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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.

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This is not a book of economic history but rather a history of economic ideas and political economy, namely, the debates that took place in France on international trade between 1814 and 1851. Derivative of a book the author originally published in French in 2008 (*L'identité économique de la France*), this work seeks to explain why so many French authors and public actors opposed free trade; he correctly argues that French protectionism was not hostile to capitalism or political liberalism but only to a global market seen as destructive of social stability. This is an interesting topic insofar, in the eighteenth century, France was home to laissez-faire and liberal ideas, in particular under the influence of Physiocratic thinkers. How thus can one possibly explain this shift?

Todd finds the answer in the pressures of the new global market, on the one hand, in the imperative of ending the Revolution, on the other. Thus in post-Napoleonic France, free trade aimed at consolidating individual and political freedom; their subsequent defeat, according to Todd, was connected to the failure of constitutional liberalism, opposite to Britain where free trade marked the intellectual and political hegemony of liberalism. In this context, Anglophobia in France was both a political and economic attitude: right-leaning liberals in France feared excessive urbanization and workers' revolt. Then, under the Second Empire, free traders won ephemeral success born from the dissociation of commercial from political liberty. Finally, Todd argues, it is probable that the return to protection after 1870 contributed to stabilizing the Third Republic.

This book is important insofar it shows a return to political economy in historical context without the abstractions and a-historical analyses of mainstream economic history. From this standpoint, we may question the author about four main points: the coherence of economic discourse and thinking and its impact on economic policies; the role of economic interests and lobbies in making commercial policies; the role of the Empire and the relationship between international trade and the abolition of slavery; the relevance of scales – the region, the nation, the empire, and the global.

We may start with the discussion on the evolution of French political economy on international trade: To what extent was there –as Todd argues- a shift from eighteenth- century free trade to nineteenth-century protectionism?

Let us take the case of Jean-Baptiste Say, who stressed the priority of economic laws over political and legal laws. He rebelled against “legal despotism” and reproached the Physiocrats for linking economic laws to political laws. He maintained there was a natural economic order that supported and confirmed the fundamental unity of individual interests precisely through the market.[1] International trade entered this overall approach. Now, Say's approach to economics and law through the notion of competition responded partly to the legacy of eighteenth-century liberal thought, partly to Bentham's suggestions and partly to the debate

that took place in France during the revolutionary era and the Empire over how the economy should be administered. The identification of the sources of property rights (natural law or civil law), as well as the limit between private and public law in the market order were on the agenda. In this context, Say's orientations expressed an attempt to synthesize these aims. This attempt emphasized the market rather than laws and regulations, expressed the same concerns as the liberal and republican circles confronted first with the Empire and then with the Restoration.[2] Economics, in both domestic and international affairs and trade, together with legislation and morality, was the guide for both individual and public action.

It is precisely this complexity that accounts for the multiplicity and diversity of later authors who claimed to be followers of Say. During the first half of the nineteenth century, and even afterwards under the Second Empire and the Third Republic, the vast majority of French economists who saw themselves as heirs of liberal thought, and of Say in particular, did not hesitate to combine the spontaneous laws of the market with demands for state intervention in a given segment. Thus, during the 1850s, Maurice Chevalier claimed to be a disciple of Cobden, Smith and Say; he favored free trade, while accepting support for companies and anti-coalition rules in the labor market.[3]

Evidently, these elements did not necessarily lead these so-called "liberal" authors to rule out state intervention altogether. The connection between the ideas of a pure market and efficiency did not take hold in "liberal" economic thought until the mid-twentieth century, and cannot be detected as such in the nineteenth century.[4] In other words, if we consider the debate on free trade as isolated from these other topics we miss the way economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries organized their thinking. International market regulation was related to general considerations about markets and regulations and they evolved in a more complex and fragmented way than the simple passage from free trade to protectionism and vice versa.

This leads to the second point to discuss, that is, the interrelation between economic discourse and economic practices. Even if Todd claims to consider both, the final balance clearly gives priority to political debates and sources over economic interests and economic outcomes. Let us take the case of Bordeaux wine producers during the 1830s as discussed in chapter 3. Protectionism and free trade in Bordeaux – one of the key regions and lobbies in the book-- are correctly related to political attitudes (royalists, different liberal currents) and, to a given extent, to commercial interests. Yet, these last were far from being homogenous and Bordeaux wine lobbies were not as compact as Todd seems to believe. Several French Consuls denounced the falsification in wine labeling practiced by Bordeaux merchants in so many different places as Valparaiso, Beirut and Prussia, and as these practices undermined the reputation of the entire region.[5] They supported the claims made by part of Bordeaux winegrowers against some Bordeaux merchants and "new" Bordeaux producers accused of producing "poor quality" wines.[6] The Bordeaux Chamber of Commerce was divided and could not reach any conclusion on the policies necessary to protect "quality" and, thus, to choose tariffs. The question was not so much about free trade and protectionism but about which tariffs for which kind of wine. And here there is no way to provide a clear-cut correspondence between political and economic orientations. Such complexity was also at work in the other areas Todd evokes –textile for example.[7]

Concerns about the consistency of policy and practice are particularly relevant here because they help understand what economic historians such as Lévy-Leboyer and Bourguignon,[8] Nye[9] and Verley[10] have demonstrated: French tariffs, when correctly evaluated (i.e: average, deflated and weighted) were lower than usually stated, and in some cases even lower

than the British. Todd quickly mentions this point in the introduction but he drops it. This is a wrong choice: if economic lobbies were divided and if after all French protectionism was mostly threatened but badly practiced, then, which is the relevance of some official discourse and conventional periodizations reproduced in Todd's book – from free trade, to protectionism, to limited free trade under the Second Empire and back to protectionism under the Third Republic? The problem is not so much on the political relevance of economic discourse –we agree on this- but on the excessive underestimation of fragmented although powerful economic interests underlying discourses AND choices.

The last issues to discuss concern the scales of analysis. Todd studies custom tariffs –that is, national interests and adds regional debates and evokes global dynamics. This multi-scale approach is extremely interesting, as it escapes conventional historiographies on international trade that focus almost exclusively on the nation. However, Todd's approach raises three questions: the changing hierarchies between local powers and the nation; the role of the Empire; the definition of the global.

During all the period under investigation here, powers and hierarchies between the central government and local authorities always were crucial. Adding a view from the regions, as Todd does, is a necessary but insufficient step to give account of the active and central role these tensions between local and central powers played. The “local” offers not only a different perspective to current historians, but it was a stake itself in the nineteenth century. If government policies in international trade influenced local economies, at the opposite, the political struggle about the level of centralization of authority was central in policy making including international trade.

The same is true with the Empire, barely mentioned in the introduction and the conclusion, and not even discussed as such in Chapter Five where the sugar affair is treated. Following ordinary approaches in the historiography (both political and business history), Todd presents the debates on sugar tariffs in the 1840s as if the related questions of managing the Empire and the abolition of slavery were just part of the context. Certainly, in many French sources, and in particular in those he mostly uses, slavery was not prioritized. But precisely, this requires an explanation! Was it because sugar merchants and producers were not concerned with slavery issues? Or also because unlike Britain, in France there was no relationship in political discussions between international trade, Empire and slavery?

Whatever the answer, a full discussion would have been appropriate. Indeed, in the early 1840s, after the end of the apprenticeship period in the British colonies, the British Navy increased patrolling along the African coasts and the Indian Ocean. France considered British inspection an abuse and a commercial tool disguised under the humanitarian veil. [11] Protectionism, slavery and anti-British attitudes were tightly linked. However, this was a complicated affair, not only because French attitudes were extremely fragmented on this question, even at the regional level –for example in the Gironde wine merchants and winegrowers, sugar traders and insurance companies had different interests in both international trade and slavery. The same complexity existed in Britain where, unlike conventional interpretations in the historiography,[12] we know now that the association between free trade and abolitionism was late to occur.[13] If this is so, then can we still oppose the French to the British case on these matters?

Thus, we miss the Empire but we find the “global.” French protectionism is considered as a reaction against globalization and the term is quite often used in the introduction and

conclusion. Of course, we may think anachronistically, interpreting discussions on tariffs and trade as though they were related to fears or support of globalization. However, as Frederick Cooper argued,[14] this choice risks obscuring instead of enlightening our analysis. Indeed, French actors of that time were much more concerned with the international market and bilateral agreements than with the “global.” This attitude was fully understandable for, unlike some economic historians’ arguments [15] globalization was extremely limited at the end of the nineteenth century, when it concerned only the North Atlantic, not the world. This was even more true during the previous decades of the nineteenth century at the core of this book.[16] If it is so, then, is the “global” really useful to explain the historical dynamics under investigation?

Let us take the case of French wine producers so dear to Todd. In the Gironde some international winegrowers were ready to play the card of the international market but only if accompanied with strong brand protection and highly differentiated prices. At the opposite, wine merchants were for free trade, standard qualities and uniform prices. If we speak only of globalization in general, we miss the different meaning of it for different actors and, ultimately, the coexistence if not mutual recognition of local appellations of origin and mass standardized products. The invention of tradition in marketing strategies is a central corollary of globalization.[17]

To sum up, this is an important book to discuss French attitudes towards market policies; it takes seriously some French discourse, maybe too seriously to capture their relative and not definitive importance in the fragmented political and economic landscape of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries France.

NOTES

[1] Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique*(Bruxelles : Société typographique belge, 1845) : Introduction: 1-14.

[2] Robert Palmer, *J.-B. Say: An Economist in Troubled Times* (Princeton:Princeton University Press, 1997); Evelyn Forget, *The Social Economics of J.-B. Say: Markets and Virtue*(London: Routledge, 1999); Philippe Steiner, “Jean-Baptiste Say: the Entrepreneur, the Free Trade Doctrine and the Theory Of Income Distribution” in Gilbert Faccarello (ed.), *Studies in the History of French Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 1998): 196-228; Roger Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: an Intellectual History of J.-B. Say's Political Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[3] Michel Chevalier, *Cours d'économie politique* (Paris : Capelle 1854).

[4] Alessandro Stanziani, *Rules of Exchange. French Capitalism in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[5] Archives Nationales F 12 7452.

[6] Alessandro Stanziani, *Histoire de la qualité alimentaire en France* (Paris : Seuil 2005).

[7] Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les deux rêves du commerce* (Paris : EHESS, 1991).

- [8] Maurice Lévy-Leboyer and François Bourguignon, *L'Economie française au XIXe siècle* (Paris : La Découverte, 1985).
- [9] John Vincent Nye, *War, Wine and Taxes. The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- [10] Patrick Verley, *Nouvelle histoire économique de la France contemporaine* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).
- [11] Courrier de la Gironde, May 24, 1842.
- [12] David Turley, *The Culture of English antislavery, 1780–1860* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).
- [13] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
- [14] Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).
- [15] Kevin O' Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson, *Globalization and History. The Evolution of Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Boston: MIT Press, 1999).
- [16] Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- [17] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

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