



REGULAR VS. VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS: MEXICAN VIEWPOINTS

Before the War

Before the U.S.-Mexican War, Mexican citizens mistrusted the standing army. The *fuero militar* - laws protecting soldiers from civil prosecution - fueled civilian fears. Furthermore, the standing army was unable to guard Mexico's borders. At a time when foreign threats lurked in the border regions, such as the rapidly expanding United States, the army could not be trusted to provide adequate protection and defense.

Finally, the Mexican War of Independence (1810-21) from Spain resulted in political instability. After the War, several dictators who were present or former military officers used their military power to gain political control. At the beginning of the U.S.-Mexican War, Mexico was under such a dictatorship. In 1845, Mariano Paredes, a former brigadier general and secretary of war, overthrew then President Herrera, a former General, and installed himself as the new interim president. However, the Mexican congress had the power to pass resolutions, thus preventing the president from becoming an absolute dictator.

Why did most Mexican citizens mistrust a regular army?

During the War

As the Mexican standing army was unable to defend Mexico against foreign invasion, civic militias were called to fight against the North American invasion. The Battles of Palo Alto and at Resaca de la Palma were fought by both regular and militia units fighting side-by-side. In contrast to the U.S. volunteers, the Mexican Army consisted mainly of conscripts. Men were ordered to leave their families and join the army.

Write three to five sentences about how you would react if you were conscripted into the army.

After the War

After the War ended, President Herrera instituted military reforms to improve the standing army. These reforms improved military training, reduced wasteful spending, increase efficiency, and attempted to improve relations between officers and privates. However, the army remained scattered in small, regional units and was still subject to regional political pressures.

Why did most Mexican citizens mistrust a regular army?

