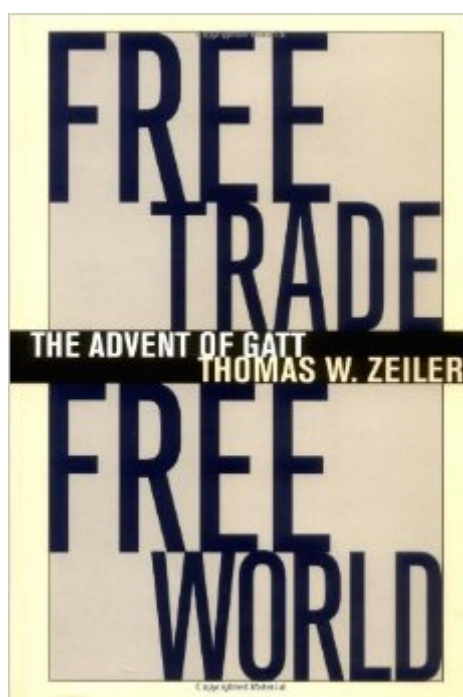


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Free Trade, Free World: The Advent Of GATT (Luther Hartwell Hodges Series On Business, Society, And The State)



Synopsis

In this era of globalization, it is easy to forget that today's free market values were not always predominant. But as this history of the birth of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) shows, the principles and practices underlying our current international economy once represented contested ground between U.S. policymakers, Congress, and America's closest allies. Here, Thomas Zeiler shows how the diplomatic and political considerations of the Cold War shaped American trade policy during the critical years from 1940 to 1953. Zeiler traces the debate between proponents of free trade and advocates of protectionism, showing how and why a compromise ultimately triumphed. Placing a liberal trade policy in the service of diplomacy as a means of confronting communism, American officials forged a consensus among politicians of all stripes for freer—and, if not free—trade that persists to this day. Constructed from inherently contradictory impulses, the system of international trade that evolved under GATT was flexible enough to promote American economic and political interests both at home and abroad, says Zeiler, and it is just such flexibility that has allowed GATT to endure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The publication of Thomas W. Zeiler's book, *Free Trade Free World: The Advent of GATT* is indeed timely. As recent WTO meetings in Seattle showed, there is much confusion in the minds of many people about what has happened to world trade in recent years. Zeiler's book deals with the

establishment of the GATT and provides an excellent background to the early years of the free trade debate. Covering the period from 1940 to 1953, it shows that controversy and disagreement were common at the birth of the GATT and globalization much as they are today. Zeiler, associate professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder, provides a well-researched and detailed history of the very difficult discussions between the United States and its allies over free trade during and immediately after the Second World War. His book is well written and interesting. It shows that not only did the American supporters of free trade have to battle their foes at home, they had to constantly struggle to convince many other leaders of democratic nations that free trade was in their best interests, as well as America's. Economic arguments about the benefits of free trade to the world community often ran up against the realities of politics as well as the economic belief that protection was better for the public good. In the United States it was hard to argue with opponents of free trade that allowing in cheaper imports such as shoes helped to improve employment when workers in shoe factories lost their jobs. Negotiations between the United States, Great Britain, and the British Commonwealth about the relaxation of protectionist measures began during World War 2.

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