

example, forty percent of the population of Amsterdam were foreign-born. The role of the Dutch in international trade and in colonizing other parts of the world could never have been a success without an ability to adapt to highly different conditions and cultures. Even the tulip, the ultimate national symbol, was, in fact, imported from Turkey in the fifteenth century.

Much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterized by an emigration surplus. Many Dutch left the country for one of the colonies – above all for the Dutch East Indies – or they emigrated to the "New World." After the Second World War this pattern reversed once more. Since then, immigrants have been arriving from former colonies, from labor recruitment countries around the Mediterranean Sea, from other countries in Europe, and, increasingly, from all over the world. The recent history of immigration to the Netherlands and the immigrant presence in the country are not drastically different from those in nearby West European countries. Currently, about eleven percent of the Dutch population of 165 million people are foreign-born and for that reason can be qualified as immigrants. If one includes the so-called second generation (that is to say their Dutch-born children), the percentage goes up to twenty.

Thus, one in five persons living in the Netherlands is either an immigrant or a child of an immigrant. These figures include people with a background in other EU-countries, in Western countries outside the European Union as well as in pre-independent Indonesia. The number of residents with "non-Western origins," as official Dutch statistics call them, stands at around 1.8 million, just over one-tenth of the population. Among these "visible minorities" three communities stand out in size: Turks, Surinamese and Moroccans, each numbering between 300.000 and 400.000.

The Turkish and the Moroccan communities are legacies of the so-called "guest worker" policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which were followed by a rather generous program of settlement and family reunion. Most migrants from Surinam arrived in the 1970s, when this former Dutch colony acquired political independence. Since the late 1980s the origins of immigration have become much more diverse. The end of the Cold War led to a significant growth of East European migrants and of asylum seekers, some of whom later acquired refugee status. Besides, growing numbers of Dutch and foreign residents find their spouses in other countries. In recent years, the number of highly skilled migrant workers has also increased, although many of them do not settle permanently. Meanwhile, follow-up migration among the three largest "non-Western" communities, the Turks, the Surinamese and the Moroccans, is continuing, albeit at a much slower pace than before.

Foreign citizens constitute only a minority of all people of immigrant descent. In fact, only 4.5 percent of the population of the Netherlands do not hold a Dutch passport, less than in most nearby countries. This is largely an effect of a generous naturalization policy in the past and the fact that nearly all (post-)colonial migrants hold Dutch passports anyway. Yet, unlike many other immigration countries in Europe, citizenship is not generally considered as the primary distinguishing factor between migrants and the native population. Rather, ethnic origin tends to be more relevant in the public perception as a means of differentiating between *them* and *us*. The Dutch have even coined a term for this: the Greek-based word *allochtoon* (non-indigenous)

Immigration and Multiculturalism

Han Entzinger

The prevailing self-image of the Dutch has always been one of a strong international orientation and an open mind towards influences from abroad: an open society with open borders. The Dutch prided themselves on their tolerance for other cultures and religions, and they were believed to welcome immigrants and refugees from all over the world. In the late twentieth century the Netherlands had become one of the countries in Europe with the largest share of foreign-born residents. Its generous and respectful policies of multiculturalism served as a shining example for other immigration societies. Since the turn of the millennium, however, the Dutch mind appears to have been closing at an unprecedented speed. Immigration is now seen as a major problem, as a threat to social stability and to Dutch culture. The murders of politician Pim Fortuyn (2002) and film director Theo van Gogh (2004), both of them outspoken antagonists of immigration, in particular from Muslim countries, shocked the nation. In the 2009 European elections Geert Wilders's anti-immigration and anti-Islam Freedom Party (PVV) became the second largest party of the country, only three percentage points behind the Christian Democrats (CDA).

Why this sudden change? Is immigration really undermining the country's stability and culture, as certain antagonists claim? Is it really challenging the country's identity, or would that identity have changed anyway, even without migration? What are the main arguments used in the current debate on immigration and how valid are they? These are some of the questions to be dealt with in this chapter. Before analyzing the current debate, however, an overview of the highlights of Dutch immigration history, with an emphasis on the past half a century will be presented.

A Brief History of Immigration

Already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Republic was a safe haven for Protestants and Jews persecuted elsewhere in Europe.¹ Particularly welcome were those who brought along entrepreneurial skills and money. Without immigration, the Dutch "Golden Age" would have been much less prosperous. Over many years, tens of thousands of migrant workers from neighboring countries came to work in agriculture, industry or shipping. Many of them settled for good. Numerous family names that now seem utterly Dutch, in fact have French or German roots. In the year 1700, for

refers to someone whose ethnic roots lie outside the Netherlands and who, for that reason, can be differentiated from *autochtoon* (indigenous), the native Dutch. An interesting, but unresolved question, of course, is whether an *allochtoon* can ever become *autochtoon* and, if so, at what stage in the integration process or even after how many generations.

Settlement patterns of people with an immigrant background, irrespective of where one places the defining boundary between allochtoon and autochtoon, are quite unbalanced. As in most other countries in Europe, migrants tend to be overrepresented in the larger cities and underrepresented in the countryside. Initially, most migrants came to the cities, where employment and educational opportunities were best. Once migrant communities had settled there, follow-up migrants tended to join them, taking advantage of the increasing social and geographic mobility of the original population, who had left the least attractive housing to the new arrivals. The largest four cities in the country (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) house only thirteen percent of the total population of the Netherlands, but they accommodate over thirty percent of all immigrants. In Amsterdam and Rotterdam almost half the population has an immigrant background (first and second generation), as do two-thirds of the school-aged children and youth in these cities. In certain neighborhoods only a small autochtone population of students and pensioners has stayed behind.

Indonesian Rijsttafel: Sharing the Table

Classical integration theory argues that immigrants preserve their food habits long after they have become assimilated into their new surroundings. Many tend to abandon their language, culture and music more readily than their food. It may take up to several generations before the immigrant offspring have taken on the same diet as their native peers. This is certainly true for many newcomers in the Netherlands. Admittedly, the relatively unsophisticated traditional Dutch cuisine may not have been too appetizing to them anyway.

What is often overlooked, however, is that newcomers may also influence local cuisine. This is how Americans – and the world – got their *pizzas*, how *chicken tikka masala* became a standard dish in the United Kingdom, and why the French have taken on *couscous*. The Dutch have their own version of this culinary creolization: Indonesian *rijsttafel* (or "rice table"). *Rijsttafel*, now a favorite in numerous Indonesian restaurants around the country, was unknown until after the Second World War. In fact, it is an invention of the Dutch colonial elite in the Netherlands East Indies, who were the only ones able to afford serving up to some fifteen or even twenty local dishes all at the same time in one meal – each of them in a little bowl, along with some rice. The Indonesians themselves were far more modest, limiting themselves to just one or two of these dishes, or even just a bowl of fried rice.

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After Indonesia's independence, over three hundred thousand "repatriates" – made up of the Dutch colonial elite as well as Indonesian Dutch of mixed origin (*Indische Nederlanders*) – came to the Netherlands. They brought *rijsttafel* with them, and introduced it into Dutch cuisine. Surprisingly, given the fact that most dishes are very spicy, *rijsttafel* quickly became rooted in its new surroundings. Some Dutch restaurants abroad even feature Indonesian *rijsttafel* as their most typical Dutch dish. Since people have begun to travel the world more, cooking in the Netherlands has become more international, as in many other countries. However, good old *rijsttafel* remains an interesting example of how migration may affect eating habits in two directions.

Over half a century has passed since the large scale immigration from Indonesia. A third generation has come of age and, sadly, the typical colonial *Indische* culture in the Netherlands has almost disappeared. "Indisch" has become a remnant of the past – or *tempo doeloe*, Malay for "the old times." The fact that about three out of four people with a background in Indonesia have married a native Dutch person may have contributed to this. However, every Dutchman knows what *nasi goreng*, *babi panggang*, *gado gado*, *sambal goreng boontjes* and *saté* means and many do like it a lot. Who would have predicted that three hundred and fifty years of colonial heritage once would pass through the stomach?

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However, doubts were voiced about the effectiveness of this minority policy.⁴ Some critics claimed that stressing ethnic differences would risk perpetuating them and would therefore become an obstacle to the migrants' fuller social participation, a phenomenon known as *ethnicization* or *minorization*. This was all the more worrying, since the economic downturn in the early 1980s had left large numbers of low skilled workers – often of immigrant origin – without a job. By 1990, more than one third of all Turkish and Moroccan men in the Netherlands were unemployed; unemployment rates for women were even higher. Most of the Dutch considered it inappropriate to encourage these immigrants to return, since the Dutch economy owed so much to them. Consequently, however, immigration became a growing burden for welfare and social policy regimes. Yet it was widely considered to be politically incorrect, if not racist, to discuss this in public.

Nevertheless, dissatisfaction grew under the surface. In 1991, the leader of the conservative Liberal Party (VVD), Frits Bolkestein, triggered a first public debate about immigration, which focused on the presumed incompatibility of Islam and "Western values." His remarks were influenced by the Rushdie affair in the United Kingdom and by recurrent disputes in France about the wearing of headscarves in public schools. Concerns grew in the Netherlands that the strong cultural relativism which had inspired the Minorities' Policy tended to perpetuate the immigrants' marginal situation rather than foster integration.

After the 1994 parliamentary elections the Christian Democrats (CDA) remained outside the government for the first time in almost a century. Traditionally, they had been the heralds of pillarization. This explains why the new coalition of three non-religious parties, headed by Labor Party (PvdA) leader Wim Kok, was now able to shift the policy focus from respecting cultural diversity to promoting the immigrants' social and economic participation. Significantly, the Minorities' Policy was renamed *Integration Policy*. From that moment on, culture was largely seen as a private affair; providing jobs to immigrants had become the main policy objective. Mother tongue teaching was removed from the core curriculum and later disappeared from the schools altogether. Besides, it was recognized that the migrants' lack of integration was also due to their insufficient familiarity with the Dutch language and society. A program of mandatory Dutch language and *inburgering* ("civic integration") courses was launched, which every newly arriving migrant from outside the European Union would be obliged to attend.

The ambition to improve the migrants' position in employment, education, housing, and other significant spheres of society proved to be quite successful. Registered unemployment among *allochtonen* dropped dramatically, though it still remained substantially above the national average. It was generally assumed, however, that it was the prospering economy rather than targeted government policies that had led to this improvement. Also in education the position of *allochtonen*, particularly of the second generation, improved significantly during the later 1990s. Although they were still overrepresented in lower forms of secondary education, their participation in higher education went up rapidly and their school dropout rate declined. The housing situation of immigrants no longer differed significantly from that of the native population of similar income levels. In other words, immigrant

First Steps Towards Integration

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the beginning of large-scale immigration and the emergence of the welfare state more or less coincided in time.2 No wonder that, in the 1950s, it was mainly through a number of wellchosen social policy measures that some 300,000 so-called "repatriates" from Indonesia were encouraged to assimilate into Dutch society, with which most already had a certain familiarity. Later, in the 1960s and 1970s, social policy again played a crucial role in the reception and guidance of newly arriving immigrants, low skilled "guest workers" from Southern Europe, Turkey, and Morocco, as well as people from Surinam. A major difference, however, was that these migrants' residence was seen as temporary, both by the Dutch authorities and by most migrants themselves. As a consequence, no efforts were made this time to promote integration. On the contrary, migrants were encouraged to retain their cultural identity. The official justification was that this would help them reintegrate upon their return to their countries of origin. One of the most outspoken expressions of this approach was the introduction of mother tongue teaching for migrant children in Dutch primary schools as early as 1974. The authorities also facilitated migrants in setting up their own associations and consultative bodies.

This approach of creating separate facilities based on community identities was not new to the Dutch. Under the segregated system known as pillarization (verzuiling) various religious and ideological communities had long had their own institutional arrangements, such as schools, hospitals, social assistance agencies, newspapers, trade unions, political parties, and even broadcasting corporations. Within the limits of the law, each community was free to create its own arrangements. This enabled them to preserve their specific identity and to "emancipate" their members in their own way.3 Since the late 1960s, however, pillarization has lost ground. Yet, it was generally believed that what did not work anymore for the population as a whole might be good for the migrants who, after all, were perceived as fundamentally different from the Dutch and as people in need of emancipation. Until about 1980 the promotion of institutional separation could easily be justified with an appeal to the migrants' presumed temporary residence. However, this institutional separation persisted even after the Dutch government finally acknowledged that most migrants would stay and should be encouraged to integrate.

The path that was envisaged for integration was remarkably similar to the one that had worked in the past for the religious and ideological "pillars." It was a combination of combating social deprivation through selected support measures provided by the then still generous welfare state, promoting equal treatment, and encouraging "emancipation," while aiming at the preservation of the communities' cultural identity. To this end the migrants were labeled *ethnic minorities*, and the policy on their behalf became known as *Minorities' Policy*. Interestingly, a country with remarkable ethnic homogeneity now introduced the notion of ethnicity as a basis for differential policymaking. The authorities and a vast majority of the population were convinced that this was the best way to promote the "emancipation" of migrants. It was this policy of deliberate separation that drew worldwide attention from protagonists of multiculturalism.

integration, measured by the traditional standards, advanced. The Dutch believed they were on the right track.

Problematizing the Issue

Nevertheless, certain problems related to immigration proved to be more persistent. The still rather amateurish integration courses failed to meet the rising expectations about the Dutch language proficiency of immigrants. Growing segregation led to a decrease in inter-ethnic contacts both at schools and in immigrant concentration districts. The still pillarized school system reinforced existing patterns of segregation and facilitated Muslims in establishing Islamic primary schools, some of which failed to meet Dutch standard quality norms. Even more worrying were the high delinquency rates among certain immigrant communities, which, at first, were mainly seen as a result of the lack of opportunities and of discriminatory practices. Later, the inability of immigrant parents to raise their children in a Western environment and, increasingly, their unfamiliarity, if not disagreement with Western values such as equality and tolerance were blamed for faltering integration and high crime rates. Finally, concerns were growing, though seldom expressed, about the relatively strong reliance on various social policy provisions among ethnic minorities.

At the start of the new millennium, two contradictory narratives began to emerge in the Dutch public debate on integration. The "official" one expressed that considerable progress had been achieved in all major indicators, such as participation in employment, in education and housing. Overall, the second generation was doing significantly better than their parents, particularly among the Surinamese. The continuing identification among Turks and Moroccans with their countries of origin and with Islam was taken as a sign of a successful multiculturalism: institutional integration could indeed go hand in hand with preservation of the original cultural identity. The sharp rise in naturalizations during the 1990s was yet another sign that growing numbers of immigrants saw a future for themselves in the Netherlands.

The competing view was much less optimistic. Paul Scheffer, a publicist and a prominent member of the Labor Party, was among the first to voice this view openly. In a much-debated article called The Multicultural Tragedy he stated that Dutch multiculturalism had failed.5 Instead, he argued, a new ethnic underclass was emerging of immigrants who did not identify sufficiently with Dutch culture and society, and who were unwilling and unable to integrate. Scheffer voiced the concern that many Dutch people felt - but did not express - about continuing immigration, stagnant integration, increased segregation and a rapidly growing Muslim population. Scheffer argued that this would eventually undermine social cohesion and the functioning of the liberal democratic state, particularly because of the supposedly illiberal ideas of the Muslims. He accused the Dutch elite of having remained largely indifferent to these developments. Their cultural relativism had allegedly prevented them from demanding the newcomers to adapt. Respect for cultural difference had prevailed over understanding the needs of the less privileged members of the native population.

In this climate of increased sensitivity regarding immigration in general and Islam in particular, the terrorist attacks of September II, 2007, in the United

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States reinforced the impression that a "clash of civilizations" was imminent.6 Around that same time the star of Pim Fortuyn suddenly began to rise on the Dutch political stage. Fortuyn was not really against immigrants as such, but his primary concern was the assault on democratic liberties that might result from the presence of so many people unfamiliar with Western values, particularly Muslims. Further immigration, he argued, would only exacerbate these problems. Fortuyn was killed by an animal rights activist nine days before the parliamentary elections of May 2002. His newly established party, however, came in second in these elections and became a partner in the new government coalition. This coalition proved to be very unstable, and was soon replaced by a more stable coalition that embarked on a tough antiimmigration agenda, which included the curtailing of family migration and the promotion of returns. Soon thereafter, immigration to the Netherlands dropped significantly. Between 2004 and 2007 the country's migration balance was negative, for the first time in four decades. In that period, Poland and Lithuania were the only two other EU-countries where emigrants outnumbered immigrants.

Integration policy also took a more assimilative direction. The dominant view became that migrants were to blame for their slow integration and should take the initiative to step up this process. Some lip service was paid to the idea that integration should be two-sided and that the established population should also leave some space to the newcomers, but only a few concrete policy measures pointed in that direction. Acquiring Dutch citizenship, for example, was made much more difficult and expensive, which provoked a plunge in naturalizations. At the request of the city of Rotterdam, the stronghold of Pim Fortuyn, a new law was passed which enabled local authorities to prevent people with low incomes (that is to say immigrants) from settling in certain neighborhoods. Enrollment in mandatory integration courses was enforced, even for allochtonen who had already been living in the country for decades. Passing the integration exam became compulsory, and failing to do so now led to a fine and to denial of permanent settlement rights. Most of the new measures left little or no room for a public recognition of the migrants' cultural identity. This led to the paradox that the same migrants who had been encouraged to preserve their own identity in the days of multiculturalism, were now blamed for their lack of identification with Dutch culture.

The emphasis in the integration debate has shifted quite clearly from promoting a fuller social participation for immigrants towards requesting newcomers to assimilate to Dutch culture and to assume a "Dutch identity.", Understandably, this has provoked fierce discussions on the nature and contents of that identity. The most outspoken feature of this "culturalization" of the immigration debate has been the growing emphasis on Islam as a major cause of many integration problems. Although less than half of all non-Western *allochtonen* in the Netherlands are Muslims, many *autochtonen* now consider Islam and its perceived expansiveness and oppressiveness as the root of all evil. They see the growing presence of Islam as a threat to the Dutch liberal and permissive attitudes on issues such as sexuality, equal rights, freedom of religion, and freedom of expression. In fact, Theo van Gogh was murdered in 2004 by a Dutch-born Muslim fundamentalist of Moroccan background who felt the film director had insulted Islam. This murder

After it had supported multiculturalism for many years, the Dutch Labor Party (PvdA), of which Aboutaleb meanwhile had become a prominent member, was eager to hear this message from someone who had been an immigrant. When Labor joined the national government after the November 2006 elections, Aboutaleb became the Deputy Minister for Social Affairs and Employment. His nomination did not pass without political turmoil, as several parties on the right saw his dual citizenship as a sign of disloyalty to the Netherlands. Aboutaleb survived a vote of no confidence in parliament and he was confirmed in office. In fact, the Moroccan law would have made it impossible for him to relinquish his Moroccan citizenship, even if he had wished to do so.

Two years later he became mayor of Rotterdam, by appointment of the national government upon nomination of the city council, as is customary in the Netherlands. Local politics in Rotterdam had been sharply divided since Pim Fortuyn's party Leefbaar Rotterdam ("Liveable Rotterdam") won the local elections of 2002, ending ahead of Labor, which had governed the city since times immemorial. In 2006, Labor had taken the lead again, mainly as a result of a huge turnout among the Rotterdam immigrant communities. Understandably, "the Liveables" were seeking revenge. At first, they strongly objected to Aboutaleb's nomination, again because of his two passports, but they soon realized that the new mayor's rather hard line on integration came close to theirs. Nevertheless, Aboutaleb does not face an easy task. Although a Dutch mayor is supposed to stand above all parties. he often has to maneuver very skillfully. In a socially, ethnically and politically polarized city like Rotterdam this certainly is a challenge, even for an immigrant as successful as Ahmed Aboutaleb.

Open Borders, Closing Minds?

Why has this dramatic turnaround occurred? Anti-immigration sentiments have also been growing elsewhere in Europe, but nowhere has the swing been as huge as in the country once reputed for its tolerance. Of course, the economic crisis and the rise of Islam as a political force may serve as explanations. These, however, are worldwide phenomena and there are no reasons to believe that these have hit the Netherlands harder than other European countries. It is more likely, therefore, that the explanation should be found domestically. In mainstream politics – not just the Freedom Party – the belief is widespread now that earlier policies of multiculturalism must be held accountable for the immigrants' lack of integration. Recognizing and facilitating their cultural identity has kept immigrants in the margins of Dutch society. In hindsight, what had worked in the days of "pillarization" for the emancipation of native religious and ideological minorities should not have been copied for immigrant ethnic minorities with strong attachments to other countries and to Islam, a world religion not rooted in the European traditions. provoked strong reactions among large segments of the native population, who tended to be blind to the fact that the vast majority of Muslims in the Netherlands also strongly disagreed with the killing.

Since then, immigration and integration have risen to the top of the political agenda. Attitudes towards these issues have become much tougher, not only in politics, but also in society at large. Undoubtedly, the frequent linking of Islam, immigration, and security has had a negative impact on public opinion among both *autochtonen* and *allochtonen*. Surveys indicate a decline in acceptance of cultural diversity, once considered a trademark of the Netherlands.⁸ Several members of parliament and celebrities, some of immigrant origin themselves, have been threatened and are now under constant security protection. One of them is Geert Wilders, the leader of the newly established Freedom Party (PVV), which has a strong anti-Islam and anti-immigrant agenda and which, according to opinion polls in 2009, is favored by about one-fifth of the electorate.

Ahmed Aboutaleb: Multicultural Mayor



Just days before the United States elected Barack Obama as its first non-white president in November 2008, a similar milestone was reached in the Netherlands. For the first time in history, a Dutch Moroccan became mayor – not just of a small village, but of the second largest city in the country: Rotterdam, with 600,000 inhabitants.

That new mayor was Ahmed Aboutaleb, born in 1961 in Morocco. At the age of 15, he migrated to the Netherlands, where his father had arrived as a "guest worker" some years before. He received his training as an engineer and held several positions in journalism and in Dutch public administration before becoming the founding director of Forum, a publicly financed information and advocacy agency for multiculturalism. After he acquired a feel for politics in that position, Aboutaleb was elected an alderman to the Amsterdam

local government in 2004. Only months later, film director Theo van Gogh was murdered by a radical Muslim of Dutch-Moroccan descent. In the grim aftermath Ahmed Aboutaleb, together with Amsterdam's mayor Job Cohen, was able to defuse tensions, both on the Moroccan and on the Dutch side. He proved to be a real bridge-builder, not by talking softly about the need for mutual understanding, but by demanding that the Moroccans step up their integration efforts and consider the Netherlands unequivocally as their first home.

In this view, multiculturalism has perpetuated the immigrants' marginality and explains their perceived lack of loyalty as well as the emergence of social tensions and delinquency.

To what extent do such views reflect reality? There is ample research evidence that most people of immigrant background living in the Netherlands are faring quite well.⁹ An all-party parliamentary committee concluded in 2004 that "in most cases immigrants have integrated remarkably well and that this has occurred in spite of public policies rather than as an effect of these."¹⁰ Research among Rotterdam youngsters of Turkish and Moroccan descent also indicates that their integration, as measured by all traditional standards, has progressed substantially over the past ten years." Their social situation has become more similar to that of their *autochtone* peers, and so have their ideas, views and expectations on almost everything, except religion and issues related to it. At the same time, however, both *allochtonen* and *autochtonen* mutually perceive a widening of the cultural distance between them and an increased discrimination. Turkish and Moroccan youngsters, especially the more highly educated, are less optimistic about their own future than Dutch youngsters and also less optimistic than they were ten years ago.

Such findings, confirmed by numerous other research outcomes, may lead to the conclusion that, in fact, immigrant integration has been quite successful in most cases, but that the dominant definition of "successful integration" has changed meanwhile. Undoubtedly, Dutch society has changed profoundly in the last few decades. Immigration has contributed significantly to these changes. Large segments of the native Dutch population perceive this as a threat, and see immigration and Islam as a major scapegoat for changes that may have gone too fast. Some recent dramatic events have reinforced thinking in terms of us and them or, for that matter, in terms of autochtonen versus allochtonen. One should wonder, however, whether the initial multiculturalist approach must not also be seen in this perspective. Was it really as genuine and hospitable as most people believed in the earlier days of large-scale immigration? After all, facilitating immigrants to retain their own cultural identity may also have served as a ready excuse for not letting them become part of mainstream society. To the first generation such a marginal situation may still have been acceptable, but the second generation that has since come of age tend to claim a fair piece of the pie. It seems time for the Dutch mind to open up, even more so since closing the borders to new immigration has proved to be impossible.

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