

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910796613003321
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Titolo	Trade and power : historical analysis of trade policy / / Oldřich Krpec and Vladan Hodulaĭk
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Brno, Czech republic : , : Masarykova University, , [2014] Â©2014
ISBN	80-210-8708-0
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (214 pages) : illustrations
Disciplina	382.09
Soggetti	Commerce - History Commercial policy - History International trade - History
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Includes index.
Sommario/riassunto	The aim of this book is to examine the relationship between international trade and political power in an appropriate historical and political context. The term "international trade" designates the exchange of goods between (relatively) distant regions but primarily between territories which are controlled by different political entities. In general, this kind of trade always has important political implications. It is a form of contact between members of different political entities who are usually of different ethnicities, sometimes even belonging to different religious groups or cultural regions. From the viewpoint of these different political entities (i.e. states), the exchange of goods (here understood as international trade) has always presented a mix of opportunities and risks, both political and economic.