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Power, Protection, and Free Trade

David A. Lake

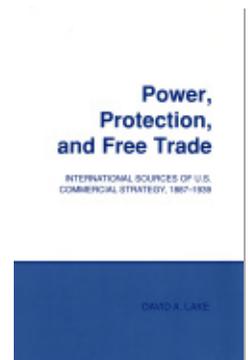
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Preface

I began this project in the late 1970s seeking to explain the contradictory mixture of cooperation and conflict then present in the international economy. All of the advanced industrialized states were caught in the web of stagflation, oil prices were skyrocketing for the second time in less than a decade, and nontariff barriers to trade were rising. Yet the Tokyo Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade had just reduced tariff levels once again, and the leaders of the Western world were undertaking a unique and historic attempt to coordinate their macroeconomic policies. I was attracted by, but ultimately dissatisfied with, the “theory of hegemonic stability,” which in many ways adequately captured the problems of the late 1970s but not the successes. What was needed was a theory that could account for both conflict and cooperation in nonhegemonic international economic systems. This book is the distant descendant of that original quest.

After developing an early version of what is now Chapter 1, I began to search for “least likely” cases that would allow for a rigorous elucidation of the theory. The problems associated with the decline of the Pax Americana no longer seemed to me appropriate to that end; examining an era of structural change in which the future is not yet known renders theory testing difficult, if not wholly meaningless. Although it possessed little intrinsic interest at first, American trade strategy in the prehegemonic era appeared to be a good “hard” case for the theory. I chose it for that reason. The deeper I delved into the case, the more fascinating it became.

In this book, I develop and test a systemic-level theory of national trade strategy, a theory that abstracts from domestic-level characteristics and focuses exclusively on how nation-states stand in relation one to

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another. In doing so, I deviate from classical theories of international trade, draw upon several less widely accepted literatures in international economics, and make strong generalizations. The theory is also intentionally parsimonious. As a consequence, I slight systemic variables not directly related to international trade and alternative explanations at the national and individual levels of analysis. Throughout, I seek to probe the limits of the systemic approach. This probing is not only analytically important, it is empirically fruitful as well. Applying the theory to the case of American trade strategy between 1887 and 1939 leads to an interpretation that differs from and challenges the current historiography.

I have benefited from the criticisms and support of numerous advisers, colleagues, and friends. Richard Rosecrance encouraged my interest in systemic theories of international politics and taught me the value of history for such an approach. Peter Katzenstein, first as adviser and later as editor, was an indefatigable critic whose suggestions are reflected throughout the book. Walter LaFeber, an exemplar for any young scholar, questioned my interpretations of American trade strategy and in the process led me through a voluminous history. I am grateful to all.

I had the good fortune to spend 1981–82 as a Research Fellow at the Brookings Institution with G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno. Their friendship and support made a difficult writing job easier. Much of what is now Chapter 2 was stimulated by our loud discussions in the library corridors and our subsequent collaborations. Jeffrey Frieden, a good friend and colleague, has read and commented on virtually every word I have written over the last four years. In return for his efforts, I always let him win at tennis.

Robert Keohane, John Odell, and several anonymous reviewers read and commented on the complete manuscript. In addition, many colleagues have provided useful comments on various portions of the book: John Conybeare, David Dollar, Glenn Fong, Robert Gilpin, Judith Goldstein, Joanne Gowa, Lori Gronich, Stephan Haggard, Thomas Ilgen, Bruce Jentleson, Stephen Krasner, Fred Lawson, Charles Lipson, Timothy McKeown, Kenneth Oye, Ronald Rogowski, Arthur Stein, Kenneth Waltz, Beth Yarbrough, and Robert Yarbrough. Selected portions of the manuscript have been presented at annual meetings of the American Political Science Association and the International Studies Association; at the University of California, Davis; Stanford University; the University of California, Berkeley; and the Program on Interdependent Political Economy at the University of Chicago. I thank the participants in these meetings for their often enlightening comments.

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I also thank my parents, Edward and Gloria Lake and Samuel and Sylvia Krieger, for their confidence and encouragement over the years. Although Brenden Manker Lake, whose birth coincided with the final revision of the manuscript, was too late to offer much support, his pending arrival helped bring this project to a timely conclusion. Finally, my greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife, Wendy Krieger Lake, to whom this volume is dedicated. The book is as much hers as mine, for I would never have contemplated—far less completed—this endeavor were it not for her love, support, and encouragement. This is a debt I look forward to repaying for many years to come.

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