

Daniel Defoe

A Plan of the English Commerce

New Edition

SERIES IN ECONOMIC HISTORY

“Defoe’s main economic work, A Plan of the English Commerce (1728), is almost forgotten now.[...] However, the book was a thorough and insightful account of Tudor industrial policy (under England’s Tudor monarchs) that has much to teach us today. [...] Defoe clearly shows that it was not the free market but government protection and subsidies that developed British woolen manufacturing.”

Ha-Joon Chang,
Bad Samaritans, pp. 23-26 (2008, Bloomsbury Publishing)

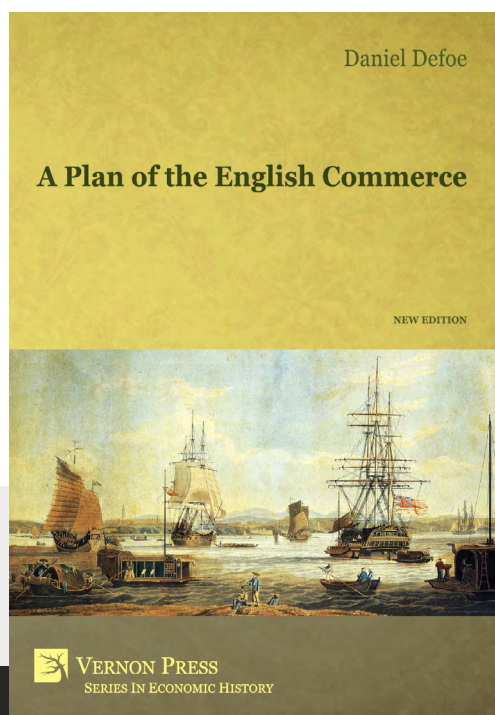
Summary

A Plan of the English Commerce is a rare piece of economic history covering the crucial period at the outset of the first Industrial Revolution and the early wave of globalization. Unlike other chroniclers of British economic development, Defoe was contemporary to and often had first-hand experience of important events. His account therefore offers an extraordinary vantage point, free from the distorting lens of modern theoretical explanations. An account rich in anecdotes and penetrating observations, Defoe’s work emphasizes neglected aspects of the world economy at the time, such as the interplay between industrial policy and international trade. Defoe argues that, under the Tudors, British industry developed under a heavily protected regime. Contrary to widespread belief, export controls, infant-industry subsidies, government-sponsored industrial espionage and aggressive technology transfer were routine. A Plan of the English Commerce is principal among Daniel Defoe’s works dealing with economic matters and remains of interest not only to economic historians but also to scholars concerned with economic development, international trade and industrial policy. This New Edition has been typeset with modern techniques and

contains a newly compiled Index of important topics. Aiming for visual clarity and the minimization of redundancy, the New Edition drops the largely arbitrary italicization of words and applies a modern formatting style to the rudimentary tables found in the original. It has been painstakingly proofread to ensure that it is free from errors and that the content is faithful to the original, down to the unusually long chapter headings.

About the author

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was an English merchant, civil servant, journalist, writer, economist and spy nowadays best known for literary classic Robinson Crusoe. Hailing from a humble family, Defoe’s ambition, restless nature and ability to bounce back from failure took him to faraway lands, engaged him in countless business ventures and an equal amount of problems with creditors, business and political adversaries. Working for the Crown nurtured his thinking on matters of national interest and exposed him to the leading policy thinking of the time. The breadth of his experience, the versatility of his mind and the popularity of his writing made him much sought after. Powerful political patrons would variably seek to profit from his services or to curtail his influence. Defoe published over 560 books and pamphlets in topics as diverse as politics, crime, economics, history, topography, personal relationships and spirituality before turning to fiction in later life.



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