



Free Trade, Free World: The Advent of GATT (Luther Hartwell Hodges Series on Business, Society, and the State)

Thomas W. Zeiler

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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—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.

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