

“THIS MISERABLE KINGDOM”: INDIAN AND EUROPEAN ALLIANCES IN THE
CENTRAL PLAINS, 1692-1730

Garrett W. Wright

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Approved by:

Kathleen DuVal

Wayne Lee

Cynthia Radding

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ABSTRACT

Garrett W. Wright: "This Miserable Kingdom": Indian and European Alliances in the Central Plains, 1692-1730
(Under the direction of Kathleen DuVal)

In the early eighteenth century, many Indian and European powers sought to establish control of the Central Plains. To do so, these powers struck alliances with other contending powers to varying degrees of success. Though the Plains Apaches saw benefits in a commercial alliance with the French to the northeast, and the Spanish initially tried for complete imperial dominance of the region, both groups ultimately needed an alliance with each other to check the growing rival alliances between the Comanches and the Utes from the Great Basin and the French and the Pawnees in the Eastern Plains. The 1720 Villasur Expedition was the culmination of this Plains Apache-Spanish alliance and resulted in immediate military defeat and long-term prevention of either group's expansion into the Central Plains.

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Introduction

On August 14, 1720, a group of Spaniards, Apaches, and Puebloan Indians awoke in their camp on the south bank of the Platte River. A large Pawnee village loomed across the wide river. Having trekked across the Great Plains for nearly two months, the men were anxious to confirm rumors of French settlements in the region so the expedition could return home to New Mexico. The Pawnees had been no help in this regard, so the expedition made preparations that morning to continue its journey northeast beyond the Pawnee village. While the Spanish soldiers gathered their horses and supplies, a great number of Pawnee and Otoe Indians emerged from almost every direction and barraged the camp with arrows and bullets. While most of the expedition's horses stampeded away, Philip Tamáriz and a handful of other soldiers managed to gain control of a few horses and save three of their bleeding comrades, one of whom had suffered nine severe wounds from the attack. They quickly turned back and began traveling southwest, leaving behind precious provisions, most of their horses and weapons, and at least forty dead or dying companions, including Lieutenant General Pedro de Villasur, commander of the expedition. More than five hundred miles of dusty plains lay between them and the security of New Mexico.¹

The Villasur expedition was the culmination of a Spanish-Apache alliance created in the early eighteenth century to check the increasing power of two rival alliances: the Utes and

¹Statement of Tamariz against Valverde, 1726-07-02, in *Autos hechos por el Brigadier don Pedro de Rivera en razón de la pesquisa contra don Antonio de Valverde, gobernador que fue de la Nueva México, de haber confiado el reconocimiento del Río Jesús María, y Poblazón de los Indios Pananas confederados con franceses*, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), *Historia*, Documento XXV (hereafter cited as Documento XXV), Folder 46, Box 2, Center for Southwest Research (CSWR), University of New Mexico (UNM), Albuquerque, New Mexico, 105-6.

Comanches and the Pawnees and French. The Utes and Comanches, as well as the Faraone Apaches, frequently raided Spanish and Apache settlements, which had greatly decreased Spanish territory in New Mexico and Apache territory in El Cuartelejo and La Jicarilla. Yet it was the Pawnee-French alliance that had directly sparked the Villasur expedition. The Pawnees, former victims of Apache raiding parties, had acquired French firearms around 1710 and returned Apache raids in kind, undercutting Apache influence in the Southwest slave trade. In appealing to Spanish fears of French imperial expansion, the Apaches drew the Spanish into their rivalry with the Pawnees.

The Plains Apaches and the Spanish had different motivations for traveling to the Central Plains in 1720. The Apaches sought revenge for recent Pawnee raids and likely hoped to expand their territory to make up for the land lost at the hands of the Utes and Comanches. The Spanish, on the other hand, were hardly concerned with the Pawnees. They wanted to find out if there were French in the Central Plains, who might be planning an invasion of New Mexico from the northeast. These different motivations point to both the discrepancy between and the reciprocal nature of European geopolitics and Indian regional rivalries. Spaniards' focus on imperial dominion over the Central Plains clouded their judgment and ultimately led to the disastrous defeat of the Villasur expedition, which was sparked by the Pawnee-Apache rivalry. On the other hand, the Apaches recognized the Spanish preoccupation with French expansion and played up French incursions into the Central Plains to draw the Spanish into the Apaches' regional rivalry with the Pawnees. Understanding a group's motivations and foundations of power exposes of the type of control that group wished to impose on a region, in this case the Central Plains. In other words, Spanish motivations for the Villasur expedition display a desire for geopolitical imperial dominance over the French in the Central Plains, while Apaches'

regional motivations reveal their regional goals of territorial expansion and commercial power. In revealing networks and processes of power far beyond the boundaries of the typical Anglo-American westward-facing historical narrative, the Villasur expedition's context and consequence can thus contribute to a continental narrative of American history.²

Previous historians have analyzed the Villasur expedition as an example of either European or Indian conflict. Early scholars argued that the expedition was simply spillover from conflicts in Europe, namely the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720). These historians portrayed the Pawnee defeat of the expedition as a French success or at least a Spanish failure.³ One recent historian has provided an ethnohistorical analysis of the expedition, linking it to Great Plains politics within and between Indian groups, emphasizing the role of the Pawnee at the expense of other groups involved.⁴ Examining the interplay of multiple peoples involved, however, provides a more complete understanding of both the Villasur expedition and the

²In order to accomplish this continental narrative of colonial American history, some historians have written synthetic volumes covering as many regions, peoples, and networks as possible within a vast chronological scope. See Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Daniel K. Richter, *Before the Revolution: America's Ancient Pasts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011); Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001). Other scholars have chosen a more focused approach, analyzing regions beyond the British colonies in order to counter the teleological westward-facing historical narrative through an examination of native and non-Anglo structures and networks. See Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Daniel H. Usner, Jr., *Indians, Settlers, and Slaves in a Frontier Exchange Economy: The Lower Mississippi Valley* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³Henry Folmer, *Franco-Spanish Rivalry in North America, 1523-1763* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1953), 232-5; Marc de Villiers du Terrage, "Le Massacre de l'expédition Espagnole du Missouri," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris*, 13, no. 2 (1921): 239-55; Addison E. Sheldon, "Nebraska Historical Expedition," *Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days* 7, no. 3 (1924): 89-91.

⁴Christopher Steinke, "Leading the 'Father': The Pawnee Homeland, Coureurs de Bois, and the Villasur Expedition of 1720," *Great Plains Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 43-62.

reciprocal nature of Indian and European actions and policies. In the years leading up to and immediately following the Villasur expedition, the actions of Plains Apaches and Pawnees directly affected Spanish and French imperial policy; likewise, Spanish and French imperial policy at times encouraged, hindered, or assisted Apache and Pawnee actions in the Central Plains.

I. Plains Apache Power to 1720

In the late seventeenth century, the Plains Apaches built, maintained, and expressed regional power through their participation in the Southwest Indian raiding economy and their strong alliance with New Mexico. These two bases of power were linked, as the Apaches acquired metal weapons from their Spanish allies and used those weapons to raid other Great Plains communities for horses, livestock, and slaves. They traded these captives to the Spanish for more firearms, horses, and trade goods, which further bolstered their participation in the Plains raiding economy. Two rival alliances challenged this dominance in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The Utes and Comanches raided Plains Apache communities from the northeast, while the French supplied the Pawnees with weapons for defense against Apache raids. The Plains Apaches reacted to these new threats by strengthening their ties with the Spanish by 1720.

The various bands of Plains Apaches, a category that includes the Jicarillas, Carlanas, Cuartelejos, and Palomas, originally lived in Canada as part of the Athabaskan group. These Apaches migrated south to the Great Plains shortly after 1000 C.E. and by the sixteenth century controlled territory from the Black Hills in the north to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the south. The Jicarillas occupied territory in the southern Rocky Mountains and in the Plains near

the Arkansas, Canadian, and Purgatoire Rivers. The Carlanas, Cuartelejos, and Palomas settled in the Plains between the Rio Grande and the Platte River. The Plains Apaches combined Athabaskan and Plains Indian cultures and practices to create a unique semi-sedentary community that still engaged in a mobile commercial network and in migratory hunting practices. In the 1670s, the Plains Apaches established *rancherias* northeast of New Mexico, in the La Jicarilla valley and the El Cuartelejo region in the Central Plains (see figure 2). In these settlements, they built flat-roofed houses and used irrigation methods learned from the Puebloan peoples to grow corn, beans, squash, and melons.⁵ Alonso de Benavides, a Portuguese Franciscan missionary, described a group of Jicarilla Apaches “plant[ing] corn and other seeds” as early as 1630.⁶ Additionally, the geographical position of these *rancherias* bolstered the Plains Apaches’ role as commercial middlemen between New Mexico and other Indian communities to the east. They resided in their *rancherias* in the spring and summer and typically spent the rest of the year traveling across the plains and foothills, hunting buffalo, mountain sheep, antelope, and elk as well as trading with Indian communities in the Plains.⁷

Not all Apache groups were sedentary like the Plains Apaches. The Faraone Apaches, who migrated southward with the Plains Apaches, did not establish *rancherias*. Instead, the Faraones were semi-nomadic and traveled around the Plains and Sandía Mountains on horseback. Their mobility benefitted them in two ways. Without permanent settlements and constantly on the move, the Faraones were less vulnerable to attacks by other Indian groups.

⁵Veronica E. Tiller, “Jicarilla Apache,” in *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 10 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 440.

⁶Dolores A. Gunnerson, *The Jicarilla Apaches: A Study in Survival* (Dekalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 104-5.

⁷Gunnerson, *The Jicarilla Apaches*, 99; George E. Hyde, *Indians of the High Plains: From the Prehistoric Period to the Coming of Europeans* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 65.

Additionally, they often raided Spanish settlements in New Mexico and Apache rancherias in the Central Plains.⁸

The Plains Apaches acquired metal-pointed lances, knives, and hatchets through trade with the Spanish. The Apaches used these metal weapons to raid other Indian communities to the east, primarily the Wichitas and Pawnees, for slaves and horses. Spanish officials, however, prohibited the sale of firearms to Indians in New Mexico to maintain military power and imperial order in the region. Constant raids from neighboring Indians including the Faraone Apaches forced the Spanish to arm their Puebloan converts surrounding Santa Fe as a means of colonial defense. In 1680 the Puebloans used these guns against the Spanish in response to drought and continued Spanish oppression. The Puebloans attacked the scattered Spanish ranches along the Rio Grande and within weeks expelled all Spaniards from New Mexico, sacked every Spanish building, and laid waste to Spanish fields. This rebellion, known as the Pueblo Revolt or the Great Northern Revolt, spread to Coahuila in the east and Sonora in the west and left New Mexico in the control of its original Indian inhabitants. The Puebloans traded Spanish goods obtained during the revolt, especially horses and firearms, to the Apaches and other neighboring Indian groups. The Plains Apaches used weapons obtained from the Puebloans to raid their enemies' settlements, especially the Pawnee and Wichita groups in the Eastern Plains. The Spanish returned to New Mexico in 1692 and ultimately reinstated their firearms monopoly, much to the dismay of the Apaches.⁹

Though the Plains Apaches were Spanish allies, they benefitted directly from the

⁸Elizabeth A.H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontations of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (1975; Reprint, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 235; Gunnerson, *The Jicarilla Apaches*, 99, 180.

⁹George E. Hyde, *Pawnee Indians* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), 27; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America: The Brief Edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 99-105; Frank Raymond Secoy, *Changing Military Patterns on the Great Plains* (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin [1953]), 4-5.

encroachment of French into the Central Plains, as French coureurs des bois fueled the regional arms trade. Unlike the Spanish, French officials encouraged the sale and trade of firearms to their Indian allies. French traders often presented Indian leaders in the Central Plains, Texas, and Louisiana with firearms as diplomatic gifts. In an expedition along the Mississippi and in Illinois country, for example, French officer Pierre LeMoyne d'Iberville gave firearms as a gift to Indians in exchange for furs and even encouraged them to trade those firearms with other native communities, perpetuating the arms trade in the Northern Plains.¹⁰ Louis Juchereau de St. Denis, a French-Canadian soldier and explorer, reported in 1717 that many different Indian communities in regions as far south as Texas had French firearms.¹¹

The Plains Apaches used these newly acquired guns to defend themselves against the increasingly powerful Ute-Comanche alliance. This alliance served military and commercial purposes and was rooted in the Great Plains raiding economy, a system existed prior to the arrival of Europeans but was exacerbated by the presence of the Spanish in New Mexico and the French in Louisiana. Most Indian groups, including the Utes, Comanches, and Plains Apaches, adapted to European colonialism by offering their services in the slave trade in exchange for access to material goods, especially firearms and horses, and political alliances. The Spanish merchant elite primarily bought or traded for Indian slaves as domestic laborers, though at times captives were used on military expeditions as well. The negotiation and maintenance of strong political, military, and commercial alliances was imperative for success in the raiding economy and slave trade. Beginning around 1700, the Utes and Comanches made use of their mastery of the horse and nomadic lifestyle to raid native communities in northern New Mexico year-round,

¹⁰Pierre Margry, *Découvertes et Établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le Sud de L'Amérique Septentrionale (1614-1754)* (Paris: Imprimerie de D. Jouaust, 1876-1886), 4: 609.

¹¹Charmion Clair Shelby, "St. Denis's Declaration Concerning Texas in 1717," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (Jan. 1923), 178-9.

intensifying the violence of the Indian slave trade. The Plains Indians' rancherias were often isolated and small with poor defenses, making them especially vulnerable to Ute-Comanche raids. By 1710, the Utes and Comanches had gained much territory at the expense of Apache communities, which in turn allowed them to launch more attacks on the surviving Apaches and even New Mexico. This weakening forced the Plains Apaches to strengthen their alliance with the Spanish in order to maintain sovereignty in the face of Ute and Comanche raids.¹²

In turn, Plains Apaches used French firearms to increase raids on their enemies in the Eastern Plains, especially the Pawnees. These raids provided another form of defense against the Utes and Comanches, as captives could be used to replace Apaches killed or captured by their enemies. Apaches often raided Pawnee settlements in the late winter months, when their victims were confined to their villages, reducing the risk of a powerful defense while giving the Apaches the element of surprise. Typically they took livestock and horses as spoils, killed men in the village, and captured women and children whom they would sell at trade fairs in New Mexico. They traded these Indian slaves to Spaniards or other Indian groups in exchange for more horses and weapons, which in turn increased their ability to raid and hunt game to support their own populations.¹³

To defend against such violence, the Pawnees struck an alliance with the French in the first decade of the eighteenth century, giving them access to firearms that allowed for better defense against Apache raids. The Apaches had raided Pawnee villages for decades due to the Apaches' mastery of the horse, inferior Pawnee weaponry (usually wood or stone) and poor defenses. The intrusion of the French into the Plains from the east, however, gave Pawnees

¹²John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 245; Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 6-12, 38-40; Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 2-6, 37-8.

¹³Hyde, *Pawnee Indians*, 26.

access to European weapons and horses, which greatly increased their ability to defend against Apache attacks. Adapting to the constant warfare in the Plains, they made their settlements more compact and thus more easily defensible. The Pawnees not only successfully repelled the Apaches from Pawnee territory, but also used their newly acquired French firearms to conduct their own raids on Plains Apache communities. In so doing, the Pawnees weakened the Apache communities that were already crippled by Comanche and Ute raids. Furthermore, the Pawnees took Apache captives whom they traded to the French for more weapons and horses. Therefore, these raids debilitated Plains Apache communities while increasing Pawnee power and influence.¹⁴

The rise of the Ute-Comanche and Pawnee-French alliances forced the Apaches to strengthen their ties with the Spanish. By 1720, Pawnee raids had become troublesome enough to warrant an Apache appeal for Spanish aid. Just a few months before, Pawnees raided and dispersed a Paloma Apache community, using a French firearm to wound the Paloma chief in the abdomen. Hearing that the Spanish were planning an expedition against the Utes and Comanches, the chief and his fellow refugees leapt at the chance to use their alliance with the Spanish to their advantage. They traveled southward to the Arkansas River and met with New Mexico's governor, Antonio Valverde y Cosío, in an attempt to draw the Spanish into war against the Pawnees.

II. Spanish Imperial Power to 1720

Following their return to New Mexico in 1692, the Spanish shifted their military policy from trying to subdue their Puebloan neighbors to creating security against seminomadic raiding

¹⁴Hyde, *Pawnee Indians*, 33-4; Alfred Barnaby Thomas, *After Coronado: Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), 12.

groups through alliances, limited military campaigns, and colonization via the establishment of presidios. New Mexico was relatively weak due to a small population and isolation from the rest of New Spain, which necessitated alliances with neighboring Indian communities. Threatened by the Utes, Comanches, and Faraone Apaches and concerned by rumors of French activity to the northeast, the Spanish merchant elite in New Mexico realized the benefits of a strong alliance with the Plains Apaches by 1720.

Though on maps New Mexico sprawled northward to the source of the Rio Grande, in reality the territory inhabited by Spaniards was small and isolated in the early eighteenth century. The colony was sparsely populated by mostly soldiers and the merchant elite mainly settled in and near Santa Fe, which was surrounded by Puebloan communities who only decades prior had expelled the Spanish from the region.¹⁵ Its few colonists, mostly desperate and impoverished people or conscripted criminals from colonies to the south, relied on shipments of food and other goods that came only once every three or four years. According to one historian, the lack of profitable agricultural production and the high cost of imported goods resulted in the “lowest standard of living of any colonists in North America.”¹⁶ Thus New Mexican officials necessarily turned their focus toward internal colonial improvement and good relations with their Indian neighbors, leaving little power or resources to expand their territory through conquest in any direction. As in other provinces in northern New Spain, New Mexicans established presidios as part of a defensive military strategy in a region confined by the Indian raiding economy to the

¹⁵Though Albuquerque was founded in 1706, New Mexican military and government administration was centered around Santa Fe in the early eighteenth century. For more on the changing demographics and economics of New Mexico in the eighteenth century, see Ross Frank, *From Settler to Citizen: New Mexican Economic Development and the Creation of Vecino Society 1750-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁶Taylor, *American Colonies*, 82.

north.¹⁷

New Mexico's isolation from the rest of New Spain made it vulnerable to attack from nearly every direction. A handful of hamlets clustered around the small presidio of Santa Fe in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, while more than two hundred miles of desert and mesa lay between these settlements and El Paso, the only other presidio in the colony. A trip to Mexico City, over one thousand miles away, required months of travel through a region fittingly known as the *jornada del muerto*, the "journey of the dead." This territory was home to many Indian groups, some interested in alliance with the Spanish and the Puebloan Indians and some not.¹⁸

Furthermore, a shortage of soldiers made defense of New Mexico nearly impossible. Presidial leaders constantly appealed for more troops from Mexico City, usually without success. With few soldiers, New Mexico was unable to wage war on enemies such as the Comanches or Faraone Apaches without the assistance of Puebloan or Plains Apache auxiliaries.¹⁹ Even the soldiers New Mexico did have were often unruly and violent. The presidial military was mostly made up of colonists from the lower classes and convicted criminals who hoped to use the military as a vehicle for social advancement. Though Spanish civilians did repopulate New Mexico along the Rio Grande after 1692, there remained an imbalanced number of soldiers in Santa Fe and El Paso. Captain of Santa Fe Juan Hurtado noted that "this miserable kingdom" at

¹⁷Richard W. Slatta, "Spanish Colonial Military Strategy and Ideology," in Donna J. Guy and Thomas E. Sheridan, eds., *Contested Ground: Comparative Frontiers on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 83-96; Kristine L. Jones, "Comparative Raiding Economies: North and South," in Guy and Sheridan, *Contested Ground*, 97-8, 114.

¹⁸Diana Hadley, Thomas H. Naylor, and Mardith K. Schuetz-Miller, eds., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain: A Documentary History, Volume Two, Part Two: The Central Corridor and the Texas Corridor, 1700-1765* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 228.

¹⁹Fray Juan Agustín de Morfi, *Memorias para la Historia de Texas*, book 3, number 55, in Pichardo's *Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas: An Argumentative Historical Treatise with Reference to the Verification of the True Limits of the Provinces of Louisiana and Texas; Written by Father José Antonio Pichardo, of the Congregation of the Oratory of San Felipe Neri, to Disprove the Claim of the United States that Texas was Included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803*, trans. and ed. Charles Wilson Hackett (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1931), 1:176.

“the most remote edge of the Christian realm in this New World” was “devoid of all human resources” and complained that “the soldier supplies the settler” with “his horse, clothing, and maintenance” to the point of nearly being “rendered incapable of royal service.”²⁰

Like the Plains Apaches, Spanish New Mexicans faced attacks from the Utes, Comanches, and Faraone Apaches after 1700. The rising Comanche-Ute power in the region blocked trade and expansion to the north, as both groups regularly raided Apache and Puebloan communities on the Rio Grande del Norte and the Rio San Juan. Though for now these communities provided an effective buffer between Spanish settlements and the Ute-Comanche raiding parties, New Mexican officials understood the looming threat of violence. Faraone Apaches also posed a threat to the Spanish, as they attacked pueblos in New Mexico and Texas. According to Captain Juan Hurtado, the Faraones typically “attack[ed] simultaneously on two fronts in order to divide [Spanish] forces.”²¹ In September 1707, Hurtado led an expedition of thirty-six men against a group of 150 Faraones who had ambushed the Pecos pueblo, killing three and injuring two Indians. This expedition ultimately failed, as the harsh environment of northern New Mexico forced Hurtado and his men to retreat.²²

In October 1707, Governor Jose Salazar called a junta de guerra to “provide a prompt solution” to Santa Fe being “invaded by the enemy Apache nations, who have continually stolen

²⁰Hurtado to Salazar, et al., 1707-10-03, in Hadley, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 244; This social stagnation seems to have led to violence being displaced from the military and social sphere. See “Sentencing of Presidial Criminals, 1710,” in Hadley, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 256-265.

²¹Hurtado to Salazar, et al., 1707-10-03, in Hadley, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 243.

²²Hurtado to Salazar, et al., 1707-10-03, in Hadely, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 243-5.

horses and livestock there.”²³ Hurtado reported on the frequent Faraone raids that often resulted in “many deaths among the Spaniards and Christian Indians” as well as loss of livestock and food supply in an attempt to receive additional troops from Mexico City. Captain Antonio Valverde y Cosio likewise pushed for more soldiers, arguing that a weak military and failed expeditions like Hurtado’s not only “serve[d] to increase [Faraone] crimes of robbery and murder” but created the possibility that “the domesticated [Puebloan] Indians may become uneasy and seek alliances with the [Faraone] Apaches.”²⁴ These appeals for military assistance point to colonial officials’ desperation and sense of vulnerability amid so many Indian communities. They believed that New Mexico’s weak military undermined Spanish power in the eyes of both their enemies and their allies.

Memories of the Pueblo Revolt colored New Mexicans’ daily interactions with their neighbors and inspired these continual cries for help from the distant imperial center of New Spain. But help rarely came. Spanish imperial officials viewed New Mexico as an unprofitable frontier colony with little purpose beyond a buffer state. Indian refusal to be subjugated into the Spanish empire, as seen through raids and other expressions of violence, made northward expansion seem unlikely to these officials. Lack of mineral deposits made it unnecessary. Though the crown spent more money on frontier defense in the years following the Pueblo Revolt, their attention had turned to Europe in the early eighteenth century due to the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713). This war was fought primarily in Europe and on the east coast of America, leaving New Mexicans to defend themselves with little imperial aid for almost a decade. One historian attributed this lack of concern for New Mexico to royal

²³Salazar to Hurtado, et. al., 1707-10-03, in Hadley, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 241-2. Original found in *Spanish Archives of New Mexico*, Reel 4, Frames 48-61.

²⁴Valverde to Salazar, in Hadley, et al., *The Presidio and Militia on the Northern Frontier of New Spain*, 245.

officials' tendency to "respon[d] to more proximate problems and to noisier, better situated lobbies."²⁵ Though Spanish officials were primarily focused on European affairs even after the War of the Spanish Succession, royal officials quickly grew concerned about New Mexico's vulnerability due to French expansion in the gulf and the perceived threat of Louisiana. To block French intrusion into New Spain, royal officials implemented administrative reforms focusing on the increased defense of the borderlands of New Mexico and Texas.²⁶

Colonial leaders successfully attracted the attention of imperial officials in the 1710s due to exaggerated rumors of French westward expansion. Locally, these rumors added to existing fears of Indian violence. Imperially, they exacerbated geopolitical anxieties over French colonial expansion in North America. The Spanish had been wary ever since the French established Louisiana in 1682 right between Spanish Florida and the rest of New Spain. In the War of the Quadruple Alliance (1718-1720), Spain fought against France, Britain, Austria, and the Dutch Republic. Though it was primarily fought on European battlefields, the war's imperial rivalries spilled over to North America. Philip V ordered colonial leaders to prohibit French traders in Spanish colonies. Similarly, colonial soldiers were to maintain "total vigilance that the French do not acquire horses" from the Indians in Texas and the Great Plains.²⁷

The Spanish fear of the French was only intensified in 1719 when Valverde, now Governor of Santa Fe, led an expedition of Spaniards and Jicarilla Apaches against the Utes as retribution for the "deaths and robberies" inflicted upon the Spanish and their Apache allies. Though the expedition was unsuccessful in finding any Utes, due largely to a misunderstanding

²⁵Slatta, "Spanish Colonial Military Strategy and Ideology," 85.

²⁶Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 118-23.

²⁷Philip V to Valero, 1717-11-10, AGN, *Historia*, Legajo 298, Tomo 38, CSWR Vol. 42A, UNM, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 120; Philip V to Valero, 1718-06-11, in CSWR Vol. 42A, 161; John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown: The Pecos Indians and New Mexico, 1540-1840* (Tucson: Southwest Parks and Monuments Association, 1987), 386-91.

of the geographical location of the Ute homeland, the soldiers reached a community of Paloma Apaches in El Cuartelejo. One of the chiefs was suffering from a recent gunshot wound in the abdomen. He claimed that “in his land...on the most remote borderlands of the Apaches,” he and his people were ambushed by “the French, united with the Pawnees” while planting corn. The Pawnees, enemies of the Plains Apaches and now allies of the French, had taken Paloma lands, pushing Paloma refugees southward into the path of Valverde.²⁸

The Paloma chief spoke to Valverde of French settlement in the Central Plains, strengthening the bond between the Spanish and Apaches around mutual distrust of and enmity toward the Pawnee-French alliance. The chief described “two large pueblos” inhabited by Frenchmen, “each of which is as large as that of Taos.”²⁹ Such settlements did not exist at the time. The French or Pawnees may have intentionally spread this false information in an attempt to intimidate the Spanish and Plains Apaches. On the other hand, the Paloma leader may have exaggerated the report in order to gain Valverde’s assistance. Regardless, the news captured the attention of Valverde and his superiors. In a later report to Viceroy Marqués de Valero, Valverde described the French settlement as being only “two hundred leagues or less” from Santa Fe, or about 500 miles.³⁰ The Paloma chief claimed to have told the French soldiers that “they would advise their friends, the Spaniards, in order that they might defend them,” to which the Frenchmen “responded that they were greatly pleased to have them notify them and bring them

²⁸“Diary of the Campaign of Governor Antonio de Valverde against the Ute and Comanche Indians, 1719,” in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 132. Original in: Antonio Valverde y Cosío and A.L. Pinart, *Diario y Derotero que Cujio el Señor General Don Antonio Balverde Cosío, Governor General de este Reyno y Governor Provincias de la Nueva Mexico en la Campaña que Ejecuto contra las Naciones Yutas y Cumanches*. 1719.

²⁹“Diary of Valverde,” in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 132.

³⁰Valverde to Valero, 1719-11-30, in *Autos sobre lo consultado por los Gobernadores del Parral y Nueva Mexico en razon de los designos de los Franceses de internarse en aquellos Países*, AGN, *Historia*, Documento XX, 1719-1727 (hereafter cited as Documento XX), Tomo 394, CSWR Vol. 45, UNM, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 161-2.

there, for they are mujeres criconas.”³¹ The Palomas described three more French settlements on the other side of the Arkansas River, from which French traders brought “arms and the rest of the things they bring” to Indian communities for trade – all information the Palomas had learned from some escaped female captives of the French. Valverde’s response reflected the tightened Spanish-Apache alliance, as he “consoled and pleased” the Apaches by offering them aid against the French and their Indian allies, whom he promised to expel from the region, “as the lands belong only to the majesty of our king and lord, Don Philip V.” Honoring his promise, Valverde returned to Santa Fe with “great anxiety” and began arrangements for a reconnaissance expedition to the supposed French settlements in the Plains.³²

The news of these French settlements, combined with similar rumors elsewhere in New Spain, resulted in imperial support for Valverde’s planned expedition to the northeast. Just two months after Valverde’s expedition, Nueva Vizcaya Governor Juan de la Cruz sent an alarming report to Viceroy Valero concerning the French presence near New Mexico. Cruz joined Valverde in the plea for more soldiers, claiming that the existing soldiers in New Mexico were “only sufficiently trained for the Indians and not for enemies who may not be of this kind, such as may be considered the English, French, or any other foreigners.” These additional soldiers would be able to defend against the supposed “six thousand French” just “seventy leagues from the villa of Santa Fé.” When compared to Valverde’s earlier report of two French settlements 200 leagues away, it is obvious that colonial officials exaggerated these already overstated numbers to gain the support and assistance of their superiors. Like Valverde, Cruz received most

³¹“Diary of Valverde,” in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 132; Neither David J. Weber nor Alfred B. Thomas were able to translate “*mujeres criconas*,” though Juliana Barr has translated it “female genitalia.” However, she has misinterpreted the phrase in this context as a genuine Apache insult “fired” at the Spanish rather than the report of a supposed French insult. See Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman*, 171; Thomas, *After Coronado*, 132 (ed. note); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 168f.n.97.

³²“Diary of Valverde,” in *After Coronado*, 132-3.

of this information from Plains Apaches. The Apaches embellished this report much like the one given to Valverde, most likely to strengthen the Apaches' alliance with the Spanish and draw the Spanish into war against the Apaches' enemies in the Plains. As proof, the defeated Apaches presented Cruz with "four hand axes and two guns which they took away from the French." He took this as evidence of a physical French military presence, interpreting the expansion of the Plains arms trade as an overt threat to the Spanish Empire and intensifying the need for some kind of countermeasure.³³

In supporting the need for military action as planned by Valverde and Cruz, the Spanish imperial administration entered into a complex regional power struggle of rival groups and negotiated alliances in hopes of imposing imperial dominance over the Central Plains. Valverde arranged for his Lieutenant General, Don Pedro de Villasur, to lead the military expedition to the northeast. Though Valverde and Villasur saw the French as the main target of this expedition, their support of the Apaches ensured a strengthening of the Spanish-Apache alliance through joint military action.

III. The Villasur Expedition and Pawnee Territoriality

On June 16, 1720, Don Pedro de Villasur, Valverde's Lieutenant General, departed Santa Fe on an expedition northeast to "reconnoiter the settlements which it is said the French nation has."³⁴ With Villasur he sent forty-two Spanish soldiers, which was over a third of New Mexico's entire military at the time, eleven Puebloan auxiliaries, a Hopi guide named Jose

³³Cruz to Valero, 1719-12-11, in Documento XX, 167-9.

³⁴Valverde to Valero, 1720-05-27, in Documento XX, 176; Martinez to Valero, 1720, in Documento XX, 205.

Naranjo, and a Pawnee slave named François Sistaca to serve as the expedition's interpreter.³⁵

The party marched north to Taos and then northeast along the same path taken by Valverde the previous year through Apache territory in El Cuartelejo and La Jicarilla. These allies supported Villasur and his men as they made their way northeast, and nearly fifty Plains Apaches joined the expedition. Though the Spanish were marching northeast against their French rivals, these Apache allies probably participated in hopes of getting revenge on the Pawnees. Thus, the Villasur expedition was the culmination of the Spanish-Apache alliance that allowed each group to use the other as military support against their mutual rivals. For a month, the expedition travelled over three hundred miles across the Plains without encountering any Frenchmen. When they reached the South Platte River on August 5, Villasur called a council of war to assess the situation.³⁶

The council hoped to seek the aid of the Pawnees in order to determine the location of any French settlements nearby. On August 7, a group of Spanish scouts traveled about twenty miles upstream and found "a very large village of Indians of the Pawnee nation" in which a group of Pawnees were holding a war dance.³⁷ Villasur and the rest of the group moved their camp from the South Platte to the south bank of the North Platte River, directly opposite the Pawnee village. A group of twenty-five Pawnee men came to the north bank of the river and, according to the Pawnee slave François Sistaca, proclaimed peaceful intentions and requested that Villasur send Sistaca across the river to their village. The Pawnee were clad in "the same

³⁵Valverde to Valero, 1720-06-15, in Documento XX, 182-4.

³⁶*Traduction d'une feuille d'un journal de route espagnol apporté par les Ouatotatas à Boisbriand*, in "Guide to the Segesser Hide Paintings Documentation Collection, 1959-1989," Folder 3, Box 4, Museum of New Mexico, Fray Angélico Chávez History Library, Box 4. This is a French translation of a Spanish soldier's journal from the Villasur expedition, brought to them by the Otoes. It is a photocopy of the original held in France's Archives Nationales, Colonies, C13C, 4:232-7.

³⁷Martinez to Valero, 1720, in Documento XX, 205.

garb” as the French, which Villasur likely viewed as confirmation of French intrusion into the Central Plains.³⁸ Hoping to maintain peace and diplomacy, Villasur sent Sistaca with “some knives and some bundles of tobacco to distribute among the chiefs to please them.”³⁹

Once Sistaca reached the village, the Pawnees refused to send him back to Villasur. Jean de l’Archeveque, a French-born citizen of New Mexico, sent a letter in French across to the Pawnees requesting the return of Sistaca and assistance finding the rumored French settlements. He received no reply. Adding to the suspicion of Villasur’s officers, some Pawnees “surprised some...Indian allies who had crossed to bathe and carried off one of them.”⁴⁰ But Villasur, betraying his minimal experience on military campaigns, ignored this suspicious activity and proudly announced that “he had never known any fear” and would continue his mission.⁴¹

A group of Pawnee and Otoe men, perhaps joined by some French allies, cut the mission short on August 14 by ambushing Villasur’s party. The previous evening, some Puebloan auxiliaries warned Villasur that they had heard “the noise of people who were crossing the river.”⁴² Villasur ordered that the horse herd be guarded extra carefully but took no other precautions against a possible Pawnee attack. At daybreak, as the Spanish, Puebloans, and Plains Apaches were preparing their supplies and gathering their horses, the Pawnee-Otoe war party attacked, taking the Villasur party by surprise. One Spanish witness remarked that “the number quickly grew so large that they could not resist” and were forced to escape, leaving their wounded comrades and much of their supplies behind. At least forty-six members of the

³⁸Martinez to Valero, 1720, in Documento XX, 205.

³⁹Statement of Aguilar against Valverde, 1726-07-01, in Documento XXV, 100.

⁴⁰Statement of Aguilar against Valverde, 1726-07-01, in Documento XXV, 99-101; Statement of Tamariz against Valverde, in Documento XX, 105-6.

⁴¹Martinez to Valero, 1720, in Documento XX, 205.

⁴²Statement of Aguilar against Valverde, 1726-07-01, in Documento XX, 101.

expedition, including Villasur himself, died in the attack. Twelve Spaniards were able to retreat to El Cuartelejo, where Apaches treated their wounds and provided them with enough supplies to reach Santa Fe on September 6.⁴³

Because imperial rivalry clouded the vision of the Spanish, Valverde and Villasur failed to recognize that they were leading a military operation into the Pawnee homeland, a territory to which the Pawnee had laid claim for centuries and had in recent memory fought hard to maintain against Apache and Comanche raids. According to Pawnee religion, their ancestors emerged from their original underground “Old-Home-in-the-Darkness” to the Central Plains, including the region into which the Spanish intruded in 1720. Here the Pawnees lived in small, scattered communities, each of which typically had one or two earth lodges to house a small community.⁴⁴ Apache raids forced the Skidi Pawnees to move north of the Platte, which effectively established the border between El Cuartelejo and the Pawnee homeland that would continue to exist until the eighteenth century. In fact, even Europeans recognized the Platte as the Apache-Pawnee border, as Valverde described it as the “wide river that divides the Cuartelejo Apaches from another group, the Pawnee, who are [allied] with the French.”⁴⁵

Similar to other Eastern Plains groups victimized by the slave and horse trades, small Pawnee communities coalesced into consolidated settlements for easier defense in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.⁴⁶ In these larger settlements, the Pawnees constructed up to twenty rectangular earth lodges, which housed extended families. They hunted prairie game including buffalo but also grew corn, squash, and beans near their town and fished in the

⁴³Statement of Aguilar, in Documento XXV, 101-104; Statement of Tamariz, in Documento XX, 107-8; Valverde to Valero, 1720-10-08, in Documento XX, 184-5.

⁴⁴Hyde, *Pawnee Indians*, vi-vii, 12, 17; Hyde, *Indians of the High Plains*, 23.

⁴⁵Valverde to Valero, 1720-10-08, in Documento XX, 185.

⁴⁶Hyde, *Indians of the High Plains*, 23.

region's rivers. Increased population due to coalescence made these new permanent settlements more secure than the smaller villages raided by the Apaches in previous years. The Pawnees traded with the French to the east, giving them access to weapons on par with those of their enemies. They used these firearms not only to defend their villages against Apache raiding parties but also to return Apache raids in kind. By 1719, the Pawnee were raiding Plains Apache communities regularly, which not only weakened their enemies but also strengthened the Pawnee as they sold Apache slaves to the French in exchange for more tools and weapons.⁴⁷

In attacking the Villasur party, the Pawnees were not acting as pawns in a European imperial rivalry, as Spanish officials believed. They were allies with the French, and there may have indeed been a few French soldiers involved in the battle. Yet, when Pawnees contemplated regional power, their objective was to defeat the Plains Apaches who had for so long pushed against Pawnee territory rather than the Spanish, with whom they had little direct contact prior to 1720. Indeed, French officials made no attempts to claim participation in the attack and instead gave full credit to the Pawnees.

In defeating the Villasur expedition, the Pawnees were asserting control over their homeland. In repelling one of their main rivals, the Plains Apaches, they ensured their own commercial power in the slave trade and as middlemen between the French and Indian nations to the west. In defeating the Spanish, they most likely strengthened their alliance with the French, who hoped to spread their commercial network to the west in spite of Spanish objections. The Pawnee victory in 1720 fundamentally altered not only the power dynamics of the Central Plains but the nature of the Spanish-Apache alliance.

⁴⁷Hyde, *Pawnee Indians*, 23-4, 27; Gene Weltfish, *The Lost Universe: Pawnee Life and Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), 119-122; "Valverde to Valero, 1719-11-30," in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 144.

IV. The Disintegration of Plains Apache Power

If the Plains Apaches were weak before the Villasur expedition, its aftermath crippled their power in the Central Plains. The Pawnee victory indirectly resulted in increased Comanche and Ute dominance in the slave trade, which pushed the Apaches out of the trade almost entirely. The Pawnee-French alliance further undermined Apache military strength through Pawnee raids on Apache communities and the Pawnees' role as arms brokers between the French and other Indian groups to the west. These circumstances transformed the Apache-Spanish alliance. Although the Plains Apaches recognized that the Spanish were no longer able to provide military support against their enemies in the Plains, the Apaches' own weakness led them to accept Spanish designs of imperial control through colonization and conversion. Thus, in the 1720s, the Plains Apaches abandoned the Central Plains in favor of protection and defense in New Mexico.

The Pawnee defeat of the Villasur expedition directly diminished Apache power in the Central Plains. While the immediate effect was the loss of Apache men on the mission, the Spanish-Apache-Puebloan coalition's failure to check the growing power and expansion of the French and Pawnees threatened Apache power and territory. The expedition's defeat crippled New Mexico, the Plains Apaches' primary ally in the region, as the following section will explain. Thus the Jicarillas, Cuartelejos, and Palomas were left in their weakened condition without the network of Spanish and Puebloan military support that had benefitted them in previous years. Furthermore, the Utes and Comanches increased their control of the region, undercutting the Apaches' ability to thrive in the Southwest slave trade.

The Comanches and Utes raided Apache settlements with greater frequency in the 1720s, and the Spanish were rarely able to provide military assistance. The Comanches and Utes possessed thousands of horses by 1720, which they used to raid their enemies year-round and

expand their territory southward to the Arkansas and Canadian rivers, displacing the Plains Apaches who had lived and traded there for centuries. In the early 1720s, the Comanches and Utes controlled territory as far south as the Red River at the expense of other Apache communities in Texas, such as the Lipans, who were forced to migrate south to seek the protection of the Spanish in San Antonio.⁴⁸ Simultaneously, the Comanches increased their raids on the Plains Apaches, “attack[ing]...with a large number in their rancherías in such a manner that [the Apaches] could not make use of weapons for defense.” The Comanches killed many Apache men and captured women and children to sell as slaves, leading the Plains Apaches to turn to their old friends for protection.⁴⁹

The Apaches in northeastern New Mexico appealed for the creation of a new presidio in their territory as a means of protection from the rising powers in the Plains. New Mexican officials had discussed construction of such a presidio as early as January 1720, but bureaucratic obstruction and military weakness following Villasur’s defeat prevented the plans from coming to fruition. On November 8, 1723, a group of Plains Apaches visited Santa Fe seeking protection via the establishment of a presidio in La Jicarilla.⁵⁰ The Apaches framed this request for a presidio in terms especially favorable to New Mexican officials in hopes of increasing the likelihood of their success. They invoked the power of Catholicism, stating that the “ruin they have suffered” at the hands of the Comanches and Utes was largely due to the Apaches’ refusal to “com[e] into the fold of [the] Catholic and true religion” and asked for Spanish priests to “instruct them in the mysteries” of Catholicism. They also solicited the power of the Spanish

⁴⁸Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 38-40; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men’s Worlds*, 256-7.

⁴⁹Council of War, 1723-11-09, in Documento XX, 217-9.

⁵⁰The author mentions the “Apaches of La Jicarilla and the rest of the heathens of those nations,” implying members of other Apache communities allied with the Spanish at the same time, likely the Cuartelejo and perhaps even the Paloma. Both of these bands were in similarly dire straits as the Jicarillas.

royal government, “offering vassalage to his majesty” and promising to “submit themselves to everything with punctual obedience commanded them.”⁵¹ The Apaches requested the installation of an alcalde mayor in La Jicarilla to govern the new presidio as well as “the security of the arms of his majesty” to protect it.⁵²

These Apaches were performing fealty for their own practical motivations: increased protection from Ute and Comanche raids and access to Spanish firearms. Governor Juan Domingo Bustamante agreed to the Apaches’ request, hoping that a presidio in La Jicarilla would provide “a bulwark for this kingdom, for its greater security from French arms and settlements” and an example for Apache communities to convert and seek the protection of the Spanish. In fact, he abandoned a proposed campaign against Faraone Apaches in order to visit La Jicarilla and assess the logistics of constructing and maintaining a presidio.⁵³

In 1724, imperial officials sent Pedro de Rivera, a brigadier general, to northern New Spain to investigate and reform presidios in New Mexico and other northern provinces. Rivera hoped to end corruption in Santa Fe especially, which was plagued with nepotism and inflated prices of goods sold to soldiers. He cut twenty presidial positions that he deemed “more harm than good to the kingdom” in order to allocate more money to “more advantageous purposes.” Exposing the corruption of local officials, Rivera reported that the leaders of New Mexico objected to the elimination of these positions due to “personal motives and imaginary fears rather than from a desire to serve the king” because of their focus on trade rather than “whether the elimination would weaken the kingdom’s defense.” Rivera’s inspection was primarily concerned with frontier defense rather than corruption and he pushed for increased efficiency of frontier

⁵¹Order for Council of War, 1723, in Documento XX, 215.

⁵²Decree for Council of War, 1723-11-08, in Documento XX, 215-6.

⁵³Council of War, 1723-11-09, in Documento XX, 217-9.

defense via a line of centralized presidios with trained soldiers across northern New Spain.⁵⁴

As part of his push for consolidated frontier defense, Rivera dismissed Bustamante's plans for a presidio in La Jicarilla, arguing that the endeavor was wasteful and unnecessary. He insisted that the Apaches' fealty was false and that the establishment of a new presidio to the northeast would divert soldiers from Santa Fe, making New Mexico even more vulnerable to Comanche raids. Rivera argued that the Plains Apaches were not "asking primarily to be converted to our holy faith" but "to have satisfaction for the hostilities which they suffer [from] the Comanches." He pointed to the lack of baptisms in La Jicarilla and concluded that "it is so obvious that they have no other aim than the purpose of their safety – to be secure from the enemies who attack them." Additionally, La Jicarilla would be difficult to defend, as the region was "commonly harried by the nation of the Comanches," who Rivera recognized were "formidable in their defense." As a solution, he proposed that the Apaches settle near the Taos pueblo, where there were "valleys as rich and abounding with water as there are in that La Jicarilla."⁵⁵ Many Jicarilla Apaches obliged and settled in Taos and Pecos by 1726, forfeiting La Jicarilla to the Comanches.⁵⁶

It is likely that many of relocated Apaches entered Spanish settlements as *genizaros*, a complex and nebulous social category of Indian captives who became partly assimilated into Spanish society. Spanish families often responded to the harsh realities of disease and warfare by taking *genizaros* into their households as cheap laborers or surrogate kin. Some *genizaros* served in militias and defended New Mexico from Comanche and Faraone Apache raids. By 1740 the

⁵⁴Rivera to Casafuerte, "Tercer Estado" in Thomas H. Naylor and Charles W. Polzer, eds., *Pedro de Rivera and the Military Regulations for Northern New Spain, 1724-1729* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 150-1.

⁵⁵Rivera to Casafuerte, 1727-09-26, in Documento XX, 233.

⁵⁶John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 254; John L. Kessell, *Kiva, Cross, and Crown*, 371-2.

number of *genizaros* in New Mexico had grown so rapidly that Spanish officials granted them permission to create a community of their own near Taos, from which they traded with the Spanish and the neighboring Indian groups. By 1750 *genizaros* comprised over 10% of the Hispanic population in New Mexico and many further increased their ties to Spaniards through property ownership and marriage. In spite of this advancement, their Indian origins prevented them from full participation in Spanish society and the *genizaros* remained a mestizo caste.⁵⁷

The Apaches' request for settlement in a Spanish presidio and their eventual migration to Spanish territory display the changed nature of the Spanish-Apache alliance after 1720. Before the Villasur expedition, the Plains Apaches were able to draw upon the alliance to convince the Spanish to join them against their Pawnee enemies. In 1723, however, the Apaches' two foundations of power – military alliance with the Spanish and participation in the slave trade – collapsed, forcing the Plains Apaches to appeal to New Mexican leaders not for a joint military campaign but for protection and defense. Some Plains Apache bands, specifically the Palomas and Cuartelejos, emigrated southward beyond the reach of the Comanches to Pecos and Llano Estacado.⁵⁸ The Plains Apaches turned inward in the 1720s, focusing on communal preservation over expansion of power or territory.

V. French and Spanish Imperial Ambitions after 1720

Despite finding no evidence of the rumored thousands of French troops, the Spanish continued to be primarily concerned with French westward expansion. Immediately following

⁵⁷Cynthia Radding, "The Many Faces of Colonialism in Two Iberoamerican Borderlands: Northern New Spain and the Eastern Lowlands of Charcas," in Andrew B. Fisher and Matthew D. O'Hara, eds., *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 108; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 226; Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire*, 38-9, 46; Fray Angelico Chavez, "Genízaros," in *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz, vol. 9 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 198-200; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 404-5.

⁵⁸Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 32, 35-6.

news of Villasur's defeat, Spanish officials around the globe expressed great anxiety over the rumored French invasion of New Mexico. Meanwhile, the French were indeed extending their influence across the Central Plains, though their motivations were commercial and not military. Indeed, the French desired trade with, not conquest of, New Mexico. Regardless, the Spanish viewed these French efforts as hostile movements and therefore eagerly accepted a defensive alliance with the Plains Apache. The Spanish hoped this continued alliance would supplement the New Mexican militia with Apache men while providing a larger buffer zone between spheres of Spanish and French influence.

News of the supposed French military presence in the Great Plains spread quickly. In a report to Mexico City less than two months after the Villasur expedition, Governor Valverde supplied the Marques de Valero with a list of Spanish, Puebloan, and Apache casualties and a request for replacements "of an equal number" and "with adequate military experience" for the defense of Santa Fe. He anxiously described the continued "hostilities and raids" committed by Utes, Comanches, and Faraones surrounding Santa Fe while invoking the imperial administration's concern for the looming French presence to the northeast. Valverde believed that some "heretical Huguenots" aided the Pawnees and Otoes in their attack, though the survivors themselves were unsure.⁵⁹ This appeal to the Franco-Spanish rivalry was apparently successful. Less than a month later, officials from Mexico City ordered for troops to be sent to New Mexico immediately. In the same letter, they warned Texas of a possible French invasion from their posts in the Central Plains, advising the presidial military to prepare for an "offensive and defensive war" even though Spain and France had signed the Treaty of the Hague in

⁵⁹Valverde to Valero, 1720-10-08, in Documento XX, 184-5.

February 1720.⁶⁰

The imperial administration rarely supported New Mexican attempts to prepare for such a war, likely in fear of breaking the fragile peace in Europe. Bustamante's support for a presidio in La Jicarilla was one attempt to bolster New Mexico's defenses against a possible French invasion, but Rivera rejected the proposal in 1726. This rejection was not merely recognition of the Apaches' practical motives, as Rivera claimed. It was also an implied admission of Spanish weakness. In denouncing the establishment of a presidio in La Jicarilla, Rivera exposed Spain's inability or lack of desire to protect its old allies. Because the Comanches, and not the French, were the main threat in La Jicarilla, Spanish officials agreed with Rivera and withdrew from the nascent presidio there. The Spanish abandonment of La Jicarilla allowed the Comanches to take over, and they held the region for over fifty years, much to the chagrin of later governors of New Mexico.⁶¹

Other Plains Apaches seem to have realized the weakness of New Mexico. In September 1726, three months after Rivera's report on La Jicarilla, a coalition of Paloma, Cuartelejo, and Sierra Blanca Apaches traveled to El Cuartelejo and La Jicarilla to find the Comanches and "see if they could force them out of these regions." They were unsuccessful, but did hear new reports of a French trader in El Cuartelejo.⁶² One can interpret this Apache expedition in two ways. It is obviously an example of Apaches pursuing the Comanches on their own, perhaps pointing to Apaches' recognition that the Spanish were unable to repel the Comanches from the region. On the other hand, it could have been a plea for assistance couched in the familiar terms of a French presence to the northeast, much like the Paloma report to Valverde in 1719. In previous years,

⁶⁰Sainz to Valero, 1720-11-04, in Documento XX, 189; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 249-50.

⁶¹Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land*, 44; John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*, 254.

⁶²Bustamante to Casafuerte 1727-04-30, in Documento XXV, 158-9.

Apache reports of French traders had resulted in a military alliance with the Spanish against their common enemies. In 1726, however, the Spanish took no military action against the Comanches on behalf of their Apache allies. Thus the Spanish report on this expedition and its narrow focus on the French threat points to a continued Spanish focus on imperial geopolitics rather than actual threats on the ground. Furthermore, New Mexican officials could have used the language of European imperialism in hopes of gaining royal support for increased colonial defense against their actual enemies, the Comanches. Generally speaking, Indian politics and rivalries made their way into New Mexican records when they fit within the authors' perceived narrative of territorial conflict – that is, the Spanish design of imperial control to thwart French expansion. It is unclear whether Apaches or local Spanish administrators framed this specific instance around a potential French threat, but regardless it displays that local inhabitants recognized the intellectual distance between the Spanish periphery and core and often played upon it to their own advantage.

Though Valverde and other Spanish officials had long imagined a looming French military threat to the northeast, in reality there was little to fear. As French territory spread north and west from Louisiana, settlements were under-populated and isolated. In a 1719 letter to the Navy Council, Louisiana Governor Jean Baptiste Le Moyne de Bienville appealed to the king for increased soldiers, settlers, and provisions much in the same way Valverde appealed to Mexico City. Bienville lamented a general lack of military professionalism in Louisiana, arguing that it was “very disagreeable” to have as the main line of defense “only a band of deserters, smugglers and scoundrels who are always ready not only to abandon you but also to turn against you.”⁶³ Forced settlers would not do for the defense of a colony in such an open country, and Bienville feared defection to either the Spanish to the west or English to the east. Thus, like Valverde, he

⁶³Bienville to the Council, 1719-10-20, in Dunbar Rowland and Albert Godfrey Sanders, eds. and trans., *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion, 1704-1743*, 4 vols. (Jackson, MS: Press of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1932), 3: 271.

requested “only men of good will” and a more constant supply of provisions, or else they would become “very wretched.”⁶⁴ To reinforce his request for more men, Bienville appealed to his position as a founder of the colony, as he “established it from its beginning and...supported it...against the efforts of the English” while “managing” Indian allies in whom he believed “the security of this colony lies.”⁶⁵ Yet even this line of Indian defense was impossible in 1719, because of a lack of provisions for trade and diplomacy.⁶⁶

Though New Mexican officials were unable to procure imperial support for a counter-move against the imagined French invasion, Pierre Dugué de Boisbriand, commander of the Illinois country, successfully used the Villasur expedition to gain French imperial support for further exploratory and commercial efforts in the Plains. Whereas Spanish reports of French hostilities were based on rumor among Apache communities and the projected fears of Valverde, the French had in the Villasur expedition a concrete example of Spanish military movement in territory they perceived to be part of Louisiana (see figure 4). Writing from Biloxi, Governor Bienville cunningly combined a lengthy description of Louisiana’s poor condition with one of the first accounts of the Villasur expedition sent to the French imperial government.⁶⁷ Thus, regardless of France’s possible participation in defeating the Villasur expedition, its direct effect on French policy was a positive one, allowing an opportunity to strengthen a weakened colony.

Governor Bienville requested more people with whom to fill the fledgling French colony that was “so far from the flourishing state in which it ought to be.”⁶⁸ He attributed the stagnation

⁶⁴Bienville to the Council, 1719-10-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 271.

⁶⁵Bienville to the Council, 1719-10-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 275.

⁶⁶Bienville to the Council, 1719-10-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 271.

⁶⁷Bienville to the Navy Council, 1721-07-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 304-6.

⁶⁸Bienville to the Navy Council, 1721-07-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 304.

of Louisiana to the imperial government, specifically the Company of the Indies, which in his mind gave power to people disconnected from the reality of colonial needs rather than allowing Bienville to “mak[e] use of the information that I have been acquiring in the twenty-three years that I have been serving in this colony in the exploration of which I assisted.”⁶⁹ Bienville requested an increase in colonial population, regimented military defense, and resources to cultivate alliances with neighboring Indian groups – all support that he had been unable to acquire in the years prior to the Villasur expedition.

Bienville’s exaggerated description of the Villasur expedition spurred French imperial officials to action. In his 1721 letter, Bienville complained that the imperial government had undermined his authority, hindering his “advantageous plans.” In his recounting of the Villasur expedition, then, he attempted to regain some power by appealing to imperial fears of Spanish northeasterly expansion. He denied the participation of any French soldiers in the attack, but exaggerated the number of Spanish soldiers and allies, describing “two hundred Spanish horsemen,” more than twice the number of soldiers in all of New Mexico at the time. Additionally, he reported that “a great number of Comanche Indians” supported the Spanish, though the Comanches were not involved on either side of the battle.⁷⁰ Like Valverde, Bienville embellished his report of the Villasur expedition in an attempt to gain the attention and assistance of his superiors. Unlike Valverde, however, Bienville was successful in rallying for French territorial expansion.

The hyperbolic description of the battle triggered a response in the French imperial center. Appealing to fears more relatable to distant imperial officials than the military and subsistence needs of a colony, Bienville claimed that the Villasur party moved northward “with the intention

⁶⁹Bienville to the Navy Council, 1721-07-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 305.

⁷⁰Bienville to the Navy Council, 1721-07-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 305.

of capturing the Frenchmen who are at the Illinois.”⁷¹ Though it is unlikely that he completely fabricated these motives, as he probably believed those really were the Spanish intentions, his description of the event suddenly made increased colonial defense a priority to imperial officials. Bienville’s report elevated the defense of Louisiana from a local concern to a geopolitical responsibility.

Though Bienville had finally gotten the attention of French imperial officials, their strategy for quelling Spanish expansion did not fall directly in line with his own. Rather than choosing Bienville to head efforts in the Missouri River Valley, the French government turned to Étienne de Veniard, Sieur de Bourgmont, a retired coureur des bois with experience with Indian communities along the Missouri and Platte Rivers, including the Otoes and Pawnees.⁷² Bourgmont established Fort d’Orléans on the north bank of the Missouri River in late 1723. Bienville’s support for the expedition faded when he learned that the expedition would be supported by men and resources from his colony. Boisbriand was similarly hesitant to supply resources from his already starving colony in Illinois country, yet Bourgmont’s expedition proceeded in spite of colonial leaders’ handwringing and obstructions.⁷³ His goal was to foster peace between French-allied Indians and the Plains Apaches, in order to get closer to the Spanish and establish trade with New Mexico. After much diplomatic maneuvering, he arranged a meeting with chiefs from Otoe, Iowa, Missouri, Kansa, Pawnee, and Plains Apache (Cuartelejo,

⁷¹Bienville to the Navy Council, 1721-07-20, in *Mississippi Provincial Archives: French Dominion*, 3: 305.

⁷²Étienne de Veniard, Sieur de Bourgmont, *Exact Description of Louisiana, of Its Harbors, Lands and Rivers, and Names of the Indian Tribes that Occupy It, and the Commerce and Advantages to Be Derived Therefrom for the Establishment of a Colony*, trans. Frank Norall in Norall, *Bourgmont: Explorer of the Missouri, 1698-1725* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 99-112; this version is translated from the original in the Archives Nationales, Archives des Colonies, C13C 1; fols. 346-56.

⁷³In 1723 Bienville sent a letter to Boisbriant encouraging him to change Bourgmont’s mission from one of peacemaking to one of warmongering. He argued that peace with the Apaches would not last, and that they should instead convince their Indian allies to attack the Apaches. See Bienville to Boisbriant, 1723-08-20, trans. Frank Norall in Norall, *Bourgmont*, 45-8.

Paloma, and Sierra Blanca) villages. An Apache chief made a grand speech, stating his people's long desire "to make peace with the French...[and] all of the tribes you have just named." He promised a long-lasting peace, so that "they and we will be able to from now on...go on our hunts without fear."⁷⁴ Thus it seemed as if peace would benefit all parties involved, including the French, by expanding the Plains trade network.

Bourgmont's expedition was not a long-term success. The French abandoned Fort d'Orléans in 1726 shortly after Bourgmont retired to France, and Comanche penetration of the region broke down the fragile truce between the French-allied Indians and the Plains Apaches. Yet, in spite of imperial abandonment of Bourgmont's goals, some French traders succeeded in moving westward. In 1727, New Mexican officials heard reports of French traders in El Cuartelejo, which they of course interpreted as a hostile harbinger of a French invasion.⁷⁵ Though the French established no trade with the Spanish in the 1720s, French *coureurs des bois* often bothered Spanish officials with illicit trade in Texas and the fringes of New Mexico.⁷⁶

Both New Mexico and Louisiana faced grim situations in the years surrounding the Villasur expedition, and officials in both continuously appealed to their superiors for settlers, soldiers, and sustenance. The Spanish and French imperial administration neglected both colonies until Villasur's defeat made the threat of invasion by the other seem real. Yet their paths to recovery would propel the two colonies along starkly different trajectories. French officials seized upon what they saw as a power vacuum in the Central Plains (which was, in reality, only a

⁷⁴Bourgmont, *Journey of the Voyage of Monsieur de Bourgmont, Knight of the Military Order of Saint Louis, Commandant of the Missouri River above That of the Arkansas, and of the Missouri, to the Padoucas*, trans. Frank Norall, in Norall, *Bourgmont*, 152-3.

⁷⁵Bustamante to Casafuerte, 1727-04-30, in Thomas, *After Coronado*, 256-7. Margry, *Découvertes et Établissements*, 6:443.

⁷⁶Philip V to Casafuerte, 1723-05-10, AGN, *Historia*, Legajo 298, Tomo 44, CSWR Vol. 42A, UNM, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 45.

European power vacuum) and sent Bourgmont to expand their commercial interests and network of alliances, which included the desire for peace and trade with the Spanish. The Spanish, on the other hand, initially closed themselves off to trade or expansion through the establishment of more presidios as buffers between Santa Fe and the imagined French threat on their borders. It is not surprising, then, that in the decades following, French Louisiana succeeded in expanding through the creation of new forts on the Missouri River and increasingly active *coureurs des bois* trade networks while New Mexicans took half a century to renew efforts to expand their influence northward.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The Spanish-Apache alliance would not last through the end of the eighteenth century, but the development of this relationship from 1700 to 1730 underscores the importance of indigenous strategies and alliances to the maintenance of power in the Central Plains. These alliances were almost constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in response to changing external conditions and internal motivations. Regardless, Central Plains alliances were almost always crafted or altered in European or Indian struggles for power, resources, or territory. In other words, though the goals and motivations of each group changed over time, the formation and maintenance of alliances proved crucial to commercial and military success in the region.

The Spanish and Plains Apaches capitalized on the importance of alliances in the decades following 1730. Though both groups initially turned inward following Villasur's defeat, by midcentury they expanded their influence and prosperity through strong ties with their neighbors. The Plains Apaches took advantage of the increased French commercial presence in the Central

⁷⁷Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count*, 385-6; Herbert Eugene Bolton, *French Intrusions into New Mexico, 1749-1752* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 391.

Plains to reinforce their communities against raids by the Utes or Comanches, whose alliance collapsed in the 1730s, and to migrate deep into northern New Spain. The Spanish negotiated alliances with the Utes and later the Comanches against the Faraone Apaches, which resulted in relative peace with neighboring Indians. Additionally, New Mexicans thrived commercially in the late eighteenth century due to the renewed demands of agricultural goods from silver mines in Chihuahua and Sonora, which integrated New Mexico more fully into the wider commercial network of New Spain. Peace with the Comanches and Utes combined with increased revenue to reverse the misfortunes faced by New Mexicans in the early eighteenth century. Thus negotiation of alliances and dependence native strategies remained key to success and power in the Central Plains even as the power dynamics shifted drastically.⁷⁸

Though the Spanish-Apache alliance did not prove to be as successful as alliances between other groups in the early eighteenth century, its creation reveals the power of the Plains Apaches, as they ultimately drew the Spanish into a regional rivalry with the Pawnees. The failure of the Plains Apache-Spanish alliance points to the ideological distance between imperial policy and local realities. Indeed, the discrepancy between imperial concerns and Indian and European motivations at the local level is a powerful subject of analysis that is most evident in instances of imperial failure. Studying this disconnect illuminates the influence of peripheral localities on the metropolitan core and illustrates the fragility of power in early America. As colonial historians turn their eyes toward regions beyond Anglo-America, the stories of those who could not maintain territorial control in the face of an expanding power become more than glimpses into what might have been. Instead, these stories significantly alter our historical imagination through the completion of a continental narrative of American history.

⁷⁸Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 175; Taylor, *American Colonies*, 413-15.

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