



## Migration as a Prelude to Hegemony

### An Integrated Comparison of Migration Processes in the Early Modern Dutch State and the United States

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#### Abstract

*The purpose of this article is to discuss the role of migration processes to changes in the world-system. We highlight the significance of these processes and their impact through a comparative historical perspective. By using an approach based on an integrated comparison, two cases are compared: the rise of the early modern Dutch state to hegemony and the corresponding rise to hegemony by the United States in the twentieth century. In presenting secondary sources on the two cases, we argue that neither expansion had been possible without a significant inflow of labor and skills carried by migrants. There seems to be a strong correlation between migration and changes in the world-system in general and the rise to hegemonic status in particular. By analyzing long-term processes like migration and its role in energizing and stimulating changes in the world-system, we argue, in line with the new economics of migration, that previous economic explanations to the rise of hegemony can be qualified. We also argue that the use of integrated comparison in the way we tentatively do in this paper can be fruitful in better understanding historical processes and their impact on power relations and economic relations in the world-system.*

**Keywords:** Migration, Labor, World-Systems Analysis, Hegemonic Transitions, Integrated Comparison



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While migration is often viewed as a defining feature of the modern era, Patrick Manning (2013) insightfully reminds us that it has long been “a central aspect of all human history.” From the earliest emergence of *Homo sapiens* in East Africa, humans have been on the move—a point emphasized by Cavalli-Sforza (1995) and Wade (2007), who argue that mobility has been intrinsic to human existence. Throughout history, migration has played a pivotal role in the diffusion of knowledge and skills, while also supplying vital labor to host societies. Moreover, it has facilitated trade and economic exchange (Harzig, Hoerder, & Gabbaccia, 2009; Eide Johnsen, 2017; Manning, 2005), positioning itself as a fundamental driver of what is now commonly referred to as globalization. At the same time, migration is often seen as depleting the countries of origin of valuable skills and expertise—a phenomenon known as “brain drain”—making international migration a double-edged sword with lasting consequences for both sending and receiving societies. Examples of how migration is an integrated aspect of human history are in abundance (Hall and Kardulias, 2010). In antiquity, the case of Athens and its openness to its *Metoikoi* (non-Athenian) population is an example of how migration has energized economic growth (Pomeroy (ed.), 2004). In Medieval times, both long- and short-distance migrations contributed to the growth of urban centers in Northern Italy (Arrighi, 2010; Rodriguez, 2023). During the Early Modern era, migration within and across states and regions played a central role in shaping the multicultural character of empires and conglomerate states of the period, (Lucassen & Lucassen 2009, pp. 347–353; Hoerder, 2002). In the same vein, historians like Dirk Hoerder have highlighted the importance of different forms of migration for the modern era, not least the transatlantic migration that involved large parts of Europe and Northern Asia (Hoerder, 2002).

Migration historians have increasingly sought to examine the systemic dimensions of international migration, incorporating both structural forces—such as global economic trends—and the role of social networks. In particular, Dirk Hoerder and Kristiane Harzig employ the concept of migration systems to theorize the interrelation between global economic processes and migratory movements. Their framework suggests that historical patterns of migration have been shaped not only by macroeconomic structures but also by individual and collective decision-making, reflecting a dynamic interplay between agency and systemic constraint. Hoerder and Harzig’s analyses of the Atlantic migration system and various European migration systems in the modern era offer compelling empirical illustrations of how migration flows have historically contributed to economic and political transformations. These examples underscore the significance of migration as a driver of change across societies and regions (Harzig & Hoerder, 2002, 2007) which raises a broader question: what role has migration played throughout history when viewed through the lens of world-systems theory?

The purpose of this article is to explore labor migration as an integral component of the world-system, emphasizing its structural and temporal significance. Our focus lies on the pre-hegemonic phase—specifically, the transitional period in which states ascend toward hegemonic status. Central to our inquiry is the methodology of integrated comparison—an approach through which we seek to understand how a general process such as migration operates across distinct historical eras within the evolving architecture of the modern world-system. Drawing on previous research,

we will compare two states across different historical periods and examine their respective trajectories toward global political and economic leadership. Our examples are the Dutch state in the seventeenth century and the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Let us now turn to the topic of migration, as it has been addressed in previous analyses within the world-systems framework.

The capitalist world-system, as conceptualized by Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), is defined by a global division of labor structured around three interrelated zones: the core, the periphery, and the semi-periphery. Emerging in sixteenth-century Europe, according to Wallerstein's original account, this system gradually expanded to encompass broader regions across the globe. It laid the groundwork for enduring structures of power, social hierarchies, and cultural interactions over the subsequent 350 years. Within the context of colonialism and imperialism, the world became increasingly interconnected through early modern trade networks that institutionalized patterns of unequal exchange (Jones & Mielants, 2010).

Economists that have studied migration have criticized neoclassical explanations grounded in the assumption that labor and skills to develop a country are always in abundance through strict economic laws that regulate streams of migrants from developing to developed countries; in fact, these quite primitive models are also found in early migration research (Ravenstein). New research within the paradigm of "the new economics of migration," has concluded that migration is not simply a rational decision made by individual migrants but that individuals are embedded in social networks that have a significant impact on migration decisions of the individuals. The decision to migrate involves not only the migrant, but for example their networks of nuclear or extended family and are dependent on both demographic conditions, knowledge, access to transportation, location of other productive forces and access to reproductive resources (Jones & Mielants, 2010). Clearly, migration—long recognised as a key mechanism for the transfer of labor power and skill sets within the global economy—has been a central and enduring feature of human history. Yet, despite its global character and the use of world-systems theory as an explanatory framework for mass migration (Jones and Mielants 2010), important questions remain about how migration itself functions as a process driving transformation within the world-system. World-system scholars P. Nick Kardulias and Thomas D. Hall (2010) have, by applying a long historical perspective, shown that inequality and exploitation have been built into world-systems since states were first developed. The intensity, the mechanisms, and the directions of inequality and exploitation have changed over time, but they have, through history and long before the European dominance, been part of state-based world-systems. They argue that inequalities and exploitation are inherent and that migration as a process and a phenomenon is not a divergence, a problem or a flaw—but that it is part and parcel of the system itself. Kardulias and Hall argue that we need to apply this long-term perspective on migration and focus on its role in the development of inequality and unequal exchange. By long-term, they do not mean decades or centuries, but millennia. In fact, as far back in time as when humans spread from Africa to populate all the world. From this time scale, movement of people, and consequently migration, is normality, not an exception (Kardulias & Hall, 2010).

Rather than treating migration as a universal aspect of human experience, they situate it within specific contexts of state formation, the development of trade networks, and the power dynamics between economically differentiated zones in a hierarchical global system.

Their primary analytical focus is the global economy, within which migration is understood as a process of profound significance. This perspective, as Portes (2007:76) describes, operates at a “higher level of abstraction,” emphasizing that international migration cannot be separated from the structural inequalities embedded in global economic relations (see also Mielants 2002).

Thomas D. Hall and Christopher Chase-Dunn employ the concept of “mode of accumulation” to articulate the underlying structural logic of the capitalist world-system, encompassing production, distribution, exchange, and accumulation. They favor this term over “mode of production” to emphasize a broader analytical scope—one that extends beyond the conditions of production to include the systemic patterns through which wealth and resources are circulated and consolidated. Their focus shifts toward the institutional mechanisms that mobilize labor and sustain social reproduction across different historical contexts. In all societies, processes of reproduction and transformation are linked to the accumulation of surplus. Within the capitalist mode of accumulation, this surplus is primarily generated through commodified labor power. However, alternative forms of labor—such as unpaid or coerced labor—also persist, particularly within segments of global commodity chains. (Chase-Dunn & Hall, 1997).

Nestor Rodriguez has explored the processes further (2023). He highlights the significance of migration in the world system by analyzing hegemony through history. Empirically, he engages the Italian city states of the late medieval period, the Dutch state’s hegemony in the 1600s, the British Empire during the nineteenth century and the hegemony of the United States in the twentieth century. Rodriguez’s purpose is to map and analyze migration of both capital and labor on a global scale. He is primarily interested in how the four hegemonic states “expanded or strengthened capitalism in the world in their eras,” affecting development and, as he puts it, “the development of underdevelopment” imposed by colonialism in regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Rodriguez, 2023).

So, migration historians and economists have positioned migration as a central and enduring phenomenon with profound economic, social, and cultural consequences for individuals, communities, and entire societies across history. This perspective aligns closely with the *longue durée* approach to migration advanced by Kardulias and Hall (2010) and other world-systems theorists, although the latter typically adopt a broader temporal scope.

From this vantage point, migration is not only a recurring pattern observable from antiquity to the present, but also a process deeply intertwined with global economic transformations and shifts in the world-system. Both migration historians and world-systems scholars emphasize its structural significance, viewing migratory flows as both shaped by and shaping the dynamics of global capitalism and geopolitical change.

Previous research into how world-system transitions occur and how new hegemony rise to power has first and foremost dealt with economic (Chase-Dunn, C., Jorgenson, A. K., Reifer, T. E., & Lio, S. (2005). pp 233–254) and direct political and military power (Hugill, 2010).

This article further explores the work of Nestor Rodriguez (2023) and a range of other scholars that have started to explore the role of migration in the world-system and how integrated comparison as a method can contribute to that ongoing project.

In both the Dutch and American cases, the transition to hegemonic status was preceded by significant waves of immigration and internal migration. This pattern suggests that the mobilization of labor and the circulation of specialized skills played a crucial role in facilitating each state's ascent to global dominance. The diachronic, integrated comparison, will emphasize labor migration of men and women, of skilled workers and of unskilled workers, of tradesmen and of farmers. We are, hence, not foremost interested in the respective temporal contexts but by the process of migration itself. We consider our two study objects to be examples and case studies on how a process (in this case migration) can be explored as one aspect of the world-system and as a driver of change.

### **Integrated Comparison**

Historical comparison, long a cornerstone of historical inquiry, has evolved from a method focused primarily on identifying differences between historical units—be they nations, regions, or civilizations—to a more nuanced approach that also seeks out meaningful similarities. Traditionally, historians employed comparison to explore exceptionalism, such as the American or French cases. These debates often emphasized contrast, implicitly suggesting that comparison was inherently about difference. Yet, as global history has gained prominence, the comparative lens has widened to include convergences and shared developments. Historical comparison is far from monolithic; it encompasses symmetrical and asymmetrical approaches, spans cultures and epochs, and ranges from micro-level studies of families or individuals to macro-level analyses of civilizations.

The social scientist Charles Tilly developed a widely cited typology that identifies four distinct types of historical comparison, each serving a different analytical purpose. First, individualizing comparison focuses on the unique characteristics of one or two cases, aiming to understand their particularities in depth. Second, inclusive comparison examines components within a larger system—such as comparing different colonies within an empire—to explore how parts relate to the whole. Third, variation-finding comparison investigates how a general process, like urbanization or demographic transition, manifests differently across contexts, highlighting variations within a shared framework. Finally, universalizing or generalizing comparison seeks to uncover broad patterns or rules that apply across multiple cases, contributing to the formulation of general theories in historical analysis (Tilly, 1984, pp.82ff, 145ff).

Tilly's typology has inspired a generation of historians, but comparison over time is a much more complicated method than synchronous comparison between different units. Birgitta Oden believes that a particular problem in diachronous comparison has been the knowledge-theoretical contradiction between a nomothetic and idiographic tradition. Historical research has primarily focused on studying historical changes as unique events, while sociological historical research has

been focused on seeking general features in the processes of change and explaining them with corresponding changes in other countries. She saw it as an important challenge to unify and reconcile these two paradigms in a theoretically grounded, source-critical, well analyzed historical-empirical research, which puts the historical processes of change at the center. For diachronic comparisons to be meaningful, there must be structural and cultural similarities between the different periods, but also differences that make it possible to identify the mechanisms behind the variations and the causes of change. She also points out that it is important to consider the change of terms over time, which can mean that the same terms are compared but not the same concepts (Odén 1994, p.13ff).

Philip McMichael (McMichael 2000, pp. 668 ff), has criticized the traditional comparative method, which is based on a developmentalist approach. He has instead launched the method of *incorporating comparison* in historical analysis. This method has three central claims. First, comparison is not a formal external procedure in which different cases are compared as separate entities with common or contrasting patterns. Instead, the comparison is integrated into the historical survey, in which its instances are comparable because they are historically coherent and mutually dependent. Secondly, they are not based on an a priori perception of the compared entities, instead they are formed in relation to each other and in relation to the whole world-system through their mutual relationship. In other words, the whole is not taken for granted but self-forming. Third, comparisons can be conducted over space and time, separately or simultaneously. By comparing over time, chronologically separated instances of historical processes, significant for changes and continuities in the world-system, can be analyzed (McMichael, 2000). To be more concrete, the comparison in this instance will investigate the process where labor migrates and the role of migration in changes to the world-system that predates and “bleeds into” the hegemonic period.

Giovanni Arrighi uses a form of integrated comparison in *The Long 20th Century*, where he compares accumulation cycles that represent related eras in a singular historical process of capitalist expansion, which they themselves constitute and modify. He analyzes the relation between capital accumulation and state building during the last 700 years. Arrighi studies how hegemonic classes and states have developed the connections of capital, state power and geopolitics. From this perspective the shifting focus of hegemony in the world-system from Northern Italy in the late Middle Ages to the Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States is studied. (Arrighi, 2010). In this article, a comparative approach is employed to examine migration as a significant process—and a potential driver—of structural change within the world-system.

For the purposes of diachronic comparison, we are using a simple model. Labor migration, particularly from peripheral and semi-peripheral regions to core states, can be analyzed across three distinct functions. Rodriguez (2023) claims that, on a primary level, migrant workers from less-developed regions are employed as producers of goods and services, generating profits for capitalist enterprises and employers. Their primary function is to produce the commodities essential for capital accumulation and profit realization. In a secondary capacity, migrants sustain the core workforce and workplaces by filling positions concentrated in the service sector. Here,

migrant workers play a critical role in maintaining the social reproduction of both the national labor force and immigrant communities. On a tertiary level, migrant labor exists in the most precarious and uncertain conditions, often reliant on temporary or informal work opportunities. Many irregular migrants in this category face significant challenges, including the constant threat of arrest and/or deportation. Their vulnerable status “frequently relegates them to a reserve labor pool, where they accept low-wage jobs with poor working conditions that are typically avoided by domestic workers” (Rodriguez, 2023).

Although occupational titles varied significantly between the early modern Dutch Republic and nineteenth-century United States—due to historical and contextual differences—the nature of the roles and their systemic functions show notable similarities. In both cases, labor was organized around productive and reproductive work, alongside a reserve workforce that could be mobilized intermittently or seasonally to meet fluctuating economic demands.

Let us now examine the two cases selected for comparison.

### **Migration in the Dutch Rise to Hegemony - The Seventeenth Century**

The Netherlands gradually established its hegemonic position within the world-system during the seventeenth century. Arrighi and Wallerstein pinpoint the period from 1625 to 1675 as the height of Dutch economic and military dominance. During this era, Dutch hegemony extended across Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, the Western Atlantic, and the Caribbean (Wallerstein, 1974; Arrighi, 2010). The economic rise of the United Provinces, which began in the late 1500s, was propelled by productive efficiency in key industries such as fishing, shipbuilding, textiles, and agriculture (Wilson, 1957; Wallerstein, 1980). Each of these sectors relied, to varying extents, on migration as a critical source of labor (Rodriguez, 2023).

The main source of Dutch wealth was the dominance of the Baltic Sea trade. The Baltic Sea region was an integral part of the international economy at the beginning of the seventeenth century as the region was an important reservoir of raw materials for Western Europe in general and the Netherlands in particular. There was a European demand for grain, timber, iron, copper, and tar from the region. In turn, salted herbs, spices, sugar, textiles, wine, and other processed products were imported to countries around the Baltic Sea from the Netherlands (Arrighi, 2010).

The Netherlands gained a dominant role in the Baltic Sea partly by reducing shipping costs. This was achieved by using considerably cheaper and innovative industrial shipbuilding and cheaper raw materials such as timber from softwood instead of oak. The Dutch ships, *fluyts*, were also constructed so that they required considerably less crew, almost half compared to other countries' vessels. In fishing, innovations included the introduction of factory ships, herring buses, that combined processing and the barreling of the fish on the ships which offered the opportunity to conduct large-scale fishing far from shore for weeks at a time (Rodriguez, 2023). The Netherlands was also militarily involved in the Baltic Sea area with the aim of securing their trade through the strategically important narrow sound between Denmark and Sweden. During the first

half of the seventeenth century, the Baltic Sea could rightly be called *Mare Nederlandica*. (Arrighi, 2010 159 ff; Wallerstein, 2011 37 ff).

Shipping innovations in both the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and as far away as Northern Italy (Wallerstein, 2004; Braudel, 1997) gave the United Dutch Provinces control of important trade routes. In addition to this, the country, during its war of independence, engaged in a “reverse taxation” of the Spanish empire by looting their fleets, which carried silver from America to Europe. Amsterdam was established as a central repository for the world's trade in huge warehouses for upwards of a decade of consumption. In addition, financial institutions were established in Amsterdam which became the world's financial center with the world's first permanent stock exchange. Another important new institution behind the world domination of the Netherlands was limited liability companies with a monopoly on trade in a certain geographical area. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company was founded, whose activities were not limited to economic business activities, but also included warfare conducted to further the financial interests of the company. These wars were often aimed at competing states (Arrighi, Giovanni 2010 159 pp; Wallerstein, Immanuel 2011, 37 pp).

The Baltic Sea trade involved more than the movement of goods. Dutch specialists and businessmen were equally central, contributing both economically and culturally to the surrounding states. One example is the merchant and industrialist Louis de Geer, who among other things developed the Swedish ironmaking industry through the import of Walloon metalworking experts (Wallerstein, 2011 pp. 37). Other examples include experienced ship captains and sailors as well as trade capitalists, shipbuilders and craftsmen. Dutch out-migration was an integral part in the establishment of Dutch control over strategically important trade routes and key areas. Trade between the Baltic states and the Netherlands and out-migration of Dutch with specialized skills and capital was complemented by extensive migration to the emerging world power (Lucassen 2009, p. 371). Immigration to the Netherlands was an important precondition for continual economic growth and the country's growing trade dominance demanded, among other things, a continual influx of skills and labor. During the Netherlands' 80-year-long war of independence from Spain, the southern Spanish-dominated parts of the Netherlands suffered destruction. Consequently, the population, mainly Protestants, due to a mix of religious and socio-economic factors, fled north to the Dutch Republic. After Spanish soldiers destroyed Antwerp, large numbers of its merchants and craftsmen fled to Amsterdam, enabling the city to take over as the principal centre of world trade. In addition, Jews fled Portugal and economic and religious immigrants came from Germany, Scotland, and Scandinavia to the Netherlands. Immigrants settled mainly in cities and towns where in some cases they made up half of the population. As a result, the Netherlands took over Northern Italy's position as the most urbanized region in Europe (Maas, Willem 2013, pp 390–401).

Between the outbreak of the Dutch revolt in 1572 and 1650, thousands of Flemish from the southern part of the Netherlands settled in the newly established textile cities of Amsterdam, Leiden, and Haarlem (Janssen, 2017, pp 234ff). A large proportion of the Flemish who migrated were textile workers. Leiden, especially, developed into a key centre of the textile industry and

became the focal point of a Western European migration network of textile labourers from the 1590s to 1650 (Jan Lucassen 1987; Leo Lucassen and Boudien de Vries 2001, pp. 24–42, 28–30). The municipal government of Amsterdam enacted policies to provide housing and other inducements to skilled foreign textile workers from the southern Netherlands and other countries to revitalize the textile industries of the city after it had been invaded by the Spanish in the 1500s (Barbour 1950).

However, in many cases the migration from the southern Netherlands could, in its early stages, first go to England or Germany and only afterwards to the northern Netherlands which is why it is difficult to assess the size of this migration. We should, as previous research has, consider this migration as part of a larger European migration system with the Dutch Republic (the northern part of the Netherlands) at its center. So, during its rise to hegemonic power, immigrants came to the Netherlands from many countries in what has been called a North Sea Migration System, including Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Western Germany (Van Lottum, Jelle-Jaap 2014, pp.182ff). Many of the immigrants came from relatively nearby regions in present-day Germany—at that time of course several smaller states. In all, hundreds of thousands of people traveled from the western and northern parts of Germany. In some Dutch cities, certain occupations even became dominated by German immigrants. In Amsterdam for example, German bakers and cobblers outnumbered their native colleagues. Female migrants from Germany found employment as maids and in other service occupations (van, Lottum, 2008).

The Dutch cities experienced large-scale migration, both from migration from abroad and from internal migration from rural areas. As a result, the Dutch Republic experienced a strong wave of urbanization in the early 1600s. Some of the immigrants that moved in simply replaced Dutch who were at the same time out-migrating, to the Baltic area and to the colonies. Much of what was going on in the growing economy was connected to maritime long-distance trade, and shipbuilding, trading, fishing, and agriculture were all focused on this. There was a strong and constant demand for skilled Dutch sailors and the consequence of this out-migration of Dutch men to transport occupations or to rural areas where new industries were established was a significant gender imbalance in some Dutch cities. Many male migrants that came from other countries could marry Dutch women, thereby taking a fast track to receiving Dutch citizenship. Female migrants, on the other hand, had a much harder time finding a suitable (native born) partner and a significant portion remained unmarried. Some Dutch historians have claimed that this fact led to an early modern welfare system that in turn attracted female rural workers to the city (van de Pol and Cuipers, 2005). In textile and other manufacturing industries, employers sought child laborers. Many orphans taken from orphanages in the United Republics and from abroad, came to work in manufacturing (Rodriguez, 2023).

Not all migrants settled in the republic for good as the early modern Dutch state was in dire need of both permanently settled and temporary migrants. Male migrants from the continent, again, mostly Germans, could, in addition to the urban trades in Dutch cities, find employment in the ever-growing Dutch fleet of trade and military vessels. The Dutch East India company presented one important job opportunity. The immigration from Denmark and Sweden was not as significant

but indicates the same pattern as the German one. The female migrants from Denmark, contemporary Norway and Sweden found employment as maids whereas the men seem to have found employment in the maritime trades as sailors and craftsmen (van, Lottum, 2008). The Scandinavian and German migration peaked during the 30-years war. Rodriguez also points to the fact that many of the sailors employed in fishing and trade were catholics from the southern part of Europe even though this was prohibited by laws (Rodriguez, 2023). Women, who made up a large part of the immigrants could, apart from becoming maids, also find seasonal employment in the cities both in the manufacturing industry and in other service work. Much—perhaps most—of women’s work was done in or for households, lodgings, inns, and workshops—as servants or as cleaners, taking in washing, nursing children or the sick, and repairing clothes. But to obtain a more “respectable job,” an immigrant woman needed contacts and recommendations. Lacking these, female immigrants would be restricted to the very lowest jobs such as turning the wheels at diamond workshops, doing odd jobs for their own kinsmen, or finding their way in the shadier parts of the informal economy or even criminality. Half of the convicted thieves in the second half of the seventeenth century in Amsterdam were women, the majority of whom were immigrants.

The position of women in the Netherlands was stronger than in other parts of Europe during the 1600s and their professional activities were encouraged (van de Pol and Cuipers, 2005). This was, with reasonable certainty, an effect of the labor demands generated by a growing economy. The abundance of available work in the growing Dutch cities might also have been a pull factor for foreign women, despite the fact that not all sectors of the labor market were open to them.

In addition to attracting large numbers of unskilled immigrant laborers, Dutch cities actively encouraged skilled migrants to settle more permanently by offering a range of incentives. These included reimbursement of relocation costs, provision of start-up capital, access to land for production, and tax relief (Lucassen, 1994, p. 151-165). However, such targeted benefits provoked criticism from native Dutch citizens, who argued that immigrants were receiving advantages denied to them. In response, municipal authorities reserved certain trades for native-born residents. For example, only Dutch citizens were permitted to engage in the fish trade and peat mongering, although most other occupations remained open to migrant men and women. Despite the controversy surrounding these policies, the strategy of subsidizing and stimulating immigration proved effective across many regions of the Dutch Republic. Urban centers expanded, and key industries such as craftsmanship, shipbuilding, and metalworking flourished. The painting tradition, rooted in the Habsburg era, also continued to develop during this period (Janssen, 2017, pp. 234ff, 240f).

From the marriage statistics it is possible to get an idea of the melting pot character of early modern Amsterdam. The civic registers inform us of names, places of birth, ages of the couples and the profession of the groom. From 1600 to 1800, 650,000 people appear in the registers: 60 percent of the grooms and 44 percent of the brides were not born in the city, and 36 percent of the grooms and 21 percent of the brides were not even born in the Dutch Republic. This tells us

something of the significance of migrated labor during the period and the role of the immigrants in the United Republics (van de Pol and Cuipers, 2005).

As previously stated, the Dutch Republic took the lead in urbanization from Northern Italy and the degree of urbanization is also part of the larger migration patterns. Amsterdam's population grew from 50,000 in 1610 to more than 200,000 in the mid 1600s. Already in the first half of the seventeenth century it was the third largest city in early modern Europe. However, despite urbanization, as Rodriguez points out, rural sectors also demanded workers in the thousands to carry out large projects of land reclamation and peat production (Rodriguez, 2023).

The out-migration of capital, specialized labor, and farmers was significant and consisted of Dutch trade company personnel such as tradesmen, officers, and soldiers. Non-Company immigrants consisted of merchants, sugar planters, manual laborers, retired soldiers, and artisans (Rodriguez, 2023). These groups travelled to overseas colonies on the African coast, Southeastern Asia, the Caribbean, and Brazil. These colonialist enterprises had an economic significance far greater than the number of Dutch migrants involved. Dutch colonialism also brought forced migration of slaves from the African continent to Dutch plantation enterprises and internal migration of indigenous people in the colonies. These migrations were sometimes forced but could also be a voluntary flight from colonial oppression (Rodriguez, 2023).

Rodriguez follows Wallerstein in his periodization of the Dutch rise to hegemony and its decline. He sets the ascending of hegemony to 1575–1590 and the decline to 1650–1672. These stages are difficult to uphold but offer a time frame for how to understand the migration patterns (Rodriguez, 2023). The years of ascending hegemony, 1575–1590, involved the expansion of Dutch industries such as cloth production, land reclamation, foreign trade, and so forth. Declining hegemony in the post-1650 period involved the stagnation and decline of many of these industries and of population growth in urban areas (de Vries, J., & van der Woude, A. (1997).

So, to sum up, labor migration and the migration of capital and trade, carried by the businessmen and tradesmen, was intimately connected to the rise of Dutch economic and political power as it offered a steady flow of laborers and craftsmen into different parts of the developing economy both carrying out reproductive and productive work. Immigrants were not least important to the maritime sector and a steady stream of migrants, capital, and small businesses energized the coastal regions of the Dutch sphere. The cities were also dependent on a steady influx of low-skilled female service workers in different domestic trades. Exact numbers on migrants are difficult to assess as practically no censuses have been preserved from this time. However, overarching trends seem clear. Jelle van Lottun has in his research talked about a North Sea migration system that centers on the expansion of the Dutch economy in the seventeenth century. So, the Netherlands constitute an expanding core in the world-system, that depended on migration to keep expanding its economy during the late 1500s and early 1600s. At the same time, other areas of Europe, except for England, constituted a periphery that was drained of resources by out-

migration (van, Lottum 2008, p.54). The most striking example being the Habsburg-controlled areas of contemporary Netherlands and the western part of contemporary Germany.

In conclusion, the large-scale immigration to the Dutch Republic—initially spurred by the war of independence from the Habsburg Empire—transformed the region into a central hub within contemporary European migration networks. This influx of labor and expertise not only met the demands of a rapidly expanding economy, but also actively fueled further growth, as the United Provinces secured the human capital necessary for sustained development. Immigration played a crucial role not only in internal expansion but also in the Republic's colonial ventures beyond its borders, making it a key driver of both domestic prosperity and global ambition.

### **Migration and the Rise of U.S. Hegemony: A Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Perspective**

After the decline of the Netherlands from the eighteenth century, the United Kingdom took over the dominant economic role in the world-system (Arrighi, 2010). The British hegemony, based as it was on the breakthrough of industrial capitalism, in the global economy, in turn, began to lose power from the late 1800s and was exposed to growing competition from other core states during the late nineteenth century. In the conventional reading, the main challenge to British hegemony came from Germany and erupted in the form of two British/American-German wars (WW1 and WW2). WW1 and WW2 have been regarded as the moment when the United States secured its future hegemonic position by preventing Germany from taking Britain's place (Flint & Taylor, 2007. p.57).

Donald Meinig shows that the emergence of American hegemony passed through several stages. Through the late 1800s the United States preferred continental isolation, which was a phase where the United States was not fully integrated within the world-system under British leadership. This changed in the 1890s when the United States switched to "hemispheric defense" and a bid on Empire through efforts in controlling the Caribbean, parts of Latin America, and some areas of the Pacific (Meinig, Donald, 1993, 1994). In contrast, Peter Hugill claims that the United States was involved in the struggle for hegemony in the world-system already in 1861, in other words, at the start of the American Civil War, as it initiated a challenge to British leadership. No war ever erupted at that time as direct confrontation between fleets was avoided, but the economic warfare was intense. Not least cotton took center stage in this economic conflict (Hugill, 2010). Either way, British hegemony in the global economy began to lose power from the late part of the 1800s and is, from that time, exposed to growing competition from other centers in the world-system.

Beverly Silver and Giovanni Arrighi compare the hegemonic position of England in the "Long 18<sup>th</sup> century" to the hegemony of the United States during the post war period of the twentieth century (Silver & Arrighi 2003, pp. 325-355). The distinction they draw concerns three related but analytically separate processes: the establishment of world domination, the strategies employed to maintain it, and the mechanisms through which hegemony was ultimately secured. They argue, in line with Meinig, that the United States of the nineteenth century was not generally to be considered a full part of the system of "Pax Britannica." Rather, the United States, being a

country the size of a continent, developed its own road to hegemonic status in the world-system, primarily based on a growing domestic economy that had outgrown the strongest European economies in both Germany and the British Empire at the entry of the 1900s. It could, however, be argued that the American economic growth was a direct consequence of the inclusion of Indian land and hence, in itself, a colonial project rather than merely a growth of the national economy. So, parallel to the British development of hegemonic power through their gradual inclusion of India and large parts of Africa in their Empire, the United States expanded over the American continent. The rise of American economic power was inseparable from the sustained influx of European immigrants who actively participated in the settler-colonial project. Much like European colonialism, this expansion relied on the conquest of Indigenous lands (Fenelon, 2023). This project of outright invasion extended beyond the territories controlled by Indigenous tribes, encompassing the subjugation of populations in the Pacific, the Caribbean, and parts of Central America from the late nineteenth century onward (Rodriguez, 2023).

The American hegemony, which was finally established by the terminal crisis of British hegemony in the early 1930s and the world wars where the United States contributed to destroying the economy of its competition, differed from the British in several ways. Arrighi (2010) contrasts the U.S. and British economic models that fueled their global dominance, describing them as corporate capitalism and free-trade imperialism, respectively. While Britain's model heightened intercapitalist competition, U.S. corporate capitalism aimed to reduce market instability by minimizing competition. On a global scale, the shift of hegemons involved several significant differences. First, by the fact that American hegemony was resting on a publicly regulated world currency system. Second, through a contractually regulated world economy, and third, through the internalization of world trade in large transnational companies.

Of special importance for American hegemony was the establishment of the latter, a company model characterized by vertically integrated, bureaucratically managed companies, which were first established nationally, in the form of railroad companies, steel companies, lumber companies, agro business, and so forth, which then continued to expand internationally (Arrighi, 2010). Throughout the 1920s, productivity grew faster in the United States, increasing the competitiveness of American companies. At the same time as the global economic system became increasingly dependent on the dollar, American investments soared. At the end of the 1920s, U.S. loans and direct investment abroad were equivalent to \$8 billion. This process of American capitalist expansion was temporarily interrupted by the 1930s crisis and protectionist reactions (Silver & Arrighi 2003, pp. 325-355).

The explosive expansion of the American economy from the late nineteenth century and the establishment of refined forms of exploitation of resources on the American continent demanded an increasingly large labor force. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States received growing numbers of immigrants and in the period 1820-1930, more than 36 million people immigrated from Europe; added to this were significant numbers from Asia. According to Leslie Page Moch, immigration in the period between 1840–1899 amounted to 18,008,151. Another 18,845,278 immigrants arrived between 1900 and 1930. Europe accounted for 85% of

U.S. immigration from 1840 to 1929. Women formed 40% or slightly more of the European immigrant groups arriving in the United States (Moch 2003). The transatlantic migration flows gradually shifted from Northern and Central Europe to the Eastern and Southern parts of the continent and, hence, followed patterns of structural change in Europe (Manning 2005, pp.150-155). The migration itself gives us hints on how the world-system changed during the nineteenth century and how economic expansion and decline is mirrored by transnational migration flows.

As Dirk Hoerder claims, several transnational migration systems were tied together and formed an integrated hemispheric system in the nineteenth century that extended, “from Russia’s Jewish Pale settlements to Chicago, New Orleans, Buenos Aires and beyond.” This “mega-migration” system was characterized by movements of men and women from increasingly impoverished classes of Europe and Asia towards new emerging core areas of the world economy. This “hemispheric” migration system also involved millions of internal migrants in Europe that gravitated to industrializing core areas of the continent and an ongoing urbanization in core areas in the United States. European peripheries provided labor for the European core areas but, to an even larger extent, fueled economic expansion in the United States in a process where that country outgrew the European empires (Hoerder 2002, pp.331ff). Parallel to this immigration there were also extensive investments of European capital in the United States. During World War I, however, these resources were depleted in the costly warfare in Europe and at the end of the war, investments over the Atlantic changed in the reverse direction. (Silver & Arrighi 2003).

The pattern of European migration to the United States is well known. Many migrants were from a new class of rural poor while others were artisans and other specialists. First, the migrants came from peripheries on the British Isles and Germany, primarily from rural areas under economic pressure. In stages, migration then expanded to include peripheries in Northern, Eastern and Southern Europe. Migration that included Asia, both North and South, was also frequent and Chinese labor migration was intense up to 1883 when the so-called “Chinese Exclusion Act” was enforced (Hoerder 2002, pp398ff).

At the start of the American Civil War, three distinct economic zones had been established in the United States, that were in various degrees connected to and affected by changes in global labor and economic regimes. An industrialized zone in the Northeast, an expansion zone in the West that integrated new farmland and areas for the extraction of raw material and one zone in the South characterized by large plantations run with slave labor producing for the world economy. After the Civil War, the American industrialized core area extended from the Atlantic coast to Chicago and St. Louis. The Civil War changed political and economic power relations as the southern plantation owning elite as a political power group was significantly weakened. What was left of the political establishment were the industrialists of the Northeast. This group was essentially controlling the American economy after the Civil War. It also controlled the streams of migrants arriving from Europe and Asia. From 1871 to 1920, the United States received 20 million immigrants net which became an important part of the workforce both in the industrial economy of the Northeast and as small farmers and workers in the westward expansion. The myth of the pioneering farmer was, and still to some degree is, upheld among the European ethnics that became

part of the expanding American national project, but the fact is that most migrants ended up in tightly knit ethnic networks in the cities or became casual laborers in the rural western part of the country. By the turn of the nineteenth century, commercial agriculture had already transformed American agriculture, and many small farmers had abandoned farming and moved to industrial and service work in the cities. The European immigrant farmer was, however, a prerequisite for the American expansion. The role of these pioneers was never solely connected to farm work as farms brought with them job opportunities for farm laborers, workers in transport, and in industry. The expansion of commercial farming in the West generated agro-business such as the milling industry in Minneapolis and the slaughterhouses in Chicago, which, with time, produced for domestic and international markets. This agro-business became a backbone in a diversifying western economy based on immigrant labor during the first part of the twentieth century.

The scholarship on migrant labor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is extensive. It includes, for example, Rudolph Vecoli's seminal studies of Italian workers in Chicago (1964); investigations of immigrant labor on the killing floors of the American meatpacking industry (Barrett, 1990); analyses of Eastern European miners (Betten, 1967; Alanen, 1982); and classic accounts of Eastern European workers in steel production (Brody, 1960; Brody, 1993). These kinds of studies, especially micro historical and local studies, are plentiful. Previous research also emphasizes the role of female immigrants in the expansion of the American economy. One example is Lars Olsson's study of The Munsingwear Knitting Company in Minneapolis which depended on a small army of immigrant women from all over Europe during the late 1910s (Olsson, 2018).

Another is Katie Friedman-Kasaba's work on Jewish and Italian women in the New York garment industry in the early 1900s (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996). Likewise, there are also studies on the importance of immigrant labor in service (Lintelman, 1991) and transportation (Fishkin & Chang, 2019). Other general studies offer insights into the role of immigrant labor in an expanding American economy (Gutman, 1977; Montgomery, 1999/1988). Immigrants, hence, played an important part in the American expansion both through their participation in commercial agriculture, as farm workers, as settlers, and as industrial labor in the cities (Gabaccia, 1988; Green, 1998; Keil&Jentz, 1983 etc.). Possibilities to establish themselves as settlers and farmers were over time, gradually replaced by dreams of a successful urban life in one of the growing cities in the United States. As transatlantic communications became more efficient and cheaper, more frequent journeys across the Atlantic were made possible and seasonal work became increasingly common for Southern European laborers during the first decades of the twentieth century (Piore, 1979).

Wherever they came from and regardless of the culture they brought with them, migrants became part of an army of workers which constructed cities and infrastructure that they later lived in and used (Foner, 2014, pp.29-32; Gutman, 1976) and that worked the factories and cash crop farms in the growing American economy. The timing and the skill sets brought by different groups decided their fate in the expanding American economy. Scandinavians whose migration started earlier than from Southern Europe had a better chance of taking up farming than the later

immigrants who tended to end up in urban areas to a larger extent. But even the Scandinavians became city dwellers over time. Not less than 67% of the Swedish immigrants lived in American cities by 1910. In fact, as early as the 1840s, two thirds of the European immigrants ended up as different types of waged labor and some ethnic groups, like the Irish, never took up farming to any large extent (Hoerder, 2002, p.336). One important aspect of the establishment of the United States' hegemonic position was, as has been pointed out, the westward expansion. In this expansion, the European migrants who took up homesteads and worked new taxable land, became an important resource (Hoerder 2002, pp.344ff). Their breaking of new land meant the integration of new geographical areas into the global capitalist economy. The literature on ethnic entrepreneurs, scientists and innovators of different kinds is plentiful. The ethnic small business owner was an integral part of immigrant society and the ethnic community often found creative solutions to the challenges encountered in the American cities.

As was shown in the Dutch case, out-migration and expansion also played a crucial part in the American rise to hegemony. The colonial projects in Cuba and in the Philippines meant the dethroning of Spain as a colonial power in the Pacific and the Caribbean. During the twentieth century out-migration of American capital and investors and specialists such as engineers and industrial specialists became a significant part of the rise to hegemony.

As American immigration laws became stricter in the 1920s, and, finally with the depression in the early thirties, migration from Europe all but came to an end. Other streams of migration were however also significant in providing the expanding American economy with a workforce. The Bracero program of the period 1942-1964 had been preceded by streams of undocumented Mexican immigrants for decades before the 1930s (Valdez, 1991, Rodriguez, 2023). Via the Bracero programs, American agriculture got access to hundreds of thousands of low wage Mexican seasonal workers that took part in harvesting, picking fruits, and so forth at American farms on the brink to its hegemony. The "legal" immigration was never enough to cover the demand, so, parallel to the Bracero system, unauthorized migration continued (Massey et al. 1987). Later on, people from other parts of Central America started migrating. These migration streams became an established pattern that has formed political and economic relationships between the United States and Central America into the twenty-first century. Rodriguez claims that these migration patterns were, to some extent, caused by early twentieth century U.S. capital's penetration that "advanced the commercialization of Mexican agriculture," which displaced rural workers and made migration a survival strategy for many of these workers (Rodriguez, 2023).

Apart from the Central American immigration, Rodriguez describes another migration pattern of significance during the U.S. period of hegemony, namely the internal rural to urban migration. The migration of African Americans and Mexican Americans was part of this pattern. Even though these migration patterns intensified during hegemony as a response to the demand in the American metropolis for labor in the service sector and the continued reliance of the American economy on low wage farm workers, these patterns were not new. On the contrary, the evidence points to the fact that these migration streams had been established many decades before American hegemony. African Americans had started leaving the southern agricultural economy for the northern cities

several decades before 1945 and as Rodriguez shows in his book, the Bracero program was merely a state level approval of an already established migration pattern and of an increasing demand in the American agricultural sector. So, some of the migration patterns that characterized the period after 1945 were already well established during the “prelude” to hegemony. The American global dominance merely accentuated this labor demand, and it took on new forms as the American white middle class in the new metropolitan centers demanded service workers in addition to workers in manufacturing and agriculture (Rodriguez). Rodriguez convincingly shows that the labor migration to urban areas went mainly to metropolitan centers. He claims that this migration was “connected to the spatial restructuring of monopoly capital in metropolitan central cities and suburban rings” (Rodriguez, p.177). In this move to the metropolis, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and other racial minority groups settled predominantly in central cities where they took jobs mainly in manual occupations.

As in the Dutch case, Rodriguez shows that the “Non-White or ethnically different groups were used to do the hardest work for the lowest pay and the Mexican and African American populations had significantly worse living and working conditions than the white populations in the American Metropolis.” This points to, apart from other economic concerns, how migration offered additional advantage for core countries in the way they could use less developed and subordinated regions as labor reserves from which to draw temporary labor as needed. In the Dutch case, this was partially organized as forced migration and forced labor. In the American case it was organized in a state program, in unauthorized immigration or as a consequence of long-term discrimination and exclusion of minorities (Rodriguez, 2023).

So, in conclusion, through the massive immigration during the long prelude to hegemony, the United States secured the labor and skills necessary for continual expansion. Immigration not only fueled the existing economy but was also paramount to the expansion within and beyond national borders.

### **Conclusion:**

As we have seen in the Dutch case, the European periphery had provided necessary labor to core areas in Europe since the early modern period. Migration—whether externally induced or internally motivated—brought craftsmen, traders, and unskilled laborers, including both men and women, into the Dutch provinces of the Netherlands. These movements contributed significantly to economic expansion and accelerated the processes of urbanization across the region. Cities such as Amsterdam were among the largest and the most modern in Europe at the time. For the Dutch state and the Dutch economy, migrants became a prerequisite for the rise to hegemony. The inclusion of other areas as subordinate colonies and trading partners of the Dutch empire offered the opportunity to use subjugated people and slaves as forced labor who were paid little or nothing at all during the hegemonic phase. This stimulated both forced and voluntary migration of large groups within the Dutch world-system.

The United States received labor migrants during its rise to hegemonic status in the world-system from the end of the 1800s by becoming a nexus in the complex and quite sophisticated

global migration systems that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century and up to WW1. In both cases, hegemonic status can be tied to economic growth fueled by a prelude period of strong immigration that continues into the hegemonic period. Given the size and the growth of the American economy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigration to that country was tied to its expansion westward and was, as Silver and Arrighi argue, a prerequisite for rising to hegemony. The American rise to dominance in the world-system was tied to three main factors: industrial economic growth, increasingly strong domestic market for products that was not subordinated to the British hegemony of the nineteenth century, and the boost offered by long-term and significant immigration from the second half of the nineteenth century. This immigration, like in the Dutch case, involved both skilled and unskilled workers, both men and women, who took on roles both in production and reproduction and that were both part of the large work force of transient, temporary day laborers and more steadily employed workers. Even though many strategies, like the massive foreign investments during hegemony, the Pax Americana was based more on maintaining systemic stability than the Dutch system which was based on aggressive trade policies, where both military means and its strong economic position and technical advantage were used. Migration was in both cases an important prerequisite for hegemonic status and the establishment of an economic base for further expansion on a global scale. The interplay between economics, politics, and the acquisition of labor seem to be crucial in both cases.

In this article we have dealt with two different states that established themselves as hegemonic in the world-system, the Netherlands in the seventeenth century and the United States in the twentieth century. Although the states and their hegemonic status took on very different expressions and the economic world-system was at different stages of development, there are some interesting conclusions to be drawn related to the role of migration. In both cases, the hegemons were relatively new state formations in the form of republics that freed themselves from monarchist empires, the Spanish and the British respectively. In both cases, the hegemonic phase was preceded by bloody and costly wars that had in turn been preceded by large-scale economic expansion. In the case of the Netherlands, both their 80-year war of liberation and the European 30-years war, which ended with the Westphalian peace, were preceding the hegemonic period. In the U.S. case its rise and replacement of the British hegemony was primarily tied to the outbreak and aftermath of the First World War but also to the emerging social unrest in the European colonies in Asia and on the African continent.

But apart from these aspects, they also share the long-term process of extensive migration, processes which preceded their rise to a hegemonic position in the world-system. Large numbers of traders and labor brought capital and skills to the two states and were necessary in establishing its leading position. The early phases of immigration were, in both the U.S. and in the Dutch case, followed by emigration related to economic and political expansion; one form was colonial expansion. The two states, hence, show a significant ratio of “out-migration” of experts to the periphery and semi-periphery which is, even though numerically smaller, largely parallel with the process of in-migration. In the Dutch case it involved merchants, mariners, craftsmen and other specialists that moved to European peripheries, like Sweden, or to colonies that were established

on the African coast and in Southeast Asia. In the American case, it involved the colonization of the West by farmers, mining companies, and timber merchants. Later this changed into an outwards migration to Latin America and the Caribbean when American companies established themselves there. Both in-migration and out-migration and expansion, we argue, are significant in understanding transformations in the world-system. Female and male migrants in the early modern Dutch cities as well as in the emerging cities in the United States were crucial in the productive and reproductive work necessary to maintain outward expansion, the integration of new areas for exploitation and new markets. Migration can thus be described as one fundamental and central process when relations in the world-system change, and when new states gradually conquer a hegemonic position. This integrated comparison is focused on one aspect of transformations in the world-system. One general conclusion that can be drawn is that migration, in relation to changing relationships between different state formations, can be seen both as a catalyst to change and an accelerant to something that is already set in motion.

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