

## Texas as a stumbling block in Mexican-American relations

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Bilateral relations between Mexico and the U.S. are usually viewed through the prism of the 1846-1848 Mexican war – a conflict that remapped borders when Mexico lost up to half of its territories. However, this approach underestimates the unique role of Texas, which was annexed by the United States in 1845. The annexation laid the foundation for a prolonged period of tension between Mexico and the USA for the next 180 years. To be more precise, Texas became a space for the permanent reproduction of the conflict. It is important to understand that Texas entered the USA as a slave state and this situation disrupted the fragile balance between the North and the South [4].

The annexation of Texas became possible due to internal political contradictions in Mexico. As part of its strategy to populate northern lands, the Mexican government gave broad autonomy and self-governance rights to English-speaking settlers from the USA [5]. The United States later used Mexico's policies toward settlers as justification for the annexation of Texas [4]. Moreover, there was no unity among Texans. Therefore, Tejanos, residents of Texas with Creole or Mexican roots, remained loyal to Mexico, but they were marginalized and lacked political power against the wave of English-speaking settlers.

As a result of the war, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed. Formally, it guaranteed the Mexicans who remained on the annexed lands citizenship and property rights, but historical documents testify that in Texas these guarantees were systematically violated [2]. Thus, Mexican community in Texas faced:

- violence and extrajudicial killings [1];
- loss of lands through judicial mechanisms (legal battles could last for years) [1];
- segregation (but de jure they were US citizens) [1].

These violations set a precedent for systematic discrimination that persisted for decades.

It's crucial to trace the transformation of border control practices across different historical periods. In early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Texas, the 'gatekeeper-state' model emerged as border protection shifted from federal to local authorities [5]. For example, the Texas Rangers acted more harshly than federal marshals and subsequently their methods were taken as a template. Later, in 1980s - 1990s, this model spread to the entire U.S. southern border [5].

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the 'Texas factor' has gained renewed significance. There are two key contradictions in which Texas acts as an active agent, shape the regional agenda and present challenges for both the USA and Mexico.

The first contradiction is migration crisis. The 'Lone Star' operation, launched in 2021, demonstrated that Texas is ready to assume the powers of federal government in the immigration sphere [3]. With an \$11 billion budget, the operation mobilized thousands of National Guard personnel and established hundreds of miles of barbed wire barriers [3]. Moreover, Senate Bill 4 (SB4), enacted in 2023, granted local authorities an opportunity to arrest and deport individuals suspected of illegally crossing the border. This Bill reached the Supreme Court

and only the fact of litigation exposed a deep constitutional conflict between Texas and federal center [6]. Meanwhile Mexico repeatedly expressed official protests, seeing a violation of bilateral agreements and a risk of discrimination against Mexicans in the U.S. in Texas' actions [6].

The second contradiction is the struggle for water. A conflict over national resources is intensifying: in 2024-2025 Texas and Mexico started a diplomatic dispute centred on adherence to the 1944 Rio Grande water-sharing treaty [7]. Mexico accumulated a debt in water deliveries and the last sugar mill closed. After that Texas members of Congress urged the U.S. administration to condition financial aid to Mexico on the country's compliance with its water obligations [7]. For Texas, with its arid climate, the water issue is a matter of survival, so in the political sense it is not inferior to migration.

Thus, Texas is not only a case of American expansion, but a sustainable factor of crisis and a stumbling block in Mexican-American relations. Historically, Texas was the place where mechanisms to exclude Mexican-origin population were first established. These practices later spread across the entire borderland. Today the key contradictions, the migration crisis and the struggle for natural resources, manifest themselves especially in the Texas context. Understanding this historical continuity is essential for an assessment of the contemporary situation in the region: the roots of the present-day conflict date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and without considering this circumstance any analysis will be incomplete.

### Источники и литература

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