivated by ambition for glory more than by duty: a Mexican could “gain[] a little fame for himself...by making” at least “a show of resistance” (emphasis in original).\textsuperscript{147} Foreign residents in La Paz and a contemporary Mexican political treatise expressed similar beliefs.\textsuperscript{148} The treatise complained that every revolution in Mexico gave individuals the opportunity for promotion.\textsuperscript{149} The national government had long been

\textsuperscript{144} Nunis, 20, 75n7; Herrera Serna, 133-135; Hubert Howe Bancroft, \textit{History of the North Mexican States}, (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1884), 712n.
\textsuperscript{145} DuPont, 64.
\textsuperscript{146} Berge, \textit{Considerations}, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{147} DuPont, 63.
\textsuperscript{148} DuPont, 64-65.
\textsuperscript{149} Berge, \textit{Considerations}, 32.
“besieged” by “obscure men alleging to have contributed important services...in the cause of the nation” who requested as “compensation” a “high military post[].”150 Such remarks proved that there were doubts even among Mexicans regarding appeals to patriotism or honor. They argued that these men and women were motivated as much by personal and local interests as the traitors were. The difference revolved around alternate perceptions about what was best for the local community and which local or personal interests should have priority.

In the middle of April 1847, two months after the junta that removed Palacios Miranda as governor, another U.S. vessel made its appearance in the harbor of La Paz. This time it was the *Portsmouth*, under the command of John B. Montgomery. Captain Montgomery immediately dispatched a messenger to Palacios Miranda. He informed the governor that he was under orders to “hoist and protect” the U.S. flag in La Paz. In order to do so “peaceably,” he demanded Palacios Miranda and the citizens “surrender the town...with all public Mexican property [and] arms and munitions of war.” Before responding to these orders, Palacios Miranda conferred with a "territorial deputation" and within a day the deputation sent word to the *Portsmouth*. Included in the message was the following statement:

...without prejudice you can proceed...to hoist the American flag in this town, in respect to which, neither in it nor in the whole territory are to be found resources to oppose this measure; it is reserved to propose to you additional conditions...in favor of the interests, peace, and well being of the peninsula.151

This message demonstrated that the deputation was guided by localism. First of all, the local situation guided them: the lack of “resources to oppose this measure” made compliance the

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150 Berge, *Considerations*, 32.
only reasonable choice. Second of all, the deputation insisted on acting “in favor of the interests, peace, and well being of the peninsula.”\textsuperscript{152} Their primary interest was in ensuring the best results for the territory, not the nation.

Ninety U.S. soldier-seamen disembarked in La Paz for the flag ceremony, and the citizens of La Paz gathered in the plaza to hear a proclamation explaining what would be expected of them. Several statements in this proclamation reflected the U.S. commander’s recognition that the well-being of the local community was the predominant concern among \textit{paceños}. The primary theme of the proclamation was that the people were advised to “continue peaceable and quiet, pursuing their usual business.”\textsuperscript{153} In other words, Montgomery urged \textit{paceños} to keep the local community running as it had always done. He knew that the best way to encourage cooperation was to minimize local disruption.

A comparison between the proclamations issued in Santa Fe and La Paz shows that although the future of the local community was important to both peoples, they were given different expectations. The Santa Fe proclamation issued in August 1846 told \textit{santafesinos} that the United States now “claim[ed] [them] as citizens” of that country, and intended to “provide...a free government...similar to those in the United States.” In contrast, the La Paz proclamation issued six months later informed \textit{paceños} that they must wait to learn their “future political relations” from the treaty of peace.\textsuperscript{154} At this point, \textit{paceños} were not necessarily relying on the promise of annexation to the United States. U.S. soldier Henry Halleck noted in his records that it was doubtful the majority of \textit{paceños} intended to renounce Mexico entirely, in spite of the government’s neglect. Instead, he observed a feeling among them "that nothing they could do would have the least influence upon the

\textsuperscript{152} 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, pp. 1059-1061.
\textsuperscript{153} 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, p. 1062.
result” of the war, so preserving the local community was the priority.¹⁵⁵ Halleck’s words implied his assumption that if the people believed the fate of the local community was truly tied to the fate of the nation, they might have behaved differently. But since the people assumed the outcome for Mexico would be the same regardless of what they chose to do, there was no reason to destroy the local community on the nation’s behalf.

After the flag ceremony and proclamation, most soldiers returned to the ship. Due to the “peaceable disposition...of the authorities and of the people,” only a "guard of marines" remained to protect the flag.¹⁵⁶ Three commissioners appointed by Palacios Miranda then met with U.S. officers in the governor’s home. In exchange for complying with U.S. demands for neutrality, the citizens of La Paz received the following concessions: those who made up the "municipal body" could retain their offices and take over many of the governor’s "functions;" private property and civil and religious liberty would "be respected;" the citizens of Baja California would have the "same rights and privileges" of U.S. citizens; and any vessels which the U.S. previously confiscated would be returned to their owners, allowing commerce to continue.¹⁵⁷

Every one of these assurances related to localism. First, Palacios Miranda’s post as governor was abolished, a post that was actually a central government appointment. Instead, his duties would belong to city leaders, because local leadership was important. Second, if local lives, property and privileges were not preserved, there would have been no benefit to paceños in submitting to the U.S. occupation. Finally, the local economy needed to be protected; ensuring the continuance of trade was necessary to enforce the people’s

¹⁵⁵ Halleck, 106.
cooperation. Local concerns prompted La Paz’s compliance in the first place, so of course
paceños required the U.S. commander’s promise to respect them.

Less than two weeks after the articles of capitulation were signed, the *Portsmouth* left La Paz's waters. The captain, under orders to depart, recognized that the absence of a naval presence in the bay could be dangerous for the citizens of La Paz. He wrote to his commander, Commodore William B. Shubrick, that there were "'apprehensions'" among "'many people...that ill-disposed persons...may take advantage of the absence of all force, and visit them with resentment for their recent quiet submission to the United States authorities.'"158 The La Paz junta specifically requested "'a vessel to be placed'" in the Bay of La Paz—even a small one of 10-12 men—to "secure quietude to the community."159 Until and unless this was done, the municipal authorities were "afraid to do anything."160 The people of La Paz knew very well that although their cooperation might save them from violence from the U.S. side, it invited violence on another. They had reason to fear for their lives either way, indicating that it was more than just fear that guided their decision-making. It was a decision that surrender was better for local interests, property and economy.

It would take three months, but the junta's request was eventually granted. At the end of July 1847, the *Lexington* arrived in La Paz carrying two companies of New York volunteers (115 soldiers) under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Henry Stanton Burton. For approximately two months, Burton and his men "quietly occupied" the town. During this quiet occupation Burton came into contact with fifteen-year-old María Amparo Ruiz, the future novelist. The two would eventually marry.

158 Nunis, 25.
159 Nunis, 25.
Ruiz was not the only paceña who chose to be friendly to the New York volunteers stationed in La Paz; many women who were motivated by a concern for the well-being of the local community made themselves amiable to the occupying army. One U.S. soldier blissfully recounted the nights he and a his fellows spent under a "tamarind tree...listen[ing] to songs in...enchanting Spanish, sung by a beautiful creature who had undertaken the task of teaching...her language." This was followed by a "ramble" upon the beach or "a dance upon a greensward." Both Mexican and U.S. sources describe multiple instances in which women in Mexico "formed lasting attachments with American soldiers." Of course, short-term attachments were more typical. While some Mexican women like Ruiz actually fell in love, for most women the motivations related to local or personal interests. Even among those who fell in love, other interests could be at play, like ambition. Ruiz "had an overriding sense...that she was destined for something bigger than the village of La Paz;" her marriage to Burton gave her opportunities she never could have had if she married a fellow bajacalifornio. Although in one way this might be perceived as a betrayal of the local community—a desire to leave—it was simply another manifestation of the role of personal desires and feelings. One might call these the most “local” concerns of all. Elsewhere in the Mexico, soldiers noted that the women were interested in seeking to profit off the invaders, and that women recognized their amiability resulted in better treatment of the town as a whole. No doubt the women of Baja California had similar motives. The local economy and local interests were better served by friendliness than by scorn.

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161 Buffum, 166.  
162 Guardino, 343.  
163 Sánchez and Pita, *Conflicts of Interest*, 58.  
As in Santa Fe, Mexican reactions to and perceptions of the occupation were guided by the occupying army’s interactions with the local community. Anglos who recognized Hispanics as fellow human beings, equally capable of civilization and intellectual pursuits, could easily mix and form fulfilling friendships and relationships. As long as paseños were treated fairly by the occupying army, a congenial relationship was relatively easy to maintain. People like Ruiz and her family saw no betrayal in forming friendly relationships with those who offered no personal offense. La Paz may have had a more luck than Santa Fe in maintaining cordial relations between soldiers and citizens. Although Lt. Col. Burton reported that the volunteer troops were difficult to handle, the Lower California assembly praised him and other officers for their conduct during the occupation. They noted the "good and refined feelings" which "actuated" Burton's superior, and told Burton, "[Y]ou...have made yourself the idol of all the country, your courage, prudence and humanity are qualities which the enemy itself cannot forget." Apparently, Burton did his best to apprehend and punish anyone who offended the locals.

The Insurrection

Some time during the relatively uneventful months of occupation, Burton received word that insurrection was brewing in some villages on the peninsula. The towns of Comondú and Mulegé (north of La Paz) were particularly active. Insurgents there received aid from the states of Sonora and Sinaloa in the form of weapons and leadership. At the behest of those states’ leaders, Manuel Pineda, a captain in the Mexican army, traveled to

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166 Letter from Lower California Assembly.
167 Nunis, 28.
Baja California to provide military command.\textsuperscript{168} Insurgent political authority was in the hands of Mauricio Castro, appointed to replace Palacios Miranda by the junta of San José del Cabo.

Captain DuPont could find “no motives of patriotism” among the majority of the insurrection leaders.\textsuperscript{169} By proclamation he accused insurgents of working “under the plea of patriotic motives,” when in reality they only had “a view...to take advantage of a state of misrule and disorder, to plunder their more peaceable fellow citizens.”\textsuperscript{170} DuPont was essentially accusing them of having local, personal reasons for rebelling against U.S. authority. They simply had differing local interests than those who submitted to the U.S. invasion. Elite \textit{paceños} also doubted the motives of the insurrectionists; they believed the insurgency was instigated by Sinaloa and Sonora “prompted by party spirit and their own interests.”\textsuperscript{171} They had offered no assistance when the U.S. first arrived in Baja California. Sinaloa and Sonora were the primary trade partners of Baja California. They must have realized it was in their own interests to reopen the ports of that territory to their merchants. It is unclear whether this was in fact the primary cause of their interference, but certainly the \textit{paceños} believed it was. They resented interference in their local autonomy whether it came from the central government or another state. They assumed other states were as concerned about their own local matters as the people of La Paz.

Since Burton was under orders not to leave the capital, all he could do upon receiving news of the rising insurrection was bide his time. However, at the end of September, the arrival of the U.S.S. \textit{Dale} gave him options. Burton sent the \textit{Dale} to Mulegé in the hopes of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{168} 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, p. 1151; Nunis, 28.
\item \textsuperscript{169} DuPont, 297.
\item \textsuperscript{170} 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, p. 1084. Emphasis in original.
\item \textsuperscript{171} Letter from Lower California Assembly.
\end{itemize}
cutting off communications between Baja California and the Mexican mainland, thereby blocking the arrival of additional military arms. The Dale failed in its mission. Although it drove the insurgents from the city, it did not remain to occupy it, and it could not manage an effective blockade. The next day, an American resident of La Paz chartered his schooner (the Libertad) to the U.S. military. For the next month this vessel battled the insurgency near Mulegé. The capacity for destroying the town was limited, for the schooner lacked the weaponry of larger vessels.

Insurrection leader Captain Pineda lacked the localism that played such a large role in the decisions of community leaders like those in La Paz. The local municipal leader of Mulegé, Alcalde Tomás Zuniga, lacked the ability to act on behalf of the local community. U.S. leaders recognized him as the local leader and consequently sought to negotiate through him. He responded that “the powers of his office had been superseded by the presence of the commandant general,” Pineda; in turn Pineda sent word to the U.S. naval commander that the local leaders no longer had any power, because the city was “held by the Mexican force.”

Pineda’s confirmation of the loss of local authority confirmed that Zuniga was not simply seeking to deflect blame. Pineda had no ties to the community of Mulegé. He was working on behalf of other states. Had his primary concern been the fate of Mulegé he might have acted differently.

The insurrection found little support among paceños. Other communities wavered in their support or opposition, as the threat to the well-being of a local community increased or decreased. Furthermore, it was the smallest towns of the peninsula that became the headquarters for the insurrection. In the absence of a strong U.S. force, insurgents moved in

172 Nunis, 30; 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, p. 1100
173 Gerhard, 419; Nunis, 29, 33.
to an area. But, as Captain DuPont observed, the insurgents “never will come where there is a ship.” The people were not looking for a fight they could not win. They wanted to put on a show of opposition. Was this because the insurgents lacked the localism of their neighbors? Did they think more nationally? Most observers doubted this. Their motives were variously identified as spiritual (a defense of the Catholic religion) or personal (a desire for glory or property). In spite of boasts that the people would fight to the “last drop of blood,” these were not warriors seeking to force a battle against an invincible foe merely to prove their loyalty to Mexico. These were men carefully calculating what they could and could not get away with, looking to recover local autonomy from the U.S. military.

A novel by Ruiz satirized calls to sacrifice local and personal interests for patriotism, demonstrating her belief that they could easily be employed by men who were only looking out for themselves. In a novel set during the U.S. Civil War, the brother of a character named Lavinia is kept a prisoner of war. A personal rivalry with a powerful legislator prevents his being exchanged with other prisoners. Of course, the individual to whom Lavinia appeals for help does not admit this is the reason. Instead, he claims her family has been called upon to show its patriotism: “So you see how, like a patriotic girl as you are, you should resign yourself to the misfortune that made your brother one of the noble victims selected by Providence to be the means of subjugating” the enemy. Individuals like Ruiz and her family saw no reason to “resign” themselves to being “noble victims” for the sake of patriotism, especially when they did not think patriotism required it. They were “patriotic” to

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174 DuPont, 321.
175 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, 1101.
176 573 H. Exec. Doc. 17, p. 312; Crawford, 244.
177 Ruiz de Burton, Who Would Have Thought It?, 109.
the community which they deemed their “patria” (Baja California), and in their minds neutrality was local patriotism.

The month of November 1847 was a difficult one in La Paz. By this time Mexico City had been occupied by General Scott's army and negotiations were underway. Whether this news had reached Baja California or not, paceños had cause to fear the insurgents as much as the U.S. army; they felt "restrained by prudential motives" from formally declaring in favor of one side or the other. However, Commodore William Branford Shubrick believed that a number of bajacalifornios would volunteer to assist the U.S. side if they felt assured that "they were never to return to the rule of Mexico." This belief caused Shubrick to issue a proclamation that “invite[d] the well-disposed to stand fast in their fidelity,” and declared that “[n]o contingency can be foreseen in which the United States will ever surrender or relinquish their possession of the Californias.” Some paceños took courage in these words, as Shubrick intended. Shubrick gained more overt support by assuring the locals that the fate of their local community was in the hands of the United States, not Mexico.

By making local interests coincide with U.S. interests, some paceños became willing to actively fight on the side of the United States, switching from accommodationists to actual traitors. As the capital and the headquarters of the U.S. occupation of Baja California, La Paz naturally became the target of the insurgents. Burton and his 112 men prepared for a fight. Most paceños evacuated, clinging to neutrality, but there were "many women and children... [who took] refuge on board" boats in the harbor. At least 29 citizens remained to actively

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179 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, p. 1085. The last sentence was supposed to be a quotation from President James K. Polk, but the quote was inaccurate. In the original statement made by Polk, "the Californias" was actually "California."
assist in the city's defense; they were led by former governor Palacios Miranda. The women and children who hid on the boats were probably those uncomfortable with the idea of living in the open desert, or relatives of the twenty-nine paceños who volunteered to help the U.S. army. The paceños who volunteered to fight were assigned to guard "the lower part of the town," where Palacios Miranda and many of the elites lived. It was significant that the paceños were posted in this particular spot. Since the protection of the local community and personal property was one of the main reasons paceños agreed to neutrality, they would be especially motivated if they were guarding their own land and homes.

The strong interest in protecting local property was also evident in other parts of the peninsula. Commander DuPont recommended that those living on the interior be supplied with “some arms” since they were “willing[] [to] undertake to keep down” those fighting U.S. forces due to the tendency of the insurgents to plunder. In the words of one group of bajacalifornios, “well behaved citizens” were unwilling to “suffer themselves to be despoiled” by the “rapacity” of Pineda and his insurgents. Whenever the local community was clearly harmed by the insurrection, open support for the U.S. increased. Whatever course a person deemed most likely to benefit the local community was the course which he or she pursued.

Approximately 200 insurgents led by Pineda made their first assault on La Paz on November 11, 1847. The fighting began at about 2 a.m. Pineda's forces stationed themselves in three different locations and fired at the U.S. garrison for an hour without receiving much in return. The Americans wanted to preserve their ammunition. After an hour was over, all

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182 Letter from Lower California Assembly.
was quiet until 9 a.m., when the attack began in earnest. Several hours of fighting resulted in at least 50 of Pineda's men being able to enter the city. Palacios Miranda and the paceños under his command were overcome by the insurgents and "the houses of the well-disposed [to the Americans]" were "sacked;" Palacios Miranda’s town-house burned to the ground. After burning or plundering several houses, the U.S. artillery finally drove the insurgents away. They camped about six miles outside of the city and "hovered" there for ten days, preparing for another attack.

Palacios Miranda and his followers had entirely sided with the enemy in order to defend the local community from being overrun by insurgents. During the brief period of respite, Lt. Col. Burton wrote to his superiors that Palacios Miranda proved himself "deserving of every confidence." The casualties on the American side were not high: one man was killed; two were "slightly wounded;" apparently no paceños lost their lives. Burton’s comments indicate that Palacios Miranda and his men were not simply putting on a facade of assisting the U.S. They were no longer just neutrals. The insurgents intended no good for La Paz. The city was a garrison of the enemy to them; while to paceños, its protection was their primary focus.

In the afternoon of November 27th, Captain Pineda and an increased force of 350 men once again attacked La Paz. This attack lasted about 5 hours before the insurgents were driven away. During those five hours, areas outside the range of U.S. muskets were burned, and much of the town was "reduced to ruins." Again, the casualties did not equal the property loss: one U.S. soldier was "slightly wounded." After this second defeat, the insurgents "maintained a light siege" of the city until December 8th, when Captain DuPont

186 Nunis, 41.
and the *Cyane* returned to the Bay of La Paz. With these additional men, small groups of soldiers were able to travel outside the city to drive away the insurrectionists who had remained in the area.

The presence of the *Cyane* also gave the evacuated *paceños* enough confidence to return to the city. Being in their local community was more important to them than staying away from direct U.S. influence or interaction with U.S. soldiers. These individuals were eager to return to their homes as soon as it seemed safe to do so. They did not want to stay in exile even though it removed them from immediate contact with the occupying army.\(^\text{187}\)

Pineda and his men were apparently aware who among La Paz's residents were traitorous enough to warrant punishment, although sources are not clear whose homes were plundered or destroyed besides those of Palacios Miranda and Francisco Lope Urriza, the town's *alcalde*.\(^\text{188}\) However, a list of *bajacalifornio* claimants who received reimbursement after the war might provide some clues. Palacios Miranda received the most money by far (over $6,000). There were several others who received over $1,000, and this amount could easily be compensation for a ransacked house.\(^\text{189}\) These claimants were Francisco Villegas and Teofilo Echevarría (who had both signed the conciliation agreement), Angel Lebriga, Thomas Smith, William Mugan, Francisco Villagar, Pablo de la Toba (María Amparo Ruiz’s brother-in-law), Ignacio Suerte, Miguel Choya, and Don Antonio Ruiz.\(^\text{190}\)

The insistence of leaders like Burton that those who actively assisted the U.S. army be reimbursed was a recognition that these individuals had been motivated by personal interests; when those interests were harmed instead of helped by the presence of the U.S. army, they

\(^{187}\) Crawford, 161; Nunis, 40-41, 114.

\(^{188}\) Nunis, 24.

\(^{189}\) Nunis, 149.

\(^{190}\) Sánchez and Pita, *Conflicts of Interest*, 46; Nunis, 24. Don Antonio Ruiz does not appear to have any direct relation to María Amparo Ruiz.
expected to be recompensed. The paceños were not actuated by any idea of sacrificing themselves and their community for the sake of helping the United States; they were actuated by the idea that helping the United States would benefit themselves and the community.

Although the insurrection did not end after the insurgents were driven out of the vicinity of La Paz, no further attempts were made on the capital. The conflict continued in other parts of the peninsula. When Burton received information indicating there was a plan to attack La Paz again, he took action to secure the city. These precautions included stationing another ship in the Bay of La Paz when the Cyane departed, and, a month later, stationing additional companies of New York volunteers in the city. In late March 1848, Burton led an expeditionary force to seek out and attack enemy outposts and headquarters around the peninsula.

The fates of all of the insurrection’s leaders revolved around personal and local issues. The expeditionary force quickly and easily captured Captain Pineda, when they found him abandoned by his troops due to a disagreement. Personal disagreements caused Pineda to lose his supporters. Mauricio Castro came into U.S. hands after local civil authorities arrested him and handed him over. Castro had offended local people, causing them to hand him over to the custody of the United States. Elsewhere, U.S. forces found and captured Padre González. Even before this, Padre González had written to Captain DuPont; having “become alarmed lest his property should be confiscated” he had assured DuPont that the Mexican insurgents “had dispersed never to return.”\textsuperscript{191} DuPont remarked that the Padre had long shown himself “heartily sick” of the insurgency.\textsuperscript{192} The Padre saw that the insurrection was putting his property in Todos Santos in danger. Only by seeking to appease DuPont

\textsuperscript{191} DuPont, 372-373.
\textsuperscript{192} Gerhard, 420; DuPont, 372-373.
could he hope to protect his local interests. In one form or another, localism was evident in all three cases.

When Lt. Col. Burton returned to La Paz in early April 1848, he was able to report "complete defeat and dispersion of the enemy's forces." Soon after, word arrived in La Paz that the war was over. A treaty had indeed been signed in early February, although when the paceños heard the news in late May, it had yet to be ratified. U.S. negotiator Nicholas Trist had expressed a willingness to abandon claims to Baja California. While the reason Mexico desired to maintain Baja California was openly expressed (the government believed that it was necessary to protect the state of Sonora from future aggression) Nicholas Trist’s offer to part with it was not, particularly since it was contrary to his instructions from the President. In late June, with the end of the war finally confirmed, Burton received his orders to withdraw all troops from the territory. La Paz and the rest of Baja California were to remain in Mexican hands. Deeply concerned by these orders, Burton wrote to his superiors, reminding them of the promise Shubrick had made to the paceños that the peninsula would become part of the United States. Believing that many of them would be in danger of retribution if they were "left to the mercy of Mexico," he requested means to evacuate to the United States all those who desired to go.

Included with this correspondence was a petition from the citizens of La Paz in support of Burton's request. This petition reflected the high priority placed on both local and personal interests. Although it was sent along with Burton’s request to evacuate the people,
the petition made it clear that the preference of the paceños was to “separate” Baja California from Mexico and “annex” it to the United States (or another “maritime power”). The paceños had no desire to leave their community. Their hopes of preserving it remained. The petitioners’ declared purpose was to “promote the true happiness of this Country.” In other words, they were seeking not only the welfare of individual citizens but of the community as a whole. Simply moving the people was not ideal. For reasons of family, economy, and community, the people would much prefer to remain where they were.

Interestingly, the petition took time to detail the resentment of the citizens against the interference of Sonora and Sinaloa in the affairs of local community, expressing fears that said interference would result in a dangerous situation for the local population. But again, the preferred response was not the removal of paceños, but the removal of the national tie making Sonora and Sinaloa feel entitled to meddle in local matters. The petitioners spoke sarcastically about the “patriotism” of the leader which those states intended to send to the peninsula once the U.S. evacuated. They believed that his purpose was more personal than patriotic: he wanted to “despoil[...the very insignificant property which [the insurrectionists] had spared” the locals. In the opinion of the petitioners, self-interest, not the welfare of Baja California or the welfare of the Mexican nation, was his priority. In contrast, the assembly members claimed they were motivated by their interest in fostering the local community and its people; this could best be accomplished by joining themselves to a nation that would provide “shelter, protect[ion], and support.” Their desires were not for a strong centralized governing authority; they wanted to be citizens of a nation that offered an

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198 Letter from Lower California Assembly.
199 Letter from Lower California Assembly. “Country” in this context is not the equivalent of “nation” but of a land area.
200 Letter from Lower California Assembly.
201 Letter from Lower California Assembly.
atmosphere in which the local community could thrive—not by direct interference from national leaders but by shielding the community from potential dangers and providing guidance or assistance when necessary.

While Burton and the petitioners awaited a response from U.S. leaders, multiple ships arrived in the Bay of La Paz in preparation for the transport of U.S. troops to Alta California. In mid-July, a response came to Burton's hand. Commodores Jones and Shubrick discouraged the bajacalifornios from open rebellion against Mexico, but agreed to relocate to Alta California all "those who wished political asylum." Burton received power to decide who deserved compensation or reimbursement from the United States, and who should be relocated. Only those "who had given their allegiance to the United States" needed political asylum. On August 31, 1848, the evacuation of the political refugees was completed. The more active traitors bid farewell to the town of La Paz and their life in Mexico—but not necessarily to their identification as californios.

Conclusion

Localism was a defining characteristic of communities like La Paz, a natural result of history and circumstance. While the people did not lack a mejicano identity and spirit, the bajacalifornio and paceño identities dominated, particularly when there was a conflict. Had the choice never presented itself, no doubt the vast majority of paceños would never have acted counter to their national identity in spite of their resentment toward the central government of Mexico. But when faced with two options, defense of national honor or preservation of the local community, they followed the latter course. Even those who

202 Nunis, 70.
203 Nunis, 71.
objected to the surrender of the peninsula had clear local motivations for doing so. Defense of the national honor alone was simply not enough prompt *paceños* to take up arms against the U.S. invaders to the detriment of the local community.
Chapter 4
Conclusion

There were several differences between the invasion and occupation of Santa Fe and the invasion and occupation of La Paz, but one common feature was the prevalence of localism. A brief look at the fates of both towns and their citizens proves that even after the war, localism continued to have a powerful influence, regardless of whether the community was part of Mexico or the United States. For example, the power of localism to override national patriotism was evident in the fact that most santafesinos elected to remain in their homes instead of migrating to remain in Mexico. After the war, the Mexican government made “laws favoring the return of Mexicans” from territories seized by the United States, hoping to encourage them to settle in the states which made up the new northern border of the country. Very few nuevomexicanos elected to take advantage of these repatriation laws. It was almost entirely the “least fortunate” who chose to move. The least fortunate not only had the most to gain from the government incentives, but they also had the fewest ties to the local community (owning no land and having only minimal involvement with the local economy). Reluctant traitor Juan Vigil y Alarid was one of the few elite to relocate so he could stay in Mexico. However, he apparently returned to New Mexico in later life, evidence of his continuing battle between local and national loyalties.204

Localism was clearly central to the politics of New Mexico territory after it became part of the United States. This was no surprise as elite nuevomexicanos

dominated the legislature. One outside observer described New Mexican politics as obsessed with local interests. The two major parties that developed were the Mexican Party and the American Party. There were Anglos and native-born *nuevomexicanos* on both sides, and the parties shared many localistic goals. It was their methods for achieving them that differed. For example, there was a debate over local culture: the Mexican Party sought to preserve as much of the pre-conquest society as possible while the latter desired assimilation into U.S. society. Both parties advocated for statehood, though they opposed it when the proposal came from the other side. The arguments against statehood were predictably local: the community was “not ready in [its] progress toward modernity” and the “burden of taxation would increase.”

Legislators also worked hard to “obtain[] resources for their home community," and they did what they could to increase the power of local community leaders. The politics of Santa Fe continued to be driven by the people’s desire to do what was best for the local community as opposed to what would best serve the nation to which they now belonged.

Catholicism was no longer the national religion, but it continued to be a powerful influence in the local community and it continued to reflect Santa Fe’s localistic views. An unexpected result of New Mexico’s transfer to the United States was that the Vatican decided to create a New Mexican diocese. Priests in New Mexico had previously been under the authority of the diocese in Durango, nearly 1,000 miles away. They had become accustomed to operating independently. The new bishop threatened the “autonomy” they had long enjoyed, so the bishop faced a great deal of opposition.

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205 P. Gonzales, 206.
206 P. Gonzales, 6, 21, 185, 192, 195, 199, 204.
whenever he tried to make changes to the local way of doing things.\textsuperscript{207} Clearly, localism continued to be a dominant feature in Santa Fe and New Mexico for years after the war.

Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo the fate of La Paz differed from that of Santa Fe, but like Santa Fe, the town and its citizens continued to be swayed by localism, whether they chose to remain in Baja California or relocate to the United States. The total number of \textit{paceños} who emigrated is unknown, but the total number of \textit{bajacalifornios} was probably somewhere between 350 and 500. The “immense emigration” damaged “the prosperity of the peninsula.”\textsuperscript{208} A large number of these were \textit{paceños}, but residents in other towns such as San José del Cabo also chose to move.

Among the refugees were Francisco Palacios Miranda and his wife, and María Amparo Ruiz with her mother, brother, sister, and brother-in-law. It is difficult to discover the fate of most of these emigrants, but apparently many of the \textit{bajacalifornios} who left La Paz out of concern for their safety returned to the city in the decades that followed. Mexico’s repatriation laws benefited them more than it did \textit{nuevomexicanos}: instead of calling upon them to leave their local community, the laws called them back home. Palacios Miranda and María Amparo Ruiz were not among the repatriates, but Ruiz’s sister and brother-in-law were.\textsuperscript{209} Ruiz and Palacios Miranda had strong reasons that would force them to overcome their localistic ties to La Paz: Palacios Miranda would have faced

\textsuperscript{207} P. Gonzales, 272.
\textsuperscript{208} “Congreso General – Camara de Diputados,” \textit{Siglo Diez y Nueve} (Mexico City, Mexico), February 27, 1849, https://infoweb-newsbank-com.dist.lib.usu.edu/apps/readex/doc?p=WHNPLAN1&docref=image/v2%3A13316854647F044D%40WHNPLAN1-13384CB7DEC4D8A8%402396451-13374DC703B3E428%400-13374DC703B3E428%40.
\textsuperscript{209} Nunis, 74; Ruiz and Sánchez Korrol, 73; 537 H. Exec. Doc. 1, 1085; Sánchez and Pita, \textit{Conflicts of Interest}, 17; Hernández, 21.
punishment as the most obvious traitor among the *paceños*, and Ruiz was married to an officer in the U.S. army.

As for the fate of La Paz itself, the Mexican government learned some lessons from the town’s cooperation with the United States, recognizing the power of localism in the community. In 1849, the Chamber of Deputies presented plans to the Mexican Congress to revitalize Baja California. This presentation included the following explanation:

> ...the necessities of that country...demand instant remedies...without which it may remain erased from the list of towns that make an integral part of the Mexican republic, because it will remain depopulated lacking an organization analogous to its local circumstances…

The first proposed remedy was to encourage Mexican colonization to replenish the loss of population. However, the most pressing need, the proposal recognized, was for the central government to stop ignoring Baja California, and create laws more suitable to local needs. The central government’s inaction and insensitivity to local conditions created the unfortunate circumstances leading to treason. The needs of the local community were paramount to the people, and the government needed to act accordingly.

In spite of these efforts to address local needs, little actually changed in Baja California after the U.S.-Mexican War. The lack of resources and the associated dissatisfaction with the federal government remained, and discontent among the population occasionally led to rebellion and even treason. One Baja California governor had to demand a “forced loan” to “keep the loyalty of [the] garrison.”

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210 “Congreso General – Camara de Diputados,” *Siglo Diez y Nueve*.

211 Eugene Keith Chamberlin, “Baja California After Walker: The Zerman Enterprise,” *The
The peninsula’s tenuous situation would only be ameliorated once two major local concerns were addressed: (1) a more effective local government was implemented, and (2) improvements in transportation made resources less scarce and the community less isolated.212

La Paz and Santa Fe are certainly not the only communities in history who have allowed local interests to guide their choices. Some might even argue that it is to be expected. But the fact is that there are some cities which primarily identify with the nation to which they belong and others which view the world first and foremost through the lens of the local community. Consider, for example, reactions in the United States to the September 11th attacks. The declared target of the attacks was the U.S. as a nation, although strikes were limited to Washington, D.C., and New York. National patriotism ran high throughout the country. Nevertheless, within the city of New York, localism was evident. Homes and businesses flew “I [heart] New York” banners as often as they displayed the American flag. New Yorkers saw it as an attack on their local community as much or more than an attack on the nation. Compare this to the reaction after Pearl Harbor, in which localism was hardly manifest at all. There are several reasons why localism might be more prominent in New York than in Pearl Harbor, and it would be enlightening to explore them.

Localism is not a new concept, nor have historians neglected its study. However, they usually consider it only as part of a broader idea, and rarely do they single it out by that name. While I am not necessarily advocating for historians to use the term

“localism” in their work, I believe it would be useful for historians to have the term in their repertoire to ensure they take the time to reflect on its relevance to their current research. For example, localism is clearly relevant to the history of states’ rights in the United States and Mexico. Any research into rivalries and disputes between communities should take localism into consideration. Historians must frequently decide whether a local historical fact is just that—local—or whether it can be used to draw conclusions relating to a broader area.

Although localism may often be only one factor to consider in a larger study, it does deserve some individual attention, particularly in studies of the U.S.-Mexican War and the borderlands. In the context of the war, it would be interesting to analyze how localism was exploited by the U.S. military, and combated by the Mexican government. In the context of both the War and more generalized borderlands history, it would be helpful to analyze a broader spectrum of communities to find more definite patterns that foster localism. Finally, borderlands historians should examine in more detail localism’s influence on identity, religion, and culture.

Localism was a powerful force in the U.S.-Mexican War that must not be overlooked. It is a force that still has power today to guide individual and community choices. The conflict between local and national outlooks was and is evident in people's lives, and it is important that historians recognize and acknowledge it, particularly in any study of the U.S.-Mexican War and the borderlands.
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