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David Todd, *Free Trade and Its Enemies in France, 1814-1851*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. ix + 275 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.95 (hb). ISBN-13: 978-1107036932.

Review Essay by Jeff Horn, Manhattan College

You cannot say that David Todd does not pay attention to reviews. In assessing the original, French version of this book, *L'Identité économique de la France : Libre-échange et protectionnisme 1814-1851*, after lauding his depiction of the history of ideas, their dissemination, and their impact, I called for “greater emphasis on the impact of concrete economic interests” in understanding the social history of ideas and especially in policymaking. At the same time, I asked for additional treatment of “how and why the political and intellectual consensus in favor of greater freedom of trade that seems to have formed in the 1830s collapsed.” Finally, I suggested that “The ideas explored in this work would also have had greater impact if related more systematically to the economic repercussions of shifts in policy.” Todd has done all these things and more in the revised and partly reconceptualized version that, happily, has just appeared in English.[1]

Of course, by incorporating these elements, Todd was seeking to foster a “fruitful dialogue between historians of ideas and economic historians,” not responding to me. The major conceptual shift between the French and English versions is that the former demonstrates “the social history of ideas and *mentalités*” while the latter engages what he describes as “the more vibrant field, in the English-speaking world of intellectual history” (p. vi). That he has managed to do so in 200 *fewer* (though denser) pages is astonishing.

Todd’s book makes a set of interlinked arguments that strives to recreate the intellectual and political milieu of an era while shedding light on a number of important interpretations of French and European political economy. He analyzes the debate over and possible versions of protectionism and free trade, a complicated and wide-ranging discourse that he portrays as “neither hostile to capitalism nor political liberalism” that “rejected the cosmopolitan project of a global market as destructive of social stability as well as national independence” (p. 5). Todd’s book is a riposte to those who conceive or conceived of “Fortress France” as an inevitable champion of protectionism and government intervention as well as those who fail to recognize the complexities of the impact of globalization on the crystallization of liberalism in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleon (pp. 6-7, 9).

The emphasis on France’s experience of globalization after Napoleon’s fall is closely connected to Todd’s engagement with the interpretations of Istvan Hont and François Furet. The *moyenne durée* accounts of these two influential historians both cover more than a century and overlap in considering the late Enlightenment and French Revolution.[2] Hont’s depiction of various forms of “jealousy of trade” informs Todd’s goal of writing a “transnational account of the

dissemination of nationalist political economy” (p. 11). Furet’s argument that the central imperative of French politics after 1814 was how to “terminer la Révolution française” underpins Todd’s conception of the stakes of nineteenth-century ideological debates (p. 10). Todd applies Hont’s analysis to the nineteenth century while testing Furet’s argument in the domain of political economy where Furet himself rarely ventured. Unsurprisingly, Hont is more prominent in the first few (chronological) chapters while Furet anchors the closing chapters. Different and evolving perceptions of nationalism and national interest are at the heart of Todd’s depiction of the Western discourses of free trade and protectionism.

The United Kingdom played several major roles in Todd’s tale, but those roles are curious. They sketch out a caricature rather than provide a portrait of a fully realized historical actor. Through the actions of its agent John Bowring, Britain supported French free traders who sought to affect government tariff policy. As behind-the-scenes manipulator, Perfidious Albion had some real though rather limited successes in the 1820s and especially during the 1830s. Far more significant was Britain’s position as industrial and commercial model. Iconic conceptions of Britain heightened both France’s Anglophilia and especially its Anglophobia. Expressed through the press and other printed media, Anglophobic representations of Britain both expressed and generated nationalist sentiment that fed protectionist views within French public opinion. Protectionism became increasingly tied to “xenophobic – almost exclusively anti-English – proclivities.” Nervous about being marginalized by the British, the French also feared to compete because that would entail becoming more like the hated “other” (p. 231).

Following in Furet’s footsteps, Todd links post-1830 Anglophobia to “the emergence of an alternative interpretation of 1789 that stressed the necessity of protection in order to defend the economic and social legacy of the Revolution” (p. 230). He argues that this alternative interpretation vanquished “the moderate, liberal and Anglophile interpretation of the 1789 Revolution” (p. 230). This is neither the time nor the place to rehearse a full-fledged critique of Furet, but it seems worthwhile to recall that the Revolution France needed to bring to an end was *not* that of 1789. Rather it was the entire Revolution, perhaps including the Napoleonic era, a period when France was at war with Britain almost uninterruptedly from 1793 to 1815, that required completion. Leaving out the rest of the Revolution or deterministically believing that the Terror and Napoleon were inevitable consequences of 1789 when conceptualizing the place of Britain in the French political imagination is deeply problematic. As I will explore briefly below, I suggest that there is room for an “alternative interpretation” of Todd’s vision of Britain’s role in the dialogue of free trade and protectionism.

For Todd, “French protectionism is better construed as an ideology than as economic policy.” He arrived at this conclusion because of the divergence in how people conceived of free trade and protection on either flank of the channel even though “it is not clear that the level of protection from foreign competition was higher in France than in Britain, at least until the 1870s” (p. 10). While I tend to agree with Todd’s analysis of government policies, it is not clear to me that the similarity of policies transfers the primary significance of protectionism to the rarified realm of ideology. Surely the *effects* of these policies are considerably more important than the nature of the discourse surrounding them. Todd’s own rhetoric is somewhat perplexing here: why celebrate “the triumph of democratic free trade in Britain” in the 1840s and bemoan the rise of “an authoritarian conception of free trade” (p. 227) in France when both countries sported

comparable tariff rates? Perhaps Todd overstates the divergence between the two countries and needs to turn his attention to comparing the same differences between rhetoric and reality for Britain that has done so well for France.

In Todd's work, "three strands of ideas hostile to free trade" had emerged in France by the mid-1830s. He emphasizes a "mercantile jealousy," an "industrialist reformulation of jealousy," and "an aspiration to self-sufficiency" (p. 155) in the context of the global industrial depression that occurred between 1837 and 1843. Todd focuses on the emergence of a kind of economic nationalism (in response to the threat posed by Britain) linked to the "acceleration of globalization" that built on concerns linked to the "social question" to advocate for protectionism as a means of minimizing potential for social or political unrest (pp. 123-124). He notes the similarity to the situation in the 1780s and argues for the importance of continuity of ideas, but he emphasizes what he sees as the novel elements that emerged after 1814 (pp. 20, 124, 126).

While I can and do appreciate Todd's delineation of these strands of ideas, I see very little if anything that is new in his description of the 1830s. The very same ideas of protection and free trade, applied to practical policy considerations, were articulated thoroughly in the context of the negotiation and implementation of the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786. Although he added citations to my work on the Treaty in the English version (pp. 10, 170), I do not believe he has recognized the challenge this portrayal of the "threat from below" poses to his interpretation. [3]. The "social question" in the context of British competition did not emerge in the nineteenth century. The hallmark of the economic and social discourse is continuity, not change. Auguste Mimerel's *Du paupérisme dans ses rapports avec l'industrie en France et en Angleterre* (1842), which Todd discusses as part of the turn toward self-sufficiency and the importance of the "social question" and English competition, could have been written in the late 1780s (pp. 168-69). Nor do I believe that Todd has dealt with the powerful interpretation of Jean-Pierre Hirsch and Philippe Minard who reconcile the seemingly contradictory ideological strains emphasized by Todd. The sentiment "let us do it but protect us a lot" [*laissez-nous faire, protéger-nous beaucoup*] demonstrates an enduring practical synthesis of ideological positions.[4] In short, I see a far greater likelihood that the 1830s witnessed an "alternative version" of the meaning of the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786 rather than of the Revolution of 1789 (p. 230). Such a reading emphasizes the significance of the old regime roots of certain ideas and the role of Revolutionary contingency at the expense of a more deterministic approach to the meaning of the first year of the Revolution patterned on Furet.

France's imperial aspirations and commitments assume an important place in Todd's interpretation of how "traditional jealousy of trade" evolved into modern protectionism (p. 16). Around 1840, sugar crystallized Todd's analysis of the significance of the empire in the debate about protectionism. Lobbies supporting Antilles sugar shipped in Bordelais hulls collided with domestic beet sugar producers. Did "protection" include or exclude the colonies? Did it encourage the acquisition of new ones? The propagandistic skill of the beetsugar industry demonstrated the influence of those who espoused "self-sufficiency" as the goal of tariff policy that helped to doom Antilles sugar production based on slavery (pp. 171-83). While the international context and end result for this well-told story differed fundamentally, once again, it must be emphasized that the rhetoric of the colonial lobby closely echoed that expressed in the 1770s and 1780s. The modification of the *exclusive* in 1784, the prolongation of Guyana's free

trade, the revival of the Indies Company in 1785, and the Anglo-French Commercial Treaty of 1786 generated a multifaceted discourse on commercial liberty and the need for tariffs to shelter French industry along with a debate over who had the right to expect “protection.” All parts of these discussions were both couched in broader principles and focused on practicalities, most notably British competition.[5]The evidence cited in the previous note (a tiny fraction of what is available) suggests that Todd has not given sufficient credit to the eighteenth century in his emphasis on the era after 1815. In my reading of the sources, other than terminology, what is new in the 1840s is the political economy of the international context rather than the discourse itself.

Although his depiction of the Restoration is solid, Todd is most effective in discussing the July Monarchy. I am less convinced by his rapid treatment of the Second Republic and afterwards. Todd’s explanation of the transition from the intellectual and political triumph of protectionism after 1846 to the Cobden-Chevalier Commercial Treaty in 1860 (p. 228) and French leadership in “ushering in a brief era of European and almost global free trade until the 1870s” (p. 234) is profoundly unsatisfactory. He emphasizes a “divorce between commercial and political liberalism” (p. 220) in France that allowed Michel Chevalier to articulate “another conception of free trade, inimical to political liberalism and concerned with the resurgence of French overseas expansion as well as the taming of domestic revolutionary tendencies” (p. 227). This argument evokes the question: did it matter to an unemployed linen worker whether the government was lowering tariff duties because of “authoritarian” or “democratic” understandings of “liberalism” if the policies were identical? In trying to make sense of trade policy after 1848, Todd over-intellectualized and under-contextualized French political economy. The weakness of the depiction of the legacy of the events and ideas of the July Monarchy evoked by Todd reveals why the broader context is so important to a convincing social history of ideas. I encourage Todd to craft a fuller treatment that clarifies and extends his understanding of change over time both backward and forward from his solid foundation in the July Monarchy.

David Todd has written an interesting, well-written, provocative book. He has mastered the literature in three languages (English, French and German) and has made a set of clear and profound though occasionally idiosyncratic arguments that merit serious consideration by anyone interested in the political economy of the period.[6] His analysis of the sources, especially those of the July Monarchy, is outstanding. He widens the discussion to consider the meaning of globalization thoroughly, allowing for a broad engagement with the political economy of protectionism and free trade and their development over time. As a model of how to depict an international history of ideas that is regionally grounded and equally aware of practical developments, Todd makes a noteworthy contribution. It is possible, however, to see significantly greater continuity between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the development of the discourses on these important topics.

## NOTES

[1] David Todd, *L’identité économique de la France : Libre-échange et protectionnisme 1814-1851* (Paris: Grasset, 2008). My review appeared in *The English Historical Review* 125: 515 (2010): 1013-4.

[2] Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005) and François Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry, 1770-1880*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1988), vol. II: *Terminer la Révolution: de Louis XVIII à Jules Ferry*.

[3] Jeff Horn, *The Path Not Taken: French Industrialization in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1830* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 51-88, 102-18. See also Jeff Horn, “‘A Beautiful Madness’: Privilege, the Machine Question and Industrial Development in Normandy in 1789,” *Past & Present* 217 (November 2012): 149-85.

[4] Jean-Pierre Hirsch and Philippe Minard, “‘Laissez-faire nous et protégez-nous beaucoup’: Pour une histoire des pratiques institutionnelles dans l’industrie française, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles,” in *La France n’est-elle pas douée pour l’industrie?*, eds. Louis Bergeron and Patrice Bourdelais (Paris: Belin, 1998), 135-58.

[5] The essential source here is Jean Tarrade, *Le commerce colonial de la France à la fin de l’Ancien Régime : L’évolution du régime de “l’exclusif” de 1763 1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1972). The arguments of the protectionist camp can be found in Édouard Boyetet, *Recueil de Divers Mémoires relatifs au Traité de Commerce avec l’Angleterre fait savant, pendant et après cette négociation* (Versailles: Baudouin, 1789) On the side of those who wanted to loosen the reins on trade yet saw a need for protection can be found such well-known publicists as Pierre-Samuel Dupont de Nemours, *Lettre à la chambre du commerce de Normandie, sur le mémoire qu’elle a publié relativement au traité de commerce avec l’Angleterre* (Paris: Moutard, 1788), André Morellet, *Mémoires relatifs à la discussion du privilège de la nouvelle Compagnie des Indes* (Paris: Demonville, 1787) and Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens & du commerce des européens dans les deux Indes*, 6 vols. (Amsterdam: n.p., 1770). This edict demonstrates the effectiveness of free trade arguments within government policymaking: *Arrêt du conseil d’état du roi qui prolonge jusqu’au 1.er Juillet 1792, l’effet des Lettres patentes du 1.er may 1768, qui accordaient à l’Isle de Cayenne et à la Guyane Française, la liberté de Commerce avec toutes les Nations* (15 May 1784), Gallica.

[6]As always in such a wide-ranging work, there are a few notable lacunae. For example, Todd’s consistent attention to the political economy of wine-growing suffers from lack of reference to Alessandro Stanziani, *Rules of Exchange: French Capitalism in Comparative Perspective, Eighteenth to Early Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) while his analysis of 1851 would have benefited from Ted W. Margadant’s, *French Peasants in Revolt: The Insurrection of 1851* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), but such notable omissions are rare.

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