“In this story, the country that feared losing its dominance of world manufacturing is not America, but England in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The country whose manufacturing prowess it feared was not Japan, but the United States. The way of manufacturing developed in this upstart country was not known as “just-in-time” or “lean production” but as the American System of Manufacturers.

Despite the efforts of many industrialists, the English never quite caught on to this new way of manufacturing, and England eventually lost its dominance over world production and exports. It did not happen overnight, but took many decades. While American pioneers were exploring and mastering the western frontier, industrial pioneers concentrated in New England were exploring and mastering a new frontier of business competition by focusing on the process of production, developing interchangeable parts, and utilizing the flexibility and ingenuity of American workers. By the 1880s, thanks to the American System of Manufacturers, the United States had overtaken England as the world’s leading manufacturer. By the turn of the century, the United States had one and a half times the industrial production of its rival. The American System of Manufactures of the nineteenth century became the world’s premier manufacturer thanks to its highly skilled and educated workers, quality goods, low costs, rapid innovations, and technological leadership.

In the twentieth century, the American System of was itself transformed by Henry Ford and others into the system of Mass Production. This became the next frontier for American companies to master. …Through its system of Mass Production, America won the economic battle with England.”

— Ibid, pp. 4-5.