

Alamo and San Jacinto battles and their military and political results,1835-1836

Dr. Kareem Subuh

**History Department ,College of Education - Ibn Rushd -,
University of Baghdad**

Abstract

The study examines the details of the Alamo and San Jacinto battles and it is shown that the Alamo took place between 187 Texans and about 4,000 Mexican soldiers . The Texans are left alone to fight and the American government did not help them . Noted that Alamo revolutionaries send an appeal to the American people without any response, only 32 volunteers who killed during the battle . The study shows how the Texans revolutionaries defeat in the Alamo has been turned into a great victory during the San Jacinto which resulted in ending the war and in achieving the independence for Texas in 1836.

Prelude

The Texas war Battles of Independence gained their importance from the nature of their events and not from only the direct and indirect results of them. So the goal of this study based on revealing the moral of the steadfastness of 200 Texans against 4000 Mexican soldiers along 12 days. The nature of this study entailed searching in the nature of the Mexican administration in Texas, and how it turned to one of the important factors in the revolutionary war of Texas, trailing the details of the important battles of the war, and defining their military and political results.

Texas under the Mexican Administration

Texas lies in the far southwest of the now existing the United States of America, its area reaches to 267.339 sq.Mi (692. 408 sq. km), which made it the largest American states after Alaska state.¹ Before being Texas the 28th American state a long ago, and exactly in 1690, Spain declared that Texas is a Spanish district. The period between 1716-1749 witnessed

establishing missions in some parts of Texas, especially in San Antonio in 1718 and in Goliad in 1749.² After purchasing Louisiana by the United States in 1803, it claimed that Texas is a part from Louisiana region, but it recognized it as a Spanish region in a treaty signed with Spain in 1819.³ On the 28th of February 1821, Mexico declared its independence from Spain as it represents a constitutional republic protecting the Catholic religion and ensuring the racial equality; and Texas itself became a part of the new republic⁴.

The treaty of 1819 had fixed the borders between Louisiana and Texas. The eager Americans who were anxious to lands crossed the borders in a migration included their slaves too, so some of them reached Texas legally, while others crossed the Unprotected borders.⁵ In general, inhabitants of Texas number reached to 30,000 Americans and 4,000 slaves in 1835, and it was the same time which was found in it 12,000 Indians and 3,500 Mexicans in Texas only.⁶ Therefore it seemed clear that the Mexican governments had themselves encouraged the Americans migration to Texas. The American pioneers' migrants got the acceptance of the Mexican authorities to settle the families in Texas. About (90%) of the new comers were from the southern American states, and some of them brought their slaves with them to plant cotton, so it was natural to rise tension between the American migrants and the Mexicans along the way of the growing of Texans economy;⁷ therefore it reflected negatively on the steps which were taken by the Mexican governments towards the American settlers and on the Mexican administration in Texas itself.

It seemed clear that the relations between the Mexican government and Texas worsened since 1826. The attempt of the United States of America to purchase Texas in 1827, asserted the fears of Mexico from an American "plot" to capture Texas by force. It became understandable the

cause of making the Mexican government issuing assurance on the strong administrative connection of Texas with other provinces, by refusing achieving the will of the Texans that going for the sake of separating Texas from Coahuila state, which rose the Texans and annoyed them very much.⁸ By those things the differences between the American settlers and the Mexican government increased and continued. Also it seemed that there were other causes stood behind, among them were continuing the migrants' economical and cultural bounds with the United States of America and their will to create strong bounds with their previous country and made slavery legal after making it illegal by the Mexican government in Texas as in Mexico itself in 1829, that step which harmed the American settlers economically,⁹ since most of them were migrants from southern American states where slavery was permitted.

The attempts of the Mexican government to stop the flow of American migrants to Texas seemed to be a reasonable cause led to arise the American settlers in it, although they remained composing the clear majority among its inhabitants. Not less importance thing the need of that majority to the religious liberty, which represented an important factor for those settlers who the Protestants formed most of them.¹⁰ Whereas the Mexican government asked the settlers to swear to be loyal to Catholicism and accepting it, at the same time prevented them from establishing a Protestant churches, so they were two matters which proved a Mexican dictatorial rule that composed an important aspect of the political developments which Mexico witnessed them in the beginning of 1830s that led the American settlers to declare the independence of Texas and entering war against the Mexican forces, that war which witnessed the famous battle of Alamo.

Alamo Battle

It may consider the tenure of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna (1794-1876 / 1834-1836, 1841-1844, 1853-1854) the rule of Mexico in 1834 a new stage in the history of Mexico and Texas. He declared himself a dictator, and imposed a new discipline considered more conservation and autocratic on his country and its regions, and asked his government to control all the provisions of Mexico including Texas. From that we can see, that while Texas wanted more liberty in the internal affairs, the new rules increased the space of the central governments' authorities on the account of the states governments; the action which led the American settlers to think that it was pursuing them in particular.¹¹ Therefore, the difficulty of conducting the normal constitutional procedures in demanding the rights under such a dictatorial government didn't leave any hope for those settlers but revolting against the Mexican authorities, in a practical expression on their need for reform more than their need to the independence.¹²

The armed revolution began in Gonzales county (the Lexington of Texas) on 2 October 1835, when 160 Americans gathered around 100 Mexican horsemen to get small cannon was given to the county to protect it from Indians. The result was killing one Mexican and one American wounded. After nearly a week, 50 Americans were able to take over the Mexican garrison in Goliad mission. On 28 October the Americans under James Bowie (1796-1836) defeated a Mexican force in Conception Mission near San Antonio. On 13 November, debates made in San Felip de Austin, the capital of Austin Colony, adopted a plan to establish a temporary government and selecting Sam Houston (1793- 1863), as a commander-in-chief of Texas with a rank of General; and the assembled people declared that Texas was fighting for gaining the rights which guaranteed by the republic of Mexico constitution of 1824.¹³

In a reply to those steps and losses that befallen by the Texan forces, the Mexican president General Santa Anna led an army composed of 6,000 men; 4,000 men of them proceeded under his leadership to the city of San Antonio. Here it seemed clear that the American settlers got great difficulties in organizing an effective defense for their new "nation". Many different groups claimed that they were the legal governments of Texas, whereas the American soldiers differed about their leader. Furthermore, the commander-in-chief of the Texas military forces, Houston, who didn't see in San Antonio that strategic value, ordered his troops to march to the east, while 155 men, among them the leader of the regular Texan troops the Brigadier General, William Barrett Travis (1809-1836), and the leader of volunteers troops the Brigadier General, Bowie, and the former congressman of Tennessee, Davy Crockett (1786-1836), remaining in San Antonio and fortifying the mission establishment which is called Alamo, where the forces of Santa Anna imposed a siege on 24 February 1836.¹⁴

The inequality between the two sides explaining the succor letters which sent by the Brigadier General, Travis, to the people of the United States of America to strengthen his forces. One of those letters implied the following:

"Fellow Citizens and Compatriots:

I am besieged by a thousand or more of Mexicans under Santa Anna... The enemy have demanded a surrender at discretion; otherwise the garrison is to be put the sword if the place taken. I have answered the summons with a cannon shot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls.

"I shall never surrender or retreat.

"Then, I call on you in the name of liberty, of patriotism, and of everything dear to the American character to come to our aid with all

dispatch. The enemy are receiving reinforcement daily and will no doubt increase to three or for thousand in four or five days. Though this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country. Victory or death.

W. Barrett Travis

Lieutenant Colonel Commanding "¹⁵

That letter expressed very well the toughness of the solidarity and its honor, the actual intention, and the absolute belief of the supreme principles. At the same time the revolutionists of Texas got a great sympathy in the United States of America, especially in the south and the northwest, where their motives corresponded with the struggle of the underprivileged people, as exactly expressed about that one of the supporters to the revolutionists in Ohio state, when he said:

"The Texans are mostly composed of the proper classes of society: men whom misfortunes have driven from our country; men who have gone there at the instance of the invitation of the Mexican government, on the full assurance of the protection of that government in the hope and expectation of being able to retrieve their shattered fortunes, and procure bread for their suffering families."¹⁶

Yes, the revolutionists of Texas got a clear American sympathy; they are after all their kinsfolk. In addition to that, there appeared a large region in it slavery exercised wildly which increases the tract of the southerners. Although so, only 32 men volunteered American joined the revolutionists to fight with them, they were from the southwestern, crossed illegally the

frontiers on 1 March 1836, and joined the fortified revolutionists in Alamo. Although, the president Andrew Jackson's welcome (1767-1845/ 4March 1829-4Mach 1837) of the revolution in Texas, his administration took the neutrality side with regard to the struggle between the revolutionists and the Mexican government, willing preventing war and internal cessations.¹⁷

All that, didn't wrest the revolutionists of Texas and they didn't show any sign on their retreat from their attitude. the besieged revolutionists in Alamo continued their steadfastness face to face with Santa Anna's forces, but the threat of Santa Anna to annihilate the Americans in Texas, was faced by the provisional government of Texas by declaring the independence of Texas on March 2, 1836 .It is remarkable that the constitution of the new republic of Texas was a copy of the constitution of the United States of America, except its prohibition of the new congress of Texas from interfering in the slavery issue¹⁸, and that explained the concept of this study where part of the Jackson's administration attitude towards the struggle in Texas connected with his fear of accruing cessations between the north and the south about that issue.

The Santa Anna's siege of the Alamo's revolutionists continued for 12 days, during that period of time the violent clashes between the two parties didn't stop. Crockett wrote in his diaries about the events of one day the following: "The resounding of shooting continued along the day, and I have no time to write memoirs."¹⁹ The important development in Alamo battle was that the Mexican troops were able to damage part of the walls. Then the Santa Anna's troops waged their last and decisive offence on Alamo at 5 A.M. on March 6, 1836. When the besieged revolutionists heard the Mexican horn blower, noticed that Santa Anna would never mercy them and killing the last man of them, so they defended themselves and the mission of Alamo strongly. In an hour, the troops of Santa Anna

annihilated them all; their number was 187 men, including Travis, Crockett and Bowie. The only survivors were Mrs. Dickinson and her child, the Black slaves, and the Mexican women.²⁰ But the other results of that battle were more effective and had a greater important.

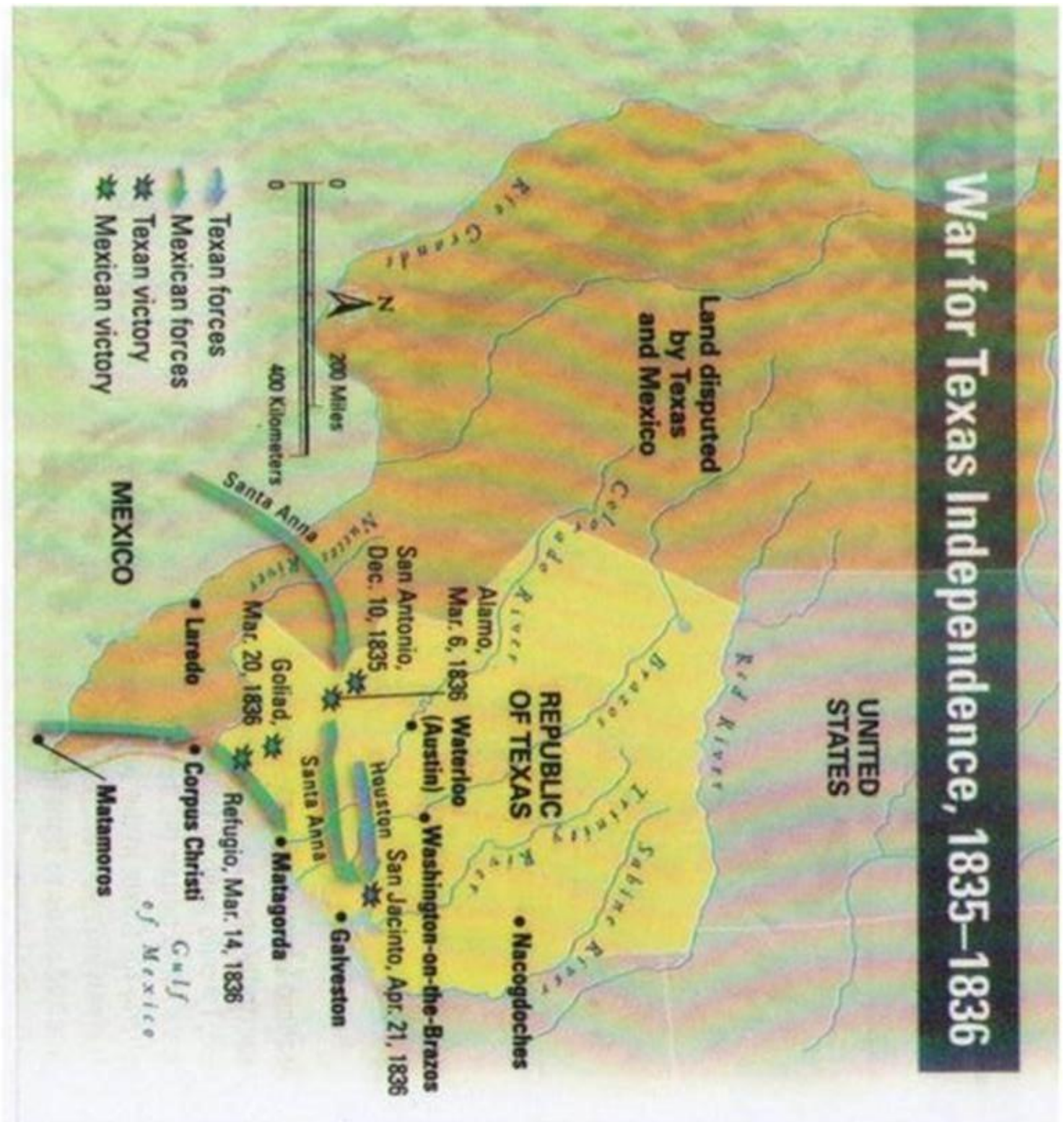
The Political and Military Results of the Battle

The end of that war was an explicit Mexican victory. But it was an expensive victory. The Mexican forces lost 1500 men on the hand of the revolutionists of Alamo, but it lost their military honor when they committed another massacre in Goliad by executing all the garrison's individuals, who were 300 men, after their surrender. Therefore it was naturally let the revolutionists of Texas angry. But the anger was one of the factors which led them intent on continuing their revolutionary war to the end. The other factor was the military organization render to the commander-in-chief of Texas, General Houston.²¹

General Houston became on the head of the revolutionary movement of Texas because of his intellectual abilities and his talents as a political orator. The most important of that all, his awareness of his army's need to a motivation by an organized fighting force in a war the enemy was preponderance in number and equipment. Therefore he strengthens his troops by artillery and infantry, especially by volunteers from the United States of America. In April 1836 he implemented his military preparations, so the number of his troops mounted to 900 men.²²

Houston troops surprised that there was a great Mexican army along the San Jacinto River on 21 April 1836, so they entered the battle against them crying "Remember the Alamo" that cry which became the most well-known Texans' cries. In 15 minutes the troops of Houston were able to overcome on the Mexican army which it lost 630 killed, 280

injured, and 730 prisoner, among them Santa Anna. Thus San Jacinto battle was actually a decisive battle ended the war, especially when Santa Anna agreed on leaving Texas with his army, but even the most importance of all that his signature on May 14, 1836, on a treaty acknowledging the independence of Texas by making the Rio Grande become the southern border of the republic of Texas.²³



The greatness of sacrifice which made by Travis and his men in Alamo imposes on us to mention that the calling for help message which sent to the citizens of United States of America, and gained a little response, was found written on Alamo's walls by blood or candles smock.²⁵ It seems that that sacrifice was appreciated, on the public and academic levels. There was found who said that the pride of the great victory of the Anglo-Saxon blood on "the Mexican barbarians who were thirsty to blood" was an expression of some feeling that the Texans fought in human and democratic war.²⁶ Establishing a first free national elections in the republic of Texas in September 1836, and electing Houston as a first president of the new republic²⁷ mean many things in the context of turning from dictatorial to democratic rule. But politics ignored Travis's and his men sacrifices and deformed them.

The political circles in the northeastern states, where the issue of Texas met a little support, explained the request of Texas to join the Union as a "plot" from the slave holders. It was clear that the majority of the Texans were hoping to annex their republic to the United States of America, but that hope soon turned to a victim of differences between the southern politicians, who were among them the slave holders and rich people, and the northern politicians. It was expected that the southern politicians would support the annexation of Texas to the United States of America, because it increases the number of the states which permit slavery which found in Texas already, as it was expected that the northern politicians would oppose that annexation, because the annexing more slavery states would shake balance in the Senate in behalf of the slavery states and encourage war with Mexico.²⁸

Those differences explains that the sacrifices of Texans in Alamo and their victory in San Jacinto didn't push president Jackson to leave his

carefulness and hesitation immediately to deal with the republic of Texas and its independence, but he remained defending the policy of "wait and see" for a long time. His message to the Congress on December 21, 1836 included the following:

"Prudence, therefore, seems to dictate that we should still stand aloof and maintain our present attitude, if not until Mexico itself, or one of the great foreign powers, shall recognize the independence of the new government, at least until the lapse of time or the course of events shall have proved beyond cavil or dispute the ability of the people of that country to maintain their separate sovereignty and to uphold the government constitution by them." ²⁹

Actually, President Jackson waited eight months after San Jacinto battle before recognizing the independence of Texas, which means that he delayed the diplomatic recognition to that time which followed implementing the American presidential elections in November 1836. Here also politics was present. It seems there was a dread that the diplomatic recognition step would weaken the position of the of the democratic party and its presidential candidate in that elections. ³⁰

Conclusion.

The main conclusions of the study are:

1. It proved that the region of Texas is a large one and the main part of its lands was not invested economically very well. After its property transmitted from Spain to Mexico the Mexican government found it

necessary to encourage the migration of Americans to Texas to make use of their economical skills and the slaves who came with them.

2. The Mexican administration in Texas wasn't successful, and didn't care about the ambitions of its people, especially Americans who wished in some anonymous rule and liberty in administering their internal affairs without the interference of the central government. The American settlers saw the nullifying of slavery was a substantial part of the Mexican government to hit and breakdown their main economical activity.

3. The central administration instigated the people of Texas of Americans, and that centrality increased after taking the General Santa Anna the rule over Mexico, and use force and dictatorship to impose the central government control on all the regions of Mexico including Texas itself.

4. It became clear that the revolution of Texas rose in the beginning for the sake of reform. But the narrow sight of the government of Santa Anna made it turn to a revolution for getting independence, especially when Santa Anna showed his intent to exile the Americans or annihilate them.

5. The steadfastness of the revolutionists in Alamo against a large Spanish army, and their sacrifice for the sake of a noble principles composed in the same time an impulse for the other revolutionists to continue their revolution till achieving victory. Whereas Alamo battle was present in San Jacinto battle when the revolutionists fought it with cry: "Remember the Alamo".

6. The procedures of the turning to democracy in Texas revealed quickly, whereas the year 1836 witnessed first national elections, and electing one of its heroes as its first president, but the United States of

America didn't understand the meaning of that immediate turn which explained the wish to annex to a constitutional state of a democratic system.

7. The caution and hesitation of the president Jackson cost the Texans much blood. His neutrality was shameful was not wiped out by his welcoming the revolution. Freedom and democracy desired always. From that we can see that the internal and external factors which limited his movement and delayed his recognition of Texas independence are the same which explained his opposition to annex it to the United States of America.

Notes

1. "Collins Concise Encyclopedia", London, Peerage Books, 1985, p. 559.
2. إيرل شينك مايرز، ولاياتنا الخمسون، ترجمة احمد عزت طه، بغداد، دار اليقظة العربية للتأليف والترجمة والنشر، 1961، ص260.
3. " Encyclopedia International", New York, 1966, Vol. 18, P.32.
4. مايرز، المصدر السابق، ص260.
5. Oscar Handlin, America. A History. U.S.A., 1968, P.443.
6. George Stimpson, American History, Fawcett Publications, Inc., Greenwich, Connecticut, 1956, P.190.
7. James West Davidson and Others, Nation of Nations. A Concise Narrative of the American Republic, New York, 2008, P.375.
8. Richard Hofstadter and Others, United States . The History of A Republic, New Jersey, 1957, P.270.
9. Alan Brinkley, American History . A Survey, Vol.2: To 1877, New York, 2003, P.346; Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.375.
10. Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.375; Handlin, Op. Cit., P.449.
11. Henry N. Drewry and Thomas H.OConor, America is, Ohio, 1987, P.307; Brinkley, Op. Cit., P.346; Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.375.
12. Hofstadter and Others, Op. Cit., P.27.
13. Stimpson, Op. Cit., P.191.
14. Drewry and OConor, Op. Cit., P.307; Brinkley, Op. Cit., P.; " The Oxford Companion to American Military History", Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, P.28.
15. William B. Travis, Message from the Alamo, in: " The Annals of America ", Vol.6, 1833-1840, the Challenge of Continent, U.S.A., 1968, P.282.
16. Hofstadter and Others, Op. Cit., P.270.
17. Handlin, Op. Cit., P.449; " Encyclopedia International ", Vol.1, P.223.
18. Hofstadter, Op. Cit., P.27; Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.375.
19. مايرز، المصدر السابق، ص263.

20. " Encyclopedia International ", Vol.1, P.223; Stimpson, Op. Cit., P.192; Brinkley, Op. Cit., P.346.
21. Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., PP.735-736; Brinkley, Op. Cit., P.346.
22. Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.376; " The Oxford Companion to American Military History ", P.635.
23. Gerald A. Danzer and Others, The Americans. Reconstruction through the 20 th Century, McDougal Little, Boston, 1999, P. 138; Drewry and OConor, Op. Cit., P.307; Stimpson, Op. Cit., P. 192.
24. Danzer and Others, Op. Cit., P.137.
25. " The Annals of America, 1836 ", P.272.
26. Hofstadter and Others, Op. Cit., P.270.
27. " Encyclopedia International ", Vol. 18, P.37.
28. Hofstadter and Others, Op. Cit., P.270; Danzer and Others, Op. Cit., P.138.
29. Andrew Jackson, The Independence of Texas, in: " The Annals of America, 1836", PP. 293-295.
30. Handlin, Op. Cit., P.449; Davidson and Others, Op. Cit., P.376.

الملخص باللغة العربية

اكتسبت معارك استقلال تكساس اهميتها من النتائج العسكرية والسياسية التي ترتبت عليها ، ولاسيما أنها أدت - أخيرا - الى ظهور جمهورية على الحدود الامريكية - المكسيكية لم تتوانى عن تبني النظام السياسي المطبق في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية ، بما في ذلك أن دستورها كان نسخة من الدستور الامريكي ، وهو أمر طبيعي اذا ما علم أن المهاجرين الامريكيين الى تكساس هم الذين تطلعوا الى استقلالها عن المكسيك وانضمامها الى بلدهم الأم الولايات المتحدة ، والأهم انهم كانوا في طليعة من خاض تلك المعارك لتحقيق ذلك الاستقلال ، فجاءت هذه الدراسة لتبحث في تفاصيل معركتين مهمتين منها ، وهما " الامو " وسان جاسينتو ونتائجهما العسكرية والسياسية ، منها انتزاع التكساسيون استقلالهم من المكسيك بعد انتصارهم على جيش الأخيرة على قلة عددهم وضعف تجهيزاتهم ، بكل مرافق ذلك من موقف حذر ومترقب أظهرته الولايات المتحدة الامريكية ، وكان موضع انتقاد الدراسة نفسها

د. كريم صبح

قسم التاريخ ، كلية التربية - ابن رشد - جامعة بغداد