



The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896

By Marc-William Palen

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Following the Second World War, the United States would become the leading 'neoliberal' proponent of international trade liberalization. Yet for nearly a century before, American foreign trade policy was dominated by extreme economic nationalism. What brought about this pronounced ideological, political, and economic about face? How did it affect Anglo-American imperialism? What were the repercussions for the global capitalist order? In answering these questions, The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade offers the first detailed account of the controversial Anglo-American struggle over empire and economic globalization in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The book reinterprets Anglo-American imperialism through the global interplay between Victorian free-trade cosmopolitanism and economic nationalism, uncovering how imperial expansion and economic integration were mired in political and ideological conflict. Beginning in the 1840s, this conspiratorial struggle over political economy would rip apart the Republican Party, reshape the Democratic Party, and redirect Anglo-American imperial expansion for decades to come.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A corrective to decades of historiography that laissez-faire doctrine guided the Gilded Age . . . a splendid book." Thomas Zeiler, author of *Free Trade, Free World* (reviewed in *E-International Relations*)

"In this boldly argued and richly detailed study, Marc-William Palen shows us why we should know much more than we do about the debate over the tariff in the nineteenth century. The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade demonstrates how questions of tariffs and trade were ideologically charged and central to American conceptions of imperialism and global economic integration in the age of British power."

Jay Sexton, University of Oxford

"In this illuminating study, Marc-William Palen cuts across the conventional domestic versus foreign approach to American history, showing the role of trade politics as an instrument of a resurgent and highly influential American economic nationalism in the late nineteenth century. He makes clear the eddying global effects of trans-Atlantic controversies over tariffs upon the shaping of US imperialism and Anglo-American relations."

Ian Tyrrell, University of New South Wales, Australia

"In a US election year thick with controversy over the impact of free trade and globalisation on jobs and wages, Palen's absorbing study of the nineteenth-century version of these debates is timely. The Exeter University historian contrasts the British commitment to free trade with what were the then dominant currents of US economic nationalism and protectionism."

Tony Barber, Financial Times (Summer Books 2016)

About the Author

Dr Marc-William Palen is a historian of empires and globalization at the University of Exeter.

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