

start gaat, om tot een meer gezamenlijke geschiedenis te komen. Maar als het gaat over extreem geweld van Nederlandse militairen in de periode 1945-1949 tijdens de Indonesische dekolonisatieoorlog – en daar gaat dit boek expliciet over – dan is het excellente boek van Limpach een rijke bron voor vele nieuwe generaties onderzoekers en eveneens een belangrijke bouwsteen van het komende grote onderzoek naar geweld en dekolonisatie. Limpach heeft als eerste historicus stevige en gefundeerde conclusies durven trekken en vult de ambitie van Van Doorn en Hendrix – om de werkelijkheid van het geweld te laten zien – zesenvertig jaar later, met veel verve verder in.

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Noten

- 1 J.A.A. van Doorn en W.J. Hendrix, *Ontsporing van Geweld: over het Nederlands Indisch onafhankelijkheidsdebat* Universitaire Pers, Rotterdam 1970.
- 2 Zie W. IJzereef, *De Zuid-Celebes Affaire* (Dieren 1984), L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, Deel 12* NIOD (Amsterdam 1987), P. Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen* (Den-Haag 1991) W. van den Doel, *Afscheid van Indië. De val van het Nederlandse imperium in Azië* (Amsterdam 2001), J.A. de Moor, *Westerlings Oorlog. Indonesië 1945-1950: de geschiedenis van de commando's en parachutisten in Nederlands-Indië* (Amsterdam 1999) S. Scagliola, *Last van de Oorlog* (Amsterdam 2002) J.J.P. de Jong, *De Terugtocht. Nederland en de dekolonisatie van Indonesië* (Amsterdam 2015) en G. Oostindie, *Soldaat in Indonesië* (Amsterdam 2015).
- 3 'Geweld door Nederlandse militairen in Indië na 1945 was structureel,' *NRC Handelsblad* 14 augustus 2015, gebaseerd op het artikel van Rémy Limpach, *Business as usual: Dutch mass violence in the Indonesian war of independence 1945-49* in: *Colonial Counterinsurgency and Mass Violence: the Dutch Empire in Indonesia*, edited by B. Luttikhuis and D. Moses, Routledge, Oxford 2014, pp. 84-87.
- 4 'Maar wisten we dit niet al eerder?' Joop de Jong in *Internationale Spectator: Clingendael Magazine voor Internationale Betrekkingen*, december 2016.
- 5 Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en Defensie aan de Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer, betreft Kabinetsreactie naar aanleiding van een studie van Dr. Limpach over geweld in periode 1945-1949 in Nederlands-Indië, Den-Haag 2 december 2016.
- 6 'Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden? Een pleidooi voor transkolonialisme' oratie uitgesproken door Prof. Dr. Remco Raben aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam op 28 september 2016.
- 7 Gesprek met Bambang Purwanto door ondergetekende, Amsterdam, november 2016.

Bas van Bavel, *The Invisible Hand? How Market Economies have Emerged and Declined since A.D. 500.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). 352 p. ISBN 9780199608133.

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This is a very ambitious book. In it Bas van Bavel seeks to establish a new understanding of the essential character of market economies, thereby doing battle with

a host of eminent economists and other social scientists. One might see him as a Polanyi for our times. In *The Great Transformation* (1944) Karl Polanyi asserted that what he called 'self regulating' markets were both of recent date (emerging in the nineteenth century) and unnatural. Van Bavel denies both of these claims. True market economies (where markets allocate not only commodities but also the factors of production) can be found in very early times, he argues, and they are all too natural. The real problem with market economies is that they are dangerous and destructive. It is on this basis that he argues, with Polanyi, that they deserve to be rejected.

Van Bavel builds his case via an historical analysis, and here he turns on its head a vast literature known as the New Institutional Economics. The many works of Douglass North, Barry Weingast and John Wallis, among others, have sought to identify the conditions under which institutional change could lead societies from subjection to rent-seeking distributional coalitions (such as predatory rulers, clans, castes, guilds, merchant monopolies and established churches) to an 'open access order' with competitive markets for both commodities and the factors of production at its core.¹ Only where this transition has been achieved, could both economic growth and constitutional rule flourish.

In *The Invisible Hand?* Van Bavel offers a very different picture of the past. The pre-market society is not infested with stationary bandits, predatory elites, and rent-seeking corporate bodies but rather is a world in which the self-organization of ordinary folks flourishes. Without the cruel discipline of the market, these self-organized economic units are free to pursue multiple goals, including security, sustainability, equity and the welfare of all (pp. 265-66).

What could have tempted the inhabitants of such a happy, altruistic world to expand the role of the market beyond the allocation of final outputs to the allocation of land, labor, and capital? Van Bavel does not treat this as a theoretical question but as a historical problem. His answer is based on his reading of the economic histories of three pre-industrial societies (Iraq, c. 500-1100; Italy, c. 1000-1500; the Low Countries, c. 1100-1800). In all three societies he detects the presence of a common cycle of rise and decline, one he believes can also be found in the more recent histories of Britain, the United States, and Western Europe. Instead of a trajectory from pre-market poverty and inefficiency to market-based growth and prosperity Van Bavel finds a tragic cycle of market-driven rise and decline.

Where socially-balanced, self-organized societies enjoyed access to commodity markets (as in all of his three primary case studies) he concedes that the development of factor markets (free labor, alienable land, and credit markets) opened the path to major economic gains. But rather than unbinding Prometheus, as bourgeois thinkers have it, this extension of markets soon revealed itself as the apple offered by the serpent in the garden. In Van Bavel's reading of

the historical literature every one of these societies, soon after they had eaten of the apple – established dominant factor markets – experienced a tipping point, as destructive as it was inevitable, that brought on an inexorable growth of inequality, decline of economic performance, deterioration of social wellbeing, and the rise of plutocracy. No reform let alone self-correcting process could avail to avoid this fate.

Many social theorists have preceded Van Bavel in identifying a fatal self-destructive element in capitalism (which Van Bavel defines as a market economy late in the cycle described above). Karl Marx, Joseph Schumpeter and, by some readings, Thomas Piketty are only the most notable. Even more have identified forces that generate cycles of societal rise and fall.² All of them develop models that involve the interaction of market institutions, elite interests, culture or religion, and the state. Van Bavel's interpretation is extreme in its emphasis on matters intrinsic to the operation of factor markets. The entire dynamic of rise and inevitable decline is driven by the essential character of these markets. Elite behavior, state institutions, public policies and cultural norms are all endogenous to the dynamic of the market economy. At several points he cites with approval the mantra of economic sociologists that markets are embedded in society, but the message of this book is really that society is embedded in its markets.

The collapse of all social-economic-political relations to an epiphenomenon of the working of factor markets strikes me as an extreme and hard-to-justify theoretical move. But readers of this journal may be more interested to know whether Van Bavel's historical evidence sustains his interpretation. His reconstruction of the development of market relations in his three test cases is based on a careful reading of the secondary literatures (although he, of course, has made important contributions to the literature pertaining to the medieval Low Countries). His extremely compressed account of modern market cycles is less surefooted, in my opinion. In each case he tries to develop measures of the penetration of the market into the allocation of land, labor, and capital and relate these to measures of wealth inequality and GDP. This allows him to date the up and down swings of the cycle of each market economy. But there is a difference between observing a turning point and explaining its cause, especially when the model allows for only one possible explanation.

Not one to eschew controversy, he proposes, without much elaboration, that the beginning of the end in each case was associated with what traditional historiography sees as either high points of cultural achievement (the establishment of the Abbasid dynasty in Iraq and the consolidation of patrician rule in the Tuscan towns) or milestones in the 'march of liberty': the Dutch Revolt, Glorious Revolution and American Revolution. (p. 254) To Van Bavel these are so many nails in the coffin of his preferred society, a balanced order composed of self-organized

non-market institutions. Hovering behind this book's exposé of the shortcomings of market economies is a usually implicit counterfactual claim that such a society, which he observes only in Medieval Europe as a brief interlude between feudal and market dominance, was a viable alternative, offering greater economic achievement, greater equity, and more justice, and that it should not be rejected as a malign environment of rent-seeking distributional coalitions, predatory power centers, and corporatist controls. It is usually unfair to complain that an author did not write a different book, but I believe Van Bavel's critique of market economies can be persuasive only after we have a volume that substantially strengthens this great counterfactual claim.

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1 A brief introduction to this literature would include: Douglass North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World. A New Economic History* (Cambridge 1973); Douglass North and Barry Weingast, 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutional Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989), 803-32; Douglass North, Barry Weingast and John Wallis, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge 2009).

2 In pre-industrial societies many of these cyclical theories are based on Malthusian demographic forces. See: Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, 1991) and David Hackett Fischer, *The Great Wave: Price Revolutions and the Rhythm of History* (Oxford 1996). Others offer a political economy of over-ripeness, emphasizing elite overreach, such as Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York 1987), and Peter Turchin and Sergey Nefedov, *Secular Cycles* (Princeton 2009; the proliferation of distributional coalitions, Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven 1982); and exogenous, violent catastrophes, Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton 2017).

Olivier de Maret, *Of Migrants and Meanings. Italians and Their Food Business in Brussels, 1876-1914*. [European Food Issues, vol. 8.] (Brussel: Peter Lang, 2016) 292 p. ISBN 9782875743565.

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Of Migrants and Meanings is a highly relevant book for several reasons. It offers an analysis of food businesses in Brussels around 1900, in which the food businesses appear as a lens to understand nineteenth-century European migration, nineteenth-century globalisation of industrial food, and the nineteenth-century creation of national identities.