

Sicily by the Athenians. Without Pericles, and weakened by the loss of a third of its population, Athens abandoned the strategy of attrition that Pericles had employed to drain Sparta's resolve and force it into peace negotiations. Thucydides was placed in charge of a fleet dispatched to guard Thrace, but he was blamed for the loss of a Thracian city and sent into exile. He later wrote that his disgrace allowed him "to know what was being done on both sides . . . and this leisure permitted me to get a better understanding of the course of events."

Just as Sophists during that time tried to understand the role of man in society and followers of Hippocrates studied man's physical being, so Thucydides tried to uncover "the society of man living in the polis," Kagan says. Modern social historians, particularly Fernand Braudel, have dismissed "the elements of politics, diplomacy, and war as mere *événements*, transient and trivial in comparison with . . . geography, demography, and social and economic developments," but Thucydides championed "the role of the individual in history and his ability to change its course." Thucydides believed Pericles' loss doomed Athens, and though the Athenians were able to fight on for another quarter-century, they were finally undone by the intervention of the Persians, who incited some of Athens's island colonies to rebel; the treachery of the Athenian general Alcibiades; and their own internal conflicts.

Thucydides, says historian Donald Kagan, "substituted rational, even scientific, thought for myth as a means of understanding and explaining the world and the universe."

Even though Thucydides never finished his *History*—it leaves off in 411 BC, and does not recount Athens's ultimate surrender in 404 BC—its lessons, equally applicable to the Cold War and the conflicts of the present day, "continue to be inescapably crucial and central in the understanding and conduct of human affairs."

HISTORY

Lincoln's Rabble-Rousers

THE SOURCE: "'Young Men for War': The Wide Awakes and Lincoln's 1860 Presidential Campaign" by Jon Grinspan, in *The Journal of American History*, Sept. 2009.

ANY STUDENT OF AMERICAN history knows that soon after Abraham Lincoln was elected president, hostilities broke out and the nation plunged into civil war. Jon Grinspan, a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia, writes that historians have not paid enough attention to the role played by a movement called the Wide Awakes in setting

the scene for these events.

The Wide Awakes emerged out of a hard-fought political contest for the governorship of Connecticut, considered "a presidential election in miniature." In March 1860, several young textile clerks and rifle makers organized a group to escort Republican speakers through the dangerous streets of Democratic Hartford. They wore black capes covered with shiny enamel to protect their clothes from oil dripping from the torches they carried. Soon the organization's headquarters teemed with young Republican men. When the Republican gubernatorial candidate squeaked out a victory by a few hundred votes, many chalked up the win to the fervor whipped up by the Wide Awakes.

Within months, Wide Awake groups sprang up across the country. They let go of their original purpose as escorts and focused primarily on nonviolent parades in support of Republican candidates. Leaders drew up circulars detailing the Wide Awakes' history, constitution, and structure, and sent samples of their uniform to the local units. Tailors experienced shortages of the enameled cloth used to make the signature capes.

For the most part, Wide Awake clubs filled their ranks with white men in their teens, twenties, and thirties. They were partisans, not abolitionists. At the time, their numbers were purported to be as high as half a million nationwide, but Grinspan thinks the figure is probably

closer to 100,000. Still, he says, that's nothing to scoff

at—as a percentage of the U.S. population, that would be equal to about one million people today. Northerners became so accustomed to the roving bands of Wide Awakes that when a small earthquake struck Boston in mid-October, some thought the sounds came from the Wide Awakes running drills on Boston Common.

Although the Wide Awakes were non-violent, militarism permeated the group's style and ethos. They marched in lockstep, practiced infantry drills (taught to them by former and future military icons including Ulysses S.



Wide Awakes on parade, sporting their distinctive black enameled capes

Grant), and wore uniforms. Onlookers in the South perceived a threat. Many historians point to

the establishment of the Minute Men in South Carolina in 1860 as a major stepping-stone on the path to civil war, but few recall that they emerged “as an offset to the Wide Awakes of the North.” When the Wide Awake chapters did not disband after the election, Southerners feared a permanent national movement.

Grinspan writes, “While certainly not a cause of the war, the Wide Awakes’ presence ratcheted up sectional pressure and invested Lincoln’s election with weighty significance.”

Wide Awakes later said the group had presaged the Civil War, but Grinspan says that “at the time they barely saw it coming.”

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

The Parishioner Is Always Right

THE SOURCE: “Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church Promotes Indigenous Movements in Mexico” by Guillermo Trejo, in *American Political Science Review*, Aug. 2009.

THE LATTER DECADES OF THE 20th century were an explosive time for the Mexican Catholic

Church. Clergy across the country joined radical indigenous peasant movements to protest the Mexican government’s human rights abuses and demand land redistribution. Many onlookers regarded the church’s newfound political awareness as

a consequence of liberation theology, a doctrine sweeping across Latin America that sees political activism in the pursuit of economic and social justice as part of the struggle for salvation.

But Guillermo Trejo, a political scientist at Duke University, says that explanation falls short, overstating the extent to which clergy supported political movements and ignoring regional variations in their involvement. A better explanation: the growing presence of Protestants.

Trejo’s theory looks at relig-

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