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Ressort: Politik

"Either man will end war, or war will end man."

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The population of the Netherlands has now reached 18 million, according to the Dutch Statistics Office. At the end of last year, 2023, the population stood at 17,942,942. The population grew by 131,651 people in that year alone. This is not a small number.

The primary driver of this growth since 2015 has been immigration, particularly from countries affected by war. Notably, a significant number of migrants have come from Syria and Ukraine. Additionally, increased life expectancy has also contributed to the population increase.

This article focuses on those who have been forced to flee their countries due to conflict. The ongoing conflicts in Syria and Ukraine have driven many to seek safety elsewhere, often in European countries. As a result, people from these nations are now found across much of Europe, leading to a rise in population density, including in the Netherlands.

This influx has sparked concerns among some local residents. Population growth can strain resources, leading to increased unemployment, housing shortages, and other social challenges. Furthermore, new arrivals often receive state support and social assistance until they obtain residence permits and secure employment. This has been a significant source of discontent for some.

This situation is not new; a few years ago, many people from Iraq also fled to Europe due to conflict. In general, where there is war, people seek safer havens, and Europe has been a common destination. Both the migrants seeking safety and the locals concerned about the impact of migration have valid perspectives.

The critical question is how long this will continue. As long as wars persist, it will be challenging to stem the flow of people to Europe. If this migration continues, it is difficult to predict whether dissatisfaction and potential conflicts will arise within Europe.

Avoiding war is sometimes impossible. As Niccolò Machiavelli wrote in "The Prince": "War cannot be avoided; it can only be postponed to your disadvantage." Yet, I find myself more in agreement with the words of English philosopher Bertrand Russell: "Either man will end war, or war will end man."

This phrase was also echoed by the 35th President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, during his speech

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at the United Nations in 1961. Kennedy highlighted the devastating effects of war and called on world leaders to choose the path of peace (source: Boris Tenenbaum's "The Great Churchill"). Today, it is imperative that the global population urges world leaders toward peace. The world needs peace—because the alternative is too grim to consider.

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