

CHAPTER 4

Whom to Exclude: The Quota Acts

While arguments for restriction emphasize social separateness, arguments for selection by characteristic highlight what, exactly, the separateness is supposed to protect. Reasons that contestants in a debate supply regarding specific groups' desirability or dangerousness might not reveal the truth about their private motives for policy change, but they do reveal the sorts of reasons that the public finds acceptable, useful, or laudable. Arguments that people make about immigration policy, as about other border control policies, reveal the ways in which people think about borders' value and the value of what those borders create or maintain, differences between the society inside and all of those outside. Tracing the way that public reasons change over time can, then, show how sovereignty's social value has changed.

Of interest are two questions: what did legislators and members of the public think would be the consequences of immigration, in general and of various groups, and how did one viewpoint come to dominate? This chapter approaches the question first by laying forth arguments made for and against immigration restriction. Those arguments concerned proposals that either died, were adapted or fused with others, or became successful. This is the first of four chapters asking the same questions; when they are taken together, they provide evidence about the relationship between arguments and policy change in this area and about the role of choice in creating a sovereignty at the center of which is exclusive control over people. The first section considers arguments made for and against excluding specific numbers of immigrants; following it is one that covers arguments made about certain types of immigrants.

The Public Interest in Numbers of Immigrants

Competing assertions of sovereign prerogative often consumed the congressional debate, but in spite of congressional hopes, such assertions alone were not sufficient to convince Americans to halt, then reverse, immigration.¹ The country had, after all, remained open to white Euro-

peans since their first settlement, and logically, the claim that the country should exclude merely because it could begged the question of why it had not done so before. Clearly, something had to have changed; some new threat had to justify predictions of impending disaster. The two possibilities, a change in who was coming and a change in how many were coming, each caused enormous alarm.

Both assumed that immigration would destroy sovereignty, then went on to detail exactly how this would be accomplished. A majority of the arguments that legislators advanced in this period were arguments by analogy; the process of immigration was invasion, while its result was colonization. Fears about the numbers involved focused on two images of cultural destruction: that of invasion by multitudes intent on conquering and that of subversion by small cells or colonies loyal to foreign powers. Legislators considered them equally deadly.

Reason (Metaphor): Armies and Armageddon

Americans opposed to immigration feared conquest. In the era around World War I, military analogies ran through discussion of immigration's consequences. Martial imagery shaped how contestants framed the threat and responses to it. Immigration restriction was "a matter of national defense."² "During the decade immediately preceding the outbreak of the European war there came to our shores, with the momentum of an irresistible army, an average of over ten hundred thousand immigrants every year";³ The commissioner-general in his 1928 retrospective on the Quota Acts pointed out that before restriction, "Ellis Island resounded for years to the tramp of an endless invading army."⁴ As protectionism applied both to the economy and the polity, defense applied against both foreign soldiers and immigrants. "The duty of our Government to the people who compose it to meet and repel evils coming from other governments is absolute. It can make no difference whether these evil influences are war, destructive immigration, or whatever other thing it may be."⁵

Thomas Heflin compared open immigration to leaving the gates of Fort Mims open, which, he said, had led Indians to massacre its residents.⁶ Biblical prophecy also infused descriptions of immigration's consequences. M. M. Neely, for example, declared:

It is our duty to defend not only against enemies in arms but against the millions of physically, mentally, and morally inferior men and women scattered over Europe, Asia, Africa, Mexico, and the islands of the sea, who, as prospective immigrants, are awaiting their opportunity to rush to our shores. [If they are successful] we shall have

justified the following words of Isaiah: ‘Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate.’⁷

Yet more dramatically, Thomas Heflin intoned, “Choose you this day whom you will serve, the god of good government in the United States or the mammon of immigration agents and steamship companies [bringing] an alien army with bombs and dangerous propaganda to come into our country, working injury to the institutions that our boys protected and defended with their blood and lives.”⁸

Apocalypse would follow invasion. “The foreign invader,” warned Thomas Lilly, “is not most dangerous when he comes as a hostile army, but when he comes into the field as an army of labor. So have all the nations of the past gone down.”⁹ Another, concerned about overstatement, observed that “though the steady stream of foreigners coming to our shores cannot be termed a ‘military’ invasion, as was the Hun invasion of the Roman Empire, it is an invasion which, if permitted to go unchecked, may have in the centuries to come the same fatal effect upon our country as did the Hun invasion of old.”¹⁰ In fact, “nations are destroyed by tides like this.”¹¹ Jacob Milligan amplified this Lesson of History: “History teaches us that the downfall of the centers of civilization of the past has not been by armed invasion but by the bringing in of alien people as laborers or slaves.”¹² Even actress Lillian Russell chimed in: “The higher civilizations of past ages, history teaches us, succumbed to such foreign invasions as now threaten us.”¹³

Reason (Metaphor): Virus and Poison

Viruses also invade. Another way to view the hazards immigrants posed was to view the American people as an organic whole and immigrants as a virus or poison. Much earlier, countries had undertaken to regulate the spread of disease through shipping restrictions and quarantine, but at the turn of the century, while infectious disease remained a problem, fears of contagion focused on political health rather than on physical health. “The body politic . . . is not unlike the human body. We are taught that germs of all diseases lie in the human system, and we are dependent upon the power of the system to generate enough combative force to destroy those germs.”¹⁴ Degeneracy and anarchism could infect, but so too could race itself be a virus. “I would quarantine this Nation against people of any government in Europe incapable of self-government for any reason, as I would against the bubonic plague. . . . I will admit the old immigration of the . . . light-haired, blue-eyed Anglo-Saxons or Celts”;¹⁵ “those who take this [melting pot] view forget that there is little or no similarity between the

clear-thinking, self-governing stocks that sired the American people and this stream of irresponsible and broken wreckage that is pouring into the lifeblood of America the social and political disease of the Old World.”¹⁶ Walter Chandler argued that “the citizenship of a nation, like the morals of character or the blood of the body, should be kept free from poison, corruption, and contamination.”¹⁷ Consumption would otherwise be swift. “Within a few short years . . . the endless tide of immigration will have filled our country with a foreign and unsympathetic element . . . and the true spirit of Americanism left us by our fathers will gradually become poisoned by this uncertain element.”¹⁸ The response to sickness was to isolate and purge the body. This is what restrictionists advocated.

Reason (Metaphor): Tariff and Prohibition

Immigration restriction can stand alone as a logical extension of the impulse to protect, but it can also stand in support of other isolationist policies. Excluding labor supports a protective tariff, as excluding subversives and internationalists aids military and diplomatic isolation. Not surprisingly, these three pillars of isolation became interlinked. Sometimes the economic arguments were no more rational than the racial arguments; for example, Richard Austin complained that millions of “idle slackers” were coming to the United States—to take jobs from American men (!)¹⁹—but often legislators viewed immigration policy as one pillar of a coherent protective policy. “I voted last week for an anti-dumping bill,” one observed, typically, “to prevent the dumping of manufactured products into this country, and I will vote for any bill to prevent the dumping of undesirable aliens into this country.”²⁰ Restrictionists drew a parallel. “I can see no difference between a provision of law providing for a differential in the admission of goods and a similar provision relating to immigrants—not the slightest difference.”²¹ Citizens, feared legislators, would see this parallel too and would take revenge on legislators who did not follow through on their restrictionist promises. “If we erect a tariff wall to keep the underpaid labor of foreign countries from competing in foreign factories and on foreign farms with well-paid and self-respecting American labor, and if at the same time we let the foreign labor in to compete with our people, in their own yard, the American workingman would have a perfect right to complain that our tariff was made to protect the employer and not the employee and that our platform promises were a fraud and a snare.”²² If they did not take revenge on legislators, they might target each other. “There can be no greater danger to the Republic than unemployment, low wages, and poverty among our own people.”²³ “If any of our people prefer to live as Europeans, it would be better for them to go

to Europe and live rather than jeopardize our Americanism and, through competition, destroy our prosperity by bringing Europe to America.”²⁴

Immigration restriction was also bound up with another type of ban, that against alcohol. Again, the two policies were connected both symbolically and practically. At the symbolic level, each ban purported to steer the country back to wholesomeness, to protect the virtuous from the possibility of being overrun by the immoral. At a practical level, each ban required the same type of border control, which meant that someone intent on breaking the alcohol law could make some extra money breaking the immigration ban.²⁵ Just as liquor smuggling shot up after Prohibition, and smuggling of goods shot up after Congress raised the tariff, immigrant smuggling shot up after Congress began to consider suspending immigration altogether. “Since the placing on the statute books of restrictive legislation and as a consequence more recent numerical limitation of immigration, the bootlegging of aliens—a lucratively attractive endeavor for the lawlessly inclined—has grown to be an industry second in importance only to the bootlegging of liquor.”²⁶ Prohibition stood with the tariff and diplomatic isolation as a cornerstone of the country’s thoroughgoing attempt to close the borders and clean house.²⁷ Immigration restriction was both an independent policy in support of this general goal and a supporting component of the other three policies. “Indeed, it seems strange that it should have taken so long for such a self-evident policy of fostering American institutions and protecting the welfare of the American public to have recommended itself to a people that has always prospered under a wise doctrine of tariff regulation and other measures designed to preserve American standards of living.”²⁸

Reasoning by analogy guided visions of the result, as well as of the process, of immigration. Again, images of conquest and submission competed for primacy. Many feared that groups of foreigners would remain loyal to their country of origin, passively in time of peace but actively in time of war. They believed that other countries promoted this “internal colonization,” encouraging immigrants to maintain non-English newspapers, loan societies, remittances, and the like, in preparation for war or at least economic competition with the United States. In this view, immigrant groups were “indigestible lumps” at best and hostile colonies at worst, enervating the country, sickening it, and eventually destroying it altogether. Vying with this image was that of subversion or erosion, where the danger was not that of future trauma but of a slow wearing-away of the boundaries separating the United States from others. The country would simply cease to be. These two images focused on dangers emanating from without; the country’s purpose and value were, by implication, their opposites: wholeness and homogeneity, which were later extolled them-

selves. Legislators' understandings of what they were to protect influenced their definition of threat, but outside threats also shaped their views of the America they were to protect.

Reason (Metaphor): Internal Colonization

That America certainly did not tolerate enemy colonies in its midst. Immigrants outside were armies; immigrants inside were subversive colonies, and "in but a few years these aliens in very despair will be pounding heavily at the very pillars of our Government, while those who have come ahead of them a few years back with their socialism, their communism, their Bolshevism, have been merely gnawing like rats at our foundations."²⁹ The United States was losing its integrity. "Foreign colonies," worried James Byrnes, "have been created in the large cities,"³⁰ and "when we contemplate that more than 10 percent of our total population owe and acknowledge allegiance to foreign flags and foreign governments, and decline to become 'part and parcel' of us, my friends, we must . . . admit that the time has come for prompt and decisive action (Applause)."³¹ Some viewed such colonies as a necessary by-product of too-rapid immigration, others saw them as a necessary consequence of racial difference, and still others saw them as key to a foreign plot to undermine the country.

First, the pace of entry could, alone, be a problem. Through too-rapid immigration, the country was turning into a Babel. "When we have foolishly listened to a sufficient number of such appeals to fill America with the pandemonium and woe which now curse so many parts of the world, who will relieve our children from the distress which we are cooking up for them now?"³² Heterogeneity was tantamount to dissolution: "There will be hundreds of motley, mongrel, anarchistic, jabbering millions here; but with such a people in the ascendancy, the country will have ceased to be America."³³ The immigration committee's chair, Albert Johnson, warned that "the U.S. must act and act very soon for its own protection and for the protection of those who would enter whom we can neither feed nor support nor assimilate."³⁴

Second, and more troublesome, racial difference could be the source of these "colonies." In 1911, the commissioner-general of immigration warned, "Another fact which tends to accentuate the seriousness of this change in race is the habit of most of the new immigrants to colonize."³⁵ This is due to an abundance "of alien races naturalized or born here whose hearts, like the hearts of their fathers, still give paramount homage to the old countries and clans from which they sprang. If tempted to it, under cir-

cumstances permitting it, they would side with alien races and foreign lands.”³⁶ Race, not learning, made good citizens. Citizenship should be granted by ethnic descent, not any longer by place of birth. James Reed earnestly pointed out that just because “a cat has kittens in an oven, that does not make them biscuits.”³⁷ If Asian immigration, for example, were allowed, “we would then become a Japanese and a Chinese colony.”³⁸ In fact, “our failure to bar the Japanese has resulted in the development of alien colonies being entirely under the protection of a foreign government and amenable in only slight degree to American influence.”³⁹ This situation was a consequence of the country’s failure to discriminate. “There are certain races that will not assimilate. They are foreign to each other. There are certain laws of Nature which man can not suspend, and there are certain laws of Nature which it is not desirable for man to undertake to suspend,” or the result will be “civil war.”⁴⁰

Third, more ominously, other countries could and would, with hostile intent, purposely establish colonies within American borders. “It is well known that every nation in the world, except the United States and possibly a few others, encourages emigration of the least desirable of its citizens and subjects and strives to keep the most desirable within its own borders.”⁴¹ Starting before the war, “large numbers of undesirables from other countries have come here in such numbers as to suggest that some foreign countries are trying to unload on us not only their surplus but the most undesirable and most objectionable part of their surplus.”⁴² Such “alien colonies in the United States speaking foreign tongues, maintaining foreign community interests, reading only newspapers printed in their own languages, are un-American and a menace to the Republic.”⁴³ A representative from California asked, “Are we to fall before the onslaught of peaceful invasion and look forward to the time that will surely come when the Japanese on the Pacific coast will hold the balance of power?”⁴⁴ (Since Congress believed the norm to be Anglo-Saxon, by definition immigrants from northwest Europe could not establish foreign colonies.) Pockets of non-Anglo immigrants would grow until they were the norm and the Anglos were a subject minority.

Their threat could coalesce and become military. Immigration threatened international war, civil war, or at the very least, crime. “These foreign peoples who may not become citizens build up, as it were, an *imperium in imperio*—a state within a state, a country within a country. Is it necessary for me to argue that such a situation is charged with danger to America?”⁴⁵ Countries within countries meant eventual war. The Japanese presented the most acute threat, for they were not only bellicose “by nature” but had developed an impressive navy. Further,

there is unquestionable evidence that they have a racial loathing for the people of the United States, and it is not only an economic question, therefore, but a military question. In case of a conflict with Japan we would have to meet, not only a frontal attack but a rear attack, and hence the necessity of keeping ourselves prepared where we have such a large body of aliens notoriously hostile and who are still controlled by their national officers in the United States.⁴⁶

Once more, if evidence were needed, the recent war provided it.

The Great War had for its incipency assassinations from one of the countries from which you cry discrimination; the people among whom there has thrived anarchy and blackhand assassins; nationalities among whom much hatred is fomented; overthrow governments in a night and destroy those in power. Many nations who rule by might rather than by right. Can people of this kind come to America, settle in groups of their own kind in large cities, have a change of heart, and a change of mind? . . . No one can serve two masters.⁴⁷

Immigration also promised civil strife. “We wish to check the increase of a foreign, alien people, who can not become citizens of the United States, and whose presence provokes domestic trouble and may cause national estrangement.”⁴⁸ All aliens do not commit crimes, announced the chair of the immigration committee, “but much crime of a non-American kind is committed by them.”⁴⁹ Because of their inherent racial tendencies or their learned political spinelessness, immigrants destabilized society.

Reason: Subversion

Fear about domestic colonization rested on the assumption that communities of immigrants threatened America; there was some critical mass, perhaps the size of a foreign-language newspaper’s circulation, at which immigrants’ degeneracy became actively threatening. Fear about subversion, on the other hand, rested on the assumption that each individual posed a threat. Some in this period concentrated on the entrants’ illegal status. Foreshadowing debate in the 1980s, some worried about the country’s future, “especially when it is considered that there is such a great percentage of our population who may not even seek naturalization; who, so long as they remain with us, must preserve an alien status because of their illegal entry; whose first act upon reaching our shores was to break our laws by entering in a clandestine manner—all of which serves to emphasize the potential source of trouble, not to say menace, that such a situation

suggests.”⁵⁰ Others were more upset that immigrants were in fact legal: “Is not this condition alarming, when such a great proportion of the voting strength of this country is in the hands of the foreign born?”⁵¹ Either way, immigrants would eat away the country’s core.

Of particular concern to legislators was the possibility that government would be the immigrants’ target. These fears were closely tied to upheavals abroad. A century earlier, the federal government had been intent on keeping out the revolutionaries and royalists fleeing the French Revolution; worries about anarchists reached their height after an anarchist immigrant assassinated President McKinley in 1901, while worries about Bolshevism intensified after the Russian revolution.⁵² “How can this Republic stand if we continue to permit all the scum of creation—the anarchists, the blackhand, and the bomb thrower—to come here from every portion of the world to undermine our institutions, destroy society, and overthrow the Government?”⁵³ The problem with immigration was precisely that it muddled the difference between friend and enemy, and confused the country’s protectors.

Subversion could be gradual. If immigration continues, “it is revolution from within, not danger from without, that will be the ever-present menace to the country (Applause).”⁵⁴ The more immigration, the greater the threat. “Danger from within. How? you ask me. By people coming here who despise our form of government, who hate our institutions, and who spread the poisons of their dangerous propaganda.”⁵⁵ Immigrant subversives, General Pershing warned, undermine morale.⁵⁶ Even without evil intent, immigrants would eventually degrade the American way of life. “Americans should be grateful to the Providence that has guided them in protecting the American wage standard from the unfair, not to say impossible, standard that would be the outcome of the leveling process resulting from unrestricted introduction of foreign peoples.”⁵⁷ If the country continued to accept immigrants fully, borders would become meaningless, and “we would sooner or later be no better off than the supplicants; in short, we would eventually have no need of immigration laws, since the inducements to come here would cease to exist.”⁵⁸ Whether immigrants produced domestic colonies or wore away the social fabric, they would sicken and perhaps kill the country. The difference was only the rate and the obviousness of the country’s destruction.

Reason: Good for the Rest of the World

Most restrictionists argued in terms of American self-interest, defined narrowly and pursued competitively. Some, however, argued cleverly in terms of global welfare. “The world is upset and disturbed as never before. The

Great War has left us an accumulation of problems that calls for all that is best in American statesmanship. We are burdened with a debt of more than twenty billions of dollars. Our international relationships involve difficulties and obligations never known before. . . . The preservation of the Republic is the greatest benefit we may hope to render humanity.”⁵⁹ Immigration restriction was prudential; prudence benefited all. “I believe in world cooperation and that we should assume our portion of responsibility to promote honest diplomacy, law, and order, and that peaceful methods may be substituted for hatred and war; but in order to faithfully serve the humanity of the world our country must keep her own household pure and uncorrupted.”⁶⁰ Whether exclusion was justifiable at all always lurked in the background; it was answered variously in different eras.

A citizen working long in support of Asian immigration argued that “some say it is not fair to any nation to say ‘we are going to keep you out.’ My answer is that we can make our most important and our maximum contribution to the welfare of the world by making democracy here in America a success; and we can not make our democracy a success if we allow larger numbers continuously to come in than we can wholesomely transform into good and genuine American citizens.”⁶¹ The war made this necessary.

With the poverty and dissatisfaction prevailing throughout the rest of the world at this time as an aftermath of the war, to permit them to come here without restriction, carrying the bitterness of heart and mingling with those of our citizens who are not entirely familiar with our country and its institutions, a poison may be spread to such an extent as to injure this Government, and in my opinion we must restrict the entrance of large groups at this time for the future welfare not only of our country but of all the peoples of the world. . . . I believe it [the bill] is necessary in order that a beacon shall be preserved on the face of this earth.⁶²

In this view, America had value for all humanity, not just for Americans. To disable it by allowing immigration was to thwart a human dream.

Finally, some argued in terms of global efficiency. Excluding the illiterate would prompt more education in Europe, benefiting European peoples and governments.⁶³ Moreover, helping people in Europe was a more efficient use of the country’s, and the world’s, resources. “Oh, it would be better that we gave the half of all that we possess in means to help sustain them where they are than to bring them here. . . . Distress is here; discontent is here; world problems are here to make mischief right here.”⁶⁴ Immigration would be a last resort. “By permitting the admission of some of

these persons, they may enjoy the privileges of America, in spite of the failure of the administration to help improve conditions over there so that they may stay at home and live in decency.”⁶⁵ Restriction, and some foreign aid, would better serve everyone, not just Americans.

Analogies of conquest—invasion, subversion, colonization—dominate the arguments for numerical restriction. These arguments emerge directly from those opposing immigration in principle; large numbers simply decreased the time that would elapse before sovereignty was irretrievable. The perceived threat was, still, external in origin and military in process. Its result would be the end of the country. Most discussion centered on how horrible the threat was, but when legislators did describe the value they were protecting, they referred to sovereignty, meaning not only the country’s independence but its integrity. The legislators saw its defense as an almost personal battle.

RAKER: We have two risks, one to stand up and enforce laws that will protect our country.

JENKS: Yes, that is one.

RAKER: And another one, to yield to outside influences as against our sovereignty, and permit their immigration and colonization which would, if continued twenty years, practically sap the existence of the western country. We ought to be manly enough to stand for our sovereignty, if we have got to, ought we not?⁶⁶

In the global struggle for self-preservation, a country either was sovereign—integral, mature, autonomous—or was not, was waiting instead for a death blow.

Prudent states used their foreign policies prophylactically, neither allowing themselves to become weak enough to be conquered nor consuming others and exchanging danger from without for danger from within. Immigration, like imperial control of foreign territories, brought enemies within, making them harder to combat. Protection became yet more difficult because enemies were of every sort. “The question of immigration involves economics, finances, social life, social order, the perpetuity of our institutions, the life of the nation itself. We should not have maudlin sympathy but practical patriotism.”⁶⁷ Practicality meant, in the standard analogy, “shutting the gates” to protect “the very vitals, the very heart of the Nation.”⁶⁸ Because immigration policy protected sovereignty, it was nonnegotiable. Practical proposals in support of this position include immigration restriction or suspension, careful screening of immigrants to select those least likely to engage in subversion, and education programs to assimilate immigrants effectively and to prevent colo-

nization by way of ghettos. Each of these did become an element of an immigration bill.

Those who supported immigration offered only one main argument—immigrants strengthen the country—with one main piece of evidence, American history. In a mercantile system, people are wealth. The United States was a settler country and had grown powerful by absorbing European human resources and exploiting American natural resources. “I believe that we do need more hands and more brains in this country and that a proper amount of development will come sooner if we will add to our population by immigration.”⁶⁹ People are also power.

It is interesting to learn what we have achieved since 1890. As a result of our entering the Cuban War and later acquiring the Virgin Islands, a new era has come in all the West Indies. We have become a power in the affairs of the Pacific, having taken Guam and the Hawaiian Islands. To-day we have under us the Philippines; we helped to bring to an end the conflict between Russia and Japan, and by the holding of the recent conference in Washington have temporarily at least brought peace in the Pacific. We gave up the Chinese indemnity. We created the Panama Canal, and when the European Great World War seemed destined to terminate in favor of Germany, we went into the struggle with all of our resources of man power and material wealth and strength so that the Allies came out victorious. To-day we are the only power on the face of the earth which is not threatened by war and fears no one. Such is the story of the United States since 1890 with its increase of more than 35,000,000 of population.⁷⁰

People were wealth. “I assert that every man of sound morals and sound health and good intelligence who comes to this country is an addition to the wealth and power of this country.”⁷¹ In the labor-intensive history of the country, the more people who settled the land, the greater the tax revenues, the more extensive the infrastructure, and the less likely that Europeans would invade the western territories. “America has been built up by immigration. Every immigrant that comes to our shores is both a producer and a consumer. Other countries go to war to acquire more territory and larger populations. We can easily absorb an additional hundred million men.”⁷² Glory came from size: the more, the better.

Immigrants were especially helpful because they took work that Americans would not readily do. “To enact a bill at the present time containing a literacy test is to shut the doors of the United States to those who would come here, if come they do, to perform the rough manual labor which the average American has declined to do during the past 50

years.”⁷³ They were the economy’s backbone. “Suppose,” asked Emanuel Celler, “we awoke one fine morning and found all our population of foreign origin had departed. There would, perhaps, be no rolls for breakfast, no sugar for the coffee, and no meat for dinner . . . no butchers, no bakers, or candlestick makers.”⁷⁴ Immigrants created wealth in the United States, and if the country was lucky, they would keep their wealth there, too.

The United States could promote this by accepting additional immigrants, for “with families reunited [in the United States] the money for their support would be retained in our country and not continue to swell the formidable total of remittances abroad, a large part of our invisible export of capital.”⁷⁵

This constant addition of new men and new blood to the Republic is as necessary for the health and refreshment, the expansion and continuance of civilization and all it means today as always. Immigration, the advent of new men, new blood, new brains and brawn in our land, is not a question of philanthropy for America; it is a matter of life or death, for the nation that seeks to arrest or stifle the natural laws of life and movement must eventually pay the penalty of lawlessness in stagnation and arrested growth. In my judgment, immigration is power and wealth for the land which draws it, and only natural perversity and legislative stupidity will deprive us of its blessings.⁷⁶

Later in the century, immigrants would be condemned for their economic motives; political migrants and refugees were good, economic migrants were bad. At the turn of the century, however, the reverse values held sway. To argue that immigrants were a bane, one demonstrated their political backgrounds and motives. To argue that they were a benefit, one showed their economic origins. Political was bad; economic was good.⁷⁷

Liberal and restrictionist arguments had much in common, although their conclusions differed. Nationalist, competitive goals motivated those arguing against numerical restriction as well as those arguing for it; both focused on its effect on American strength. Like the restrictionists, liberals saw immigration, trade, and diplomacy connected directly. One influenced the other; policies should go hand in hand. They, again like the restrictionists, drew evidence for this viewpoint from the country’s recent experience during the war: the United States, the least xenophobic and most accepting of diverse immigration, had conquered Europe’s decadent nationalist powers. It emerged from the war the strongest of the Atlantic powers. The two differed mainly in whether they believed that strength came from an organic socioracial integrity or from numbers. Practical

proposals in support of this viewpoint include those to promote immigration for economic or political reasons. Immigration could, for them, either be entirely open or it could focus on sector-specific recruitment campaigns. Allowing immigration to remain unrestricted numerically was implicitly on the table, for it meant preserving the status quo. Doing nothing would result in unrestricted immigration. Encouraging sector-specific workers was also proposed, usually for the agricultural sector, which had seen its work force vanish as black labor moved northward.

The Public Interest in Certain Types of Immigrants

Although policies are framed in abstract principle, they always, in practice, apply to particular groups. Sometimes the abstraction is intended to hide that particularity. Even when it is not, interested parties do have particular constituencies. The American gate would not be shut on generic people, but on specific, nameable people: business travelers with local ties, the relatives and compatriots of U.S. citizens or permanent residents. A large number of constituencies had an interest not only in whether restrictive policy became the law, but in whom it barred. Those in favor of numerical restriction had specific groups in mind; those opposed did as well. Because restrictionists focused on the value of homogeneity, the cost of any involvement with Europe, and consistency of policy across hemispheres, those who favored immigration argued for the value of heterogeneity, the country's cultural and geopolitical debt to Europe, and the uniqueness of the Western Hemisphere in U.S. history and policy. The reasons that restrictionists provided focused exclusively on the consequences for current American citizens. Those who opposed them claimed, besides such narrow benefits, international obligations of cultural patrimony, of wartime alliance, of neighborliness; that is, they took other countries' interests into account. Restrictionists, therefore, won.

Reason: American Society—Homogeneity or Heterogeneity

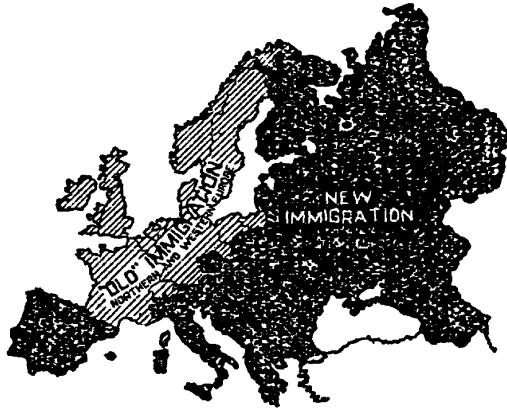
Most arguing for restriction chose homogeneity as their goal, although a few restrictionists argued for racial selectivity on the grounds of fairness: Anglo-Europeans had settled the United States; it should therefore be preserved for their descendants. After all of the settlers' hard work, the reasoning went, the benefits should not go to latecomers. "We can contribute to people who are in dire need of our financial aid, but we can not conveniently give up to those people our homes and the homes that we and our

forefathers have built for the future generations of this country, and we should not be expected to.”⁷⁸ Others argued in terms of democracy. Most Americans were in favor of racial discrimination; therefore, it was the democrat’s choice. “I think most of us are reconciled to the idea of discrimination. I think the American people want us to discriminate; and I don’t think discrimination itself is unfair.”⁷⁹ The commissioner-general of immigration defended Congress’s decision to exclude Hindus as public charges using the same reasoning: since Americans discriminated against Hindus, Hindus would not be able to find employment and therefore would be public charges.⁸⁰ But people offered such reasons for racial restriction only rarely.

Homogeneity made possible most of what many restrictionists valued about the United States. It mattered to some not so much that citizens were of a particular stock so much as that they were of the same stock. Restrictionist John Works said that he objected to the Japanese not because they were of an inferior race, but because they were a different race.⁸¹ The representative from Mississippi explained why he valued sameness: “There is nothing more important for any democracy than a homogeneous population, with like traditions, like ideals, like aspirations, like thoughts concerning what is best for mankind, like tokens of citizenship, like pride, homogeneity.”⁸² Homogeneity should be valued not just in itself but for what it makes possible. “You can not have untrammelled law and order and wise liberty unless you have equality, and you can not have equality unless you have fraternity and likeness of thought, if not an identity.”⁸³ Homogeneity led to stability, which made possible “common belief, common aspirations, common devotion.”⁸⁴ Sameness also laid the foundation for social constancy. “The stability of a country depends upon the homogeneity of its population—where ideals and aspirations go along the same lines; where the ideals in relation to government, in relation to social conditions, and as to guarantees of property and personal rights are in harmony.”⁸⁵ Figure 3 reproduces a graphic demonstration of the relationship between us and them, old and new.

Difference was a threat. The Japanese belief that their emperor was connected to God meant that they could never assimilate while retaining their faith.⁸⁶ “We have admitted the dregs of Europe until America has been orientalized, Europeanized, Africanized, and mongrelized to that insidious degree that our genius, stability, greatness, and promise of advancement and achievement are actually menaced.”⁸⁷ These qualities were not just good to have but were necessary for survival.

The strength of a nation—not to speak of its progress, its honor, its glory—the very strength of a nation lies in the oneness of its people. I



PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRATION

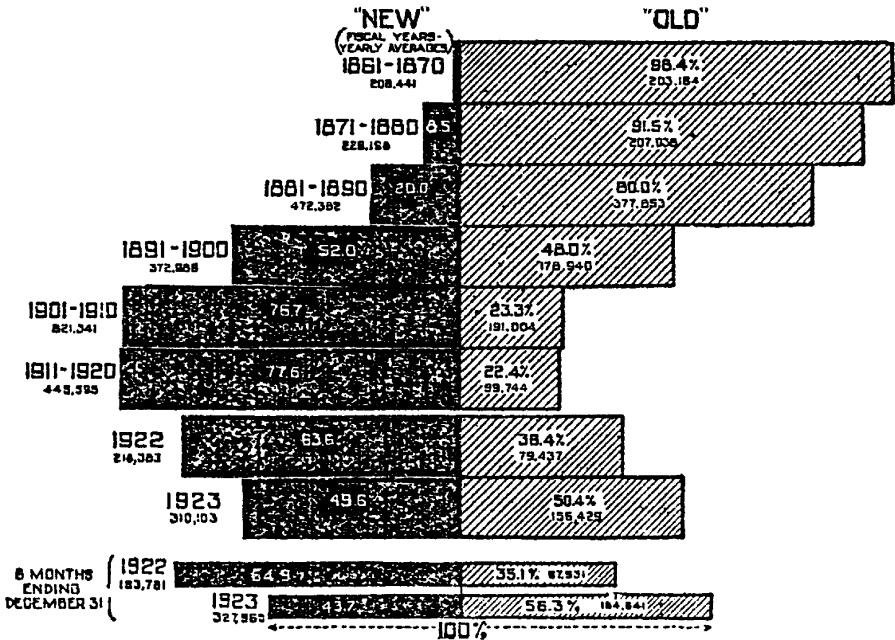


Fig. 3. "Old" and "new" European immigration—United States. (From the *Congressional Record* 65, pt. 4 [68C\1S], 14 March 1924, 4172.)

have only to invite the thoughts of men to travel over the earth and see those races which have maintained their nationality, their institutions, and it will be perceived that those nations which were unified, knit together have survived, while those made up of divergent interests, divergent races, hostile races, unsympathetic races have either fallen by virtue of dangers from within or have become easy prey to dangers from without.⁸⁸

The country's recent emergence as a world power brought attention to its faults. Still, "never anywhere in the history of all the world has there been a country with institutions as broad and great and liberal as this, and hence I believe it is time for us to look about and inquire whether at any time there is to be in this country such a thing as a distinctive nationality."⁸⁹ If the United States were to pursue international greatness, it must first clean house.

Instability threatened the country because the pace of assimilation was too slow. "We already have as many foreigners here as the melting pot can melt, and, in my judgement, we have too many here already."⁹⁰ Foreign-language newspapers both signaled and created instability; they made obvious to English speakers how many preferred another language, but also how easy spreading foreign secrets in "code" would be. The English language divided "us" from "them." The urban polyglot became the source of nervous joking, as well as army investigations. This is typical: "You know, a couple of fellows were walking along the streets of New York the other day when one stopped, and the other one said, grabbing him, 'What's wrong?' The other said, 'I thought I heard a couple of fellows talking English back there' (Laughter)."⁹¹

Homogeneity's most obvious advantages were those of culture. If everyone had been socialized into similar values and mores, communication was easier, and government was simpler. In this view, that those with similar backgrounds were of similar races was due to history, not inheritance or destiny; "the desirability of an immigrant does not depend so much on his racial blood as it depends upon the moral standards of the country from which he comes."⁹² Race was, then, simply an indirect indicator of political attitudes.

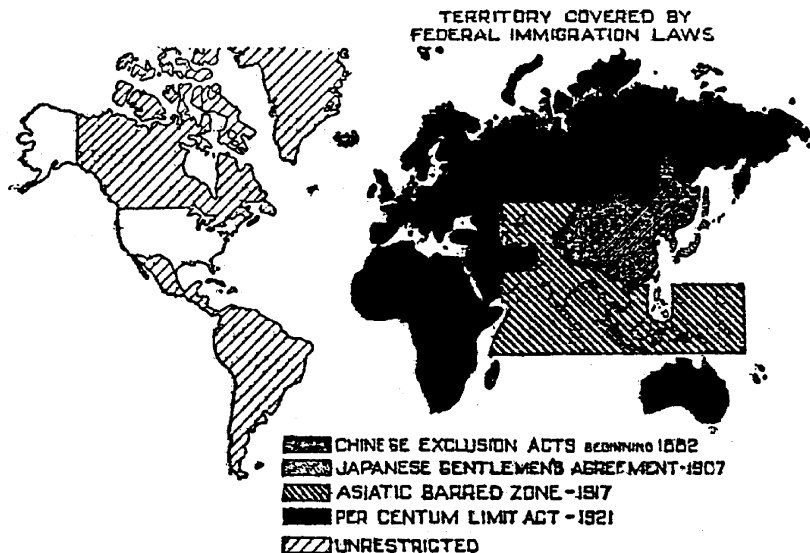
The people coming to us from northern and western Europe readily assimilate and harmonize with our Government and our institutions. They have known freedom and have enjoyed freedom for more than a century. On the other hand, the people coming to us from eastern and southern Europe until recently were under the despotic Governments of Russia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria, Hungary, and so forth.

. . . they nursed hate from their mother's breast. . . . Government to them has meant slavery and oppression. Out of this condition naturally grows anarchy, bolshevism, communism, syndicalism, and other monstrous conceptions of law and government. This was their only way of expressing themselves against intolerable conditions.⁹³

The war had made homogeneity's value felt. America then had "too many voices, too many languages, and too many people who have never thought of the purposes or principles of this country."⁹⁴ To assure stability during the peace, the country would assimilate those who were there, then balance foreigners' rates of immigration against their ignorance of Anglo-Saxon law.

But for many, what mattered most was not just that Americans were similar to each other, but that they were racially identical. Asian exclusion and its arguments became the lever used to exclude other groups.⁹⁵ The first Chinese Exclusion Act had become settled policy by the time Congress considered European restrictions. Restrictionists used it to cement the idea that restriction, even racially based restriction, was in principle acceptable. Anglo legislators and prominent members of the public might, in the 1920s, argue that Asians were more hardworking, honest, or Christian than most Americans, or even that one numbered them among one's friends. By considering "Europeans" to be a category parallel to "Asians," restrictionists drew on the precedent of Asian exclusion to justify "old" European restriction. Figure 4 shows how this was illustrated for Congress.

But one could not argue that intermarriage was acceptable. Without intermarriage, restrictionists pointed out, there was segregation, which would of necessity prevent full assimilation. "A democracy is founded on equality, but there can be no equality when there can not be, ultimately, intermarriage among the people of a community. It goes to the very foundation of our American institutions, and in a country like ours, where the Government consists of the voice of the people, if we deteriorate the people by bringing them against impossible competition we destroy the factors for making the union great and strong."⁹⁶ Therefore, "because physical assimilation of oriental peoples is impossible, their incorporation into the body politic is impracticable and unwise."⁹⁷ Allowing in Asians would create yet another racial underclass, another group condemned by the dictates of their genes to the purgatory of second-class citizenship. "The policy of exclusion is an established American policy; it has already avoided and practically solved one race problem; it will, if continued and extended, solve all that may present themselves."⁹⁸ In any event, "if the onrushing horde continues in unabated numbers the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon is doomed on this continent."⁹⁹



TOTAL IMMIGRATION - 1922-23 (YEAR ENDING JUNE 30.)
 522,919 - 100 %.

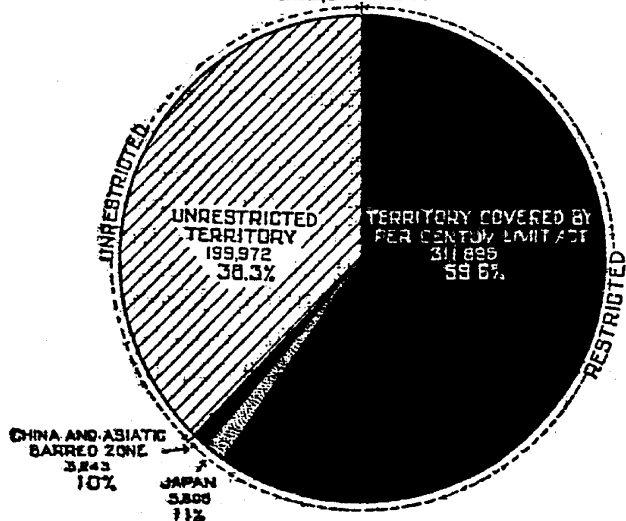


Fig. 4. Immigration—United States. Territory covered by immigration laws. (From the *Congressional Record* 65, pt. 4 [68C/1S], 14 March 1924, 4173.)

Exactly how Asians and members of other groups were supposed to be different from or inferior to northwestern Europeans was detailed by the joint immigration committee's house eugenicist, Harry Laughlin. His findings about relative intelligence and social behavior grounded racial exclusion scientifically.¹⁰⁰ He found ethnic groups in varying degrees to be substandard as workers, employers, community members, marriage partners, soldiers, and citizens. According to one report, New York in the 1910s spent \$4 million annually just on insane Austrians, while 50 percent of Italians went crazy in the United States.¹⁰¹ "The Japanese do not create," stated V. S. McClatchy, a California newspaper baron. "They imitate, improve, appropriate."¹⁰² Americans were white. "Who are they about whom all these tears are being shed? Three hundred and forty-three Turks—also some 70 Africans."¹⁰³

Racial similarity produced what citizens valued about the United States. The commissioner-general of immigration reflected that

the acid test of any civilization, nation, or system of government is the men and women it produces, and with equal truth it may be said that the acid test of men and women at any time is the nation and system of government they evolve, the conditions of living they develop. To say that good immigration means good citizenship, is to state a self-evident truth, a fact so obvious that its bare assertion seems superfluous; [since 1882] the major test of eligibility to citizenship has been racial.¹⁰⁴

This was especially important for the United States, whose sovereign was its majority; "it therefore makes a vast difference to us what that majority is, both now and in the future, and it is for us to decide while we are still that majority."¹⁰⁵

For 300 years this country got along fine without any citizenship standards. True; but it is also true that for 3,000 years the world muddled along somehow without either science or order; but, gentlemen, that time has passed. We live in another age, the age of science, the age of progress based on the test of experience. In every branch of our civilization except citizenship, the most vital of all, our progress rests on standardization.¹⁰⁶

If science demonstrated racial hierarchy, then racial standardization was the obvious next step. Figure 5 reproduces one of the graphs that Laughlin had entered into the *Record*.

INTELLIGENCE RATING

By percentage of letter grades, of Foreign-born, White, and American Negro Draft and Army Officers and Men.



Based upon the Psychological Examination of men in the United States Army, from Tables 21c-p.698, 268-p.134, 406-p.855, Memor. 27. Nat. Acad. Sci., 1921.

CHART No. 9

429-241-481 51. (Page p. 1278.) No. 3

Fig. 5. Intelligence rating. This is one of several charts presented by eugenicist Harry Laughlin to the immigration committees. (From *Europe as an Emigrant-Exporting Country and the United States as an Immigrant-Receiving Nation*, Hearings before COIN, House of Representatives [68C/1S], 8 March 1927; between pages 1278 and 1279.)

With nonwhite citizens, American democracy was doomed to collapse. "We in this country have been so imbued with the idea of democracy, or the equality of all men, that we have left out of consideration the matter of blood or natural inborn heredity mental and moral differences. No man who breeds pedigreed plants and animals can afford to neglect this thing."¹⁰⁷ Assimilation was a failed dream. "We are slowly awakening to the consciousness that education and environment do not fundamentally alter racial values."¹⁰⁸ Not only did America's own experience bear this out, but so did the entire history of Europe.

That the people of all that region [southeastern Europe] are mongrels, mixed and intermixed from invading and near-by races from the north, from the brown people of the east, and the black people of the south is well known to every student. That they are incapable of working out the problems of government and protecting themselves against the destructive forces moving among them is made plain by their present plight and by conditions prevailing among them since antiquity and promising to continue forever.¹⁰⁹

Europe's problems, the problems it had foisted on the United States, were racial in origin. For the United States to escape the same fate, it had to work for racial identity. Racialists were more pessimistic than assimilationists about America's capacity to overcome Old World differences.

Homogeneity, whether of race or background, stabilized society. At best, heterogeneity meant "racial indigestion."¹¹⁰ Too large a flow led to "indigestible lumps in the national stomach and . . . insoluble blood clots in the national circulation."¹¹¹ At worst, it would lead to war. Whereas those focused on domestic colonization feared that foreign-sponsored cells would rise up to cripple the country, those focused on homogeneity were frightened of civil strife. The Civil War, then only fifty years past, served as their model. The lesson they drew from it in this context was that racial difference was a drag on local communities, leading to conflict. "Internal disorders become the consequence of unassimilable racial groups";¹¹² specifically, "there has also been a menace to our institutions in not trying vigorously to weld the 42 nationalities here into a united people with a common language rather than in a happy-go-lucky way allowing them to transplant and perpetuate on American soil Old World hatreds and bolshevistic ideas."¹¹³

Europe was always the premier model. "I believe now more firmly than ever that races will stick together. There must be some reason. In Europe, where there is so much trouble, often when you cross a river you step from one nation to another nation. You find the people not only

speaking a different language but hating the people on the other side of the river with all their might . . . [just as is true of] the hyphenated American; we can see what we are breeding in the United States (Applause).”¹¹⁴ The American South was another model. Drawing an analogy to the southern Europeans and Asians, William Howard warned, “We have had a burden of a million and a half niggers in Georgia ever since the Civil War who were turned loose on us in their ignorance.”¹¹⁵ William Vaile, similarly, argued that “if we have to have another servient race brought into this country in order to promote production, then let us get along without the production, even if it hurts an industry of my own district (Applause).”¹¹⁶ Conflict, which would likely be racial conflict, could lead to all-out war. Restriction’s bottom line was to “prevent another race problem from arising up in this country”¹¹⁷ and leading again to war.

Homogeneity became linked conceptually not only to American institutions’ stability but also to their quality. Good citizens (white citizens) made good government. President Coolidge in a message to Congress announced that “American institutions rest solely on good citizenship. They were created by people who had a background of self-government.”¹¹⁸ Representative Garber elaborated on this. “The strength of those institutions and of the Government does not lie in the area of our territory, our material resources, the number of our population, or our standing Army. It lies in the quality of our citizenship. . . . Lower the quality of citizenship and you decrease the quality of government. . . . What is the remedy? . . . Close the gates!”¹¹⁹ Importing bad people could corrupt citizens: “Importing cheap labor and people alien to our institutions, to our methods of government, is stifling unborn children and preventing them from having the privileges they ought to have in this country (Applause).”¹²⁰ If immigrants were accepted, they would “reproduce here the conditions from which they flee.”¹²¹

Underlying the claim that the degree of the population’s whiteness created the strength of democratic institutions was the notion that institutions are themselves organic, a notion that also underlaid the idea that immigration was a virus or poison. Like children, institutions have a biological heritage that influences their strength.

Republics are not exempt from mutability, or decay. Republics are no natural system. They are the highest form of civilized government where the rights of men are held of value. A republic is subject to internal dangers as well as foreign menaces.

In order that it may live it is absolutely necessary that we maintain a certain type of citizenship. . . . But above all things, in order to assure the stability, in order to make certain the future strength and

righteousness of this Nation, we must strive for homogeneity among the citizenship. Therein lies the strength of a republic. As nearly as we can, we should seek for and have racial homogeneity; but assuredly we should have homogeneity in the sense of common belief, common aspirations, common devotion.¹²²

Democratic institutions were peculiarly vulnerable to abuse. “Under our form of Government there is necessity for the highest intelligence, and therefore we are concerned with the types of men or races that shall be permitted to enter the United States and permanently abide therein.”¹²³ The New York Chamber of Commerce asserted that “of all forms of administration, democracy is particularly susceptible to the infiltration of foreign elements that do not understand or appreciate the customs and government of the new land in which they settle.”¹²⁴

American institutions were the product of a peculiarly white culture. “But do we wish to surrender this country to them [the Japanese] or shall we insist that this country shall be preserved for the white race?”¹²⁵ Encouraged by others’ examples, representatives decided that, too, “our business is to build up, as the Australians are trying to do, a white man’s country.”¹²⁶ California and the western territories were on the frontier, not only geographically but politically. “We on the western borders are the defenders of our white civilization. Are we to fall before the onslaught of peaceful invasion and look forward to the time when the Japanese on the Pacific coast will hold the balance of power?”¹²⁷ Heterogeneity, of race or political socialization, divided the American public, segregating segments and thereby retarding its growth. This weakness, stemming from division and apathy even if not the result of a purposeful foreign plot, would eventually sap democratic institutions’ strength. Sooner or later, the country would die.

Homogeneity attracted those most concerned about the devastation that pluralism wrought on American society and its international position. Neither the country’s particular war experience nor recent effects of interdependence motivated their arguments; rather, “war” in the abstract repelled them. War, any war, was due to pluralism—racial pluralism. The country had changed in many ways since the time that restrictionists perceived as its golden age. Ethnic diversification preceded the Spanish-American War and World War I and, many restrictionists believed, had forced the country into both wars, just as the presence of Black Americans had inevitably led the country into its civil war. This idea led restrictionists to advocate at least ethnic, but preferably racial, homogeneity. Putting this idea into practice could involve moves to declare an ethnic norm, then to deport those who deviated from it and/or to exclude new immigrants from

entry based on this classification. The main criterion for inclusion would be similarity to current Americans.

Homogeneity, others argued, was not a worthwhile goal. At best, it was irrelevant to the country's success. At worst, advertising America's newfound commitment to homogeneity would antagonize foreigners and domestic minorities, leading to armed conflict. World War I loomed here, too. Homogeneity's sudden value confused many because during the war, "Such dangers as had threatened our government had been averted; such dangers as the world had never seen before had been suppressed. . . . We came forth a Nation of free men no longer recognizing any distinction of nationalities or creed. Our Republic had successfully ended the experiment of its existence and took its place, a full, round, high place—first—among the powers of the earth."¹²⁸ The mixed country was the most successful. "We have recently emerged from the greatest war in history in which we may proudly say that our Nation reached spiritual heights never attained by any other nation."¹²⁹ The commissioner-general of immigration argued that to think otherwise was unpatriotic. "It is obvious that if the principles of our Government are sound they will stand the test of all conditions; and his confidence in and loyalty to them is of a wavering and conditional character who, either explicitly or by a necessary implication, discloses a belief that they require amendment in time of war. If they are not good in times of war, neither are they of value in times of peace."¹³⁰ Such worries were beneath the United States. "While this sort of national frailty is excusable in old nations, Asiatic or European, it is incomprehensible when found among the American people, full of the vigor of youth and absorbing unto itself all that is strong and virile in the human stock."¹³¹ Homogeneity was simply not a relevant concern.

Others argued that international problems or civil war would result not from too many groups, but from their forcible unification. It would be obvious to all that "we, in trying to restrict, in reality discriminate. We are now in the age of international amity. We are on friendly terms with all the great powers of the world. . . . The smoke of guns is hardly cleared away. The world still bleeds from the wounds of World War, and we in Congress are preparing to deal a blow to our friends and allies during this terrible conflict waged so that the world might be safe for democracy."¹³² The country itself would not be safe for democracy either, for "you are dividing your people into two classes, a superior class and an inferior class; and if anything can possibly bring Bolshevism in America it is class distinction, race hatred, and prejudice, which must cause discontent, which is un-American and undemocratic."¹³³ Acceptance of all citizens would assure peace; discrimination, even indirect discrimination through immigration policy, would assure bitterness.

Whites were not better than others in any event. "If these 'Nordics' are God's chosen people, why did they borrow their religion from the hills of Judea, their laws from the Roman forum, and their arts from the galleries of Athens?"¹³⁴ Rather, "the belief in Nordic superiority has grown to large proportions mainly because people like to believe in such superiority and do not take the trouble to examine for the truth of such superiority."¹³⁵ Nordics were, in fact, worse behaved. "There is not a case on record where it can be said that the Italians have at any time . . . been so selfish in their administration as to arrogate all the benefits therefrom to themselves and their religious confreres. This has been done in many large cities and the culprits are by no means the immigrants from Southern Europe nor from Italy, but on the contrary they are Nordics and thoroughly Anglo-Saxon."¹³⁶ White supremacy was an ironic boast.

Further reasons to oppose racial discrimination were the same as those given in opposition to the country's general pursuit of homogeneity: it would cause embarrassment and lead to armed conflict. Anti-Japanese laws would embarrass the administration.¹³⁷ "We do contend that it [openness] is absolutely necessary at this time in order that the peaceful relations of the world shall continue, because as a matter of fact our relation to the Japanese immigrant is something more than that; it covers the broader relations of the Occident with the Orient."¹³⁸ Japan was, moreover, looking for an excuse for war: "With a danger I believe a serious one, with developments coming in the future that might lead to war, I think it is extremely important that we keep our skirts clear, and have nothing on this side that they can bring up as an excuse that there was discrimination against them, and things of that kind."¹³⁹ "Here we are, one on one side of the Pacific and the other on the other, and for the future peace of the world, for our own freedom from attack, and for the avoidance of friction, it is absolutely essential that we should maintain friendly relations with that country [Japan]."¹⁴⁰ Domestic war could follow. Racial exclusion would "be the first instance in our modern legislation for writing into our laws the hateful doctrine of inequality between the various component parts of our population."¹⁴¹ Discrimination would demoralize ethnic Americans.¹⁴²

Liberals valued the principles upon which they believed the country had been founded and to which they believed it must remain true. Pluralism attracted those who believed that it created or reflected strength. Decadent empires glorified nativism. The United States was beyond such ideas. Individualism was also a founding liberal principle that could be honored only by assessing individuals on their merits, with merit understood to be calculated with regard only to a person's acts. Liberals therefore desired a selection/restriction process based upon individual merit.

Since current policy excluded only on the basis of individual merit, liberals could argue for the status quo. They would also favor including Asians in the applicant pool, eliminating bloc restrictions.

Reasons: Europe as Contaminant or Heritage

The argument constructed originally to explain Asian exclusion applied by extension to southern Europeans who were also not white by current standards. The anti-Asian argument did most of the logical work promoting European restriction (though most of the arguments were not strictly logical, even by loose standards). Rather, the impetus for restricting Europeans came from Americans' lessons from the war. The American experience demonstrated that neither Europe nor former Europeans in the United States were to be trusted. Their loyalties during the war, in American eyes, damned immigrants who fought for the cause as well as those who fought against it. "The war awoke the public to the situation as never before."¹⁴³ It did so by revealing the sickness at the country's core. "We boasted of the 'melting pot' and of our ability to assimilate all races and colors and tongues and tribes. When the war broke out in 1914, it became manifest that we had not really assimilated these alien additions to our population in any appreciable degree";¹⁴⁴ in fact, "during the Great World War, . . . it looked as though we had allowed influences to enter our borders that were about to melt the pot in place of us being the melting pot."¹⁴⁵ If an immigrant fought for the Allied cause, it was simply luck that the United States was fighting on the side of his homeland.

If he did not, that treachery showed the thinness of his ties to the United States. "The Americanization of these thirty-six and a third million of our population is, in many cases, only skin deep and is merely a mask to be quickly thrown aside when the interests of their dear fatherland are involved, as has been abundantly shown by the conduct of the so-called German-Americans during and since the World War."¹⁴⁶ If he stayed behind to work in the war effort, he was taking advantage of Americans' absence to buy up the country. "From all the country comes the cry of the rank injustice of forcing American citizens into the war, while alien slackers are here in vast numbers enjoying the peaceful privileges of our country and immunity from fighting for the very integrity of their countries."¹⁴⁷ If he refused to fight, he was truly loathsome. "Certainly an alien subject of a country at war with the central powers becomes most undesirable here when he is able-bodied, within military age, has no dependents, and yet refuses to fight either for this or for his own country."¹⁴⁸

Even had Congress considered European immigrants to have acted nobly during the war, it might not have changed its anti-European views.

Isolating America from war meant isolating it from European wars, and if wars were in the Europeans' blood, preventing war meant keeping out Europeans. In the decade before the war started, immigration to the United States had been increasing steadily; European immigrants were ever more visible in urban areas. During the war, Americans were sent to Europe, to live with Europeans and be killed taking care of their troubles. By the time of the Armistice, they had had enough. "A short time since we looked upon Europe with comparative indifference as she grappled with her great social problems, as we felt her problems could never be ours. But to-day we are not only face-to-face with those social problems but are fast being carried into European militarism, from which God grant we may be spared (Applause)."¹⁴⁹ Isolation was the obvious answer. "We do not intend to close the door because we were here first; we close it because it is our door. We are now under a reaction of the effects of the World War; we are sick and tired of Europe and all its works; we want to develop our character along our own lines."¹⁵⁰ Europe was poison.

Others explained restriction in a way that salvaged the country's immigrant past.

Times change and men change with them. It was originally true that the people who left America and came to Europe were the boldest, the bravest, the most enterprising, and those who most sought freedom; but *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illio*—those times have changed and people have changed with the times. . . . The man who comes to America to-day is the wage-earner or else the political non-descript, who has been cast out in his own country because of socialistic or anarchistic opinions of some description.¹⁵¹

A tract entitled "Immigration and the Three Percent Restrictive Law," written by Robert DeC. Ward, argued that the quality of new immigration was inferior, echoing the "new/old" distinction articulated decades earlier by Chairman Dillingham.¹⁵² Europeans had also been enemies. Excluding them on those grounds as well was fair.¹⁵³

Apart from their behavior during the war, Americans still found much to fault in Europeans' political allegiances. It seemed that everyone in Europe who was not a monarchist was an anarchist or a bolshevik. "They have never drawn the breath of freedom, they have never lived under a republic; and it is the history of most Latin [European] countries that a republic can not prevail, that they live greatly in revolution and fomentation. Any judge can constitute an alien an American citizen, but it takes a change of heart and mind to make an American."¹⁵⁴ Subservient

people could not last in a democracy, and “As you know, dictatorships are in existence in practically every country which claimed it was being discriminated against by the 1890 census date. However, we do not want that sort of government in this country. Mussolini has done marvels for Italy, but nobody here would want a government of that kind.”¹⁵⁵

Neither did anyone want civil upheaval and revolution. “At the present time there is a good deal of turmoil in the various nations of the earth. There are certain places where one side gets into power to-day and another side tomorrow. The first side then takes to the woods, and they would all be political refugees. These seasons of turmoil reappear frequently, and this provision [for refugees] would send a flood tide to America.”¹⁵⁶ War lurked everywhere. Civil wars turned into international wars, which bred revolutionary wars.

Legislators especially feared a reenactment of the “Russian debacle ushering in the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.”¹⁵⁷ To subvert the United States and strengthen themselves, moreover, “some of the foreign countries are preparing to dump on America ten, twelve, or fifteen million people.”¹⁵⁸ Legislators feared that revolution could be contagious.

Since the world’s Great War, many dangerous and deadly doctrines have sprung up throughout Europe; governments have been changed over night, and in many instances the rights of property and freedom of speech and action are unknown. These same dangerous and deadly doctrines have been spread throughout this country, to a great extent, by foreign propaganda and foreigners. . . . Not long since Lenin, the great leader of the Communist party, which controls Russia, died; and since that time over a thousand memorials have been held in this country for him. This shows the dangers which we face and that it is up to the American people to see that America is kept American (Applause).¹⁵⁹

Suspension or vigilant immigration restriction was an obvious answer.

Those unwilling to conclude that Europeans were all undesirable might still consider that the best Europeans would not emigrate; they would stay to rebuild. Those who immigrated, then, rather than Europeans in general, were policy’s targets.¹⁶⁰ “The real workers, the men who would be economically useful, are remaining in their own countries assisting in their upbuilding and recuperation from the devastation of the war.”¹⁶¹ Emigrants could only be bad. “There are only two classes of immigrants who want to come to this country now, namely, the cowardly slacker who does not want to help rehabilitate the country in which he

lives and which was devastated by the war, and the other one is the man who wants to come here to accumulate worldly goods and then go back to the country from which he came.”¹⁶²

Before the war, those who favored European exclusion did so for racial reasons. Southern Europeans were non-Anglo and therefore undesirable. After the war, Europeans’ behavior during the war years provided an additional reason to refuse them entry. Restrictionists valued a patriotism that many believed pluralism only weakened; Europe’s particular problems created specific threats to American unity and strength that could be addressed narrowly. Implementing this could be done by targeting all Europeans or by focusing on racially inferior (southern) Europeans. As proposals to exclude Europeans proliferated, those who opposed this exclusion scrambled to make opposite arguments. Heterogeneity was better than homogeneity; European ties were a benefit, not a drag.

Restriction’s opponents claimed that restriction was nothing more than an irrational xenophobia.

The war and the present postwar period, both redolent with hysteria, offer the worst possible background for reasoning out the immigration problem. As a result of the ordeal of the war we are still hysterical about immigration. The ultra restrictionist and those behind the Johnson bill [for national origins quotas] claim we are a disunited people. Nothing is further from the truth. The war proved that of all nations in the combat we were the most united. We were successful in welding our many peoples without the use of force or coercion. The methods embodied in the Johnson bill are the forceful methods used by Germany to assimilate her people.¹⁶³

The war was to blame for this new wave of feeling. “After every foreign war comes a resurgence of chauvinism. It is the scum that boils up out of the cauldron of disorder, bloodshed, and national hatreds.”¹⁶⁴ Europe was neither bad nor good. “The field of thought recognizes no barriers. . . . We brought over the idea of deportation of radicals from France, not from the France of Rousseau, Jaurès, and Victor Hugo but from the France of the Bourbons.”¹⁶⁵ Anti-European feeling had no basis.

World War I was also important to restriction’s opponents. Europeans were enemies, but they were allies too; some even fought with American forces. Not only should Americans not shun Europeans, they owed many of them a great deal. “The adult foreigner now has a just obligation due him from this Nation, because of his services and the services of his fellows during the World War.”¹⁶⁶ Many of the restrictionists’ targets were from southern Europe, but “Croatia and Slovenia were part of Austria-

Hungary, and every one of these Croatians and Slovenians knew that in case he became a prisoner of war, he would be shot as a traitor.”¹⁶⁷ European countries would surely be confused. “At whom are you striking in this bill? Why, at the very people whom a short while ago you announced you were going to emancipate. We sent 2,000,000 men abroad to make the world ‘safe for democracy,’ to liberate these very people. Now you shut the door to them”;¹⁶⁸ “It is curious to note that, taking the census of 1890 as a basis, Belgium, Bohemia, Italy, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania, and Russia, with whom we were associated as allies during the late conflict, would be in the most unfavorable position.”¹⁶⁹ If the recent alliance were insufficient reason, current alliances surely must be. “We can not isolate ourselves, nor should we wound the sensibilities of our friends and allies.”¹⁷⁰ Foreign relations were far too important to jeopardize in a fit of postwar prejudice.

Restrictions would turn out to be superfluous anyway, making Europe’s inevitable retaliation ironic. “I believe that the economic rehabilitation of Europe has tended to check immigration and also has tended to increase the returning flow. I also believe that the destruction of autocracy and the establishment of new republics in Europe have tended to retard immigration and have also tended to increase the return movement.”¹⁷¹ Europe does not take protectionist legislation lightly, rewarding only openness. “But this [immigration] bill does not aim to open foreign markets. It aims to close them still further. It aims to anger many countries of Europe; its purpose will be to close European markets to American goods, agricultural, manufactured, and raw materials. . . . for the stigmatized nations of Europe will not take the insult lying down. They are going to bridle up, for all peoples have deep-seated national pride and national honor that must be satisfied.”¹⁷²

The United States courted catastrophe in the interdependent world. “A discriminatory law may rebound to our embarrassment in the conduct of our foreign trade. . . . If these countries should choose to reciprocate by discriminating against American-made products, as is entirely within their rights, the effect of this law would be disastrous to our American industries.”¹⁷³ Obligations underlined these interests: “We should not be so completely obsessed by nativism, by the shibboleth ‘America for Americans,’ as to forget that we belong to a family of nations with whom we desire to keep on friendly and cordial relations and to carry on international trade and commerce, [not] give affront to friendly nations and humiliate large numbers of our fellow citizens.”¹⁷⁴ The Cuban ambassador warned that likely immigrants “will then select Europe in preference to the United States for traveling and for the purpose of education. As a result, the commercial and business relations of Cuba with the United States,

which depends to a large extent on this intercourse, will suffer, while those with Europe will tend to increase proportionately by the transfer of interest from the United States to Europe.”¹⁷⁵ Isolation would harm the country economically, politically, and culturally.

Principle was, also, at stake. The United States had a hand in creating the European conditions from which people fled. It should therefore have a hand in remedying the upheaval. “The conditions existing in Europe today . . . were created by causes that we approved and in which we participated. These same conditions that have made the lot of the human race desperate and pathetic were of our will, our vote, our action in this House, and I wish to enter a solemn protest in the very beginning against the utter lack of sympathy, international comity, and international gratitude wrapped up in the proposed passage of the measure.”¹⁷⁶

Internationalists favored immigration generally and European immigration specifically. Europeans were trading partners, and relatives, and allies. The American people owed Europe a great deal, and at least ought to have no complaint against Europeans. Since European immigration was unrestricted during the debates, liberals could simply argue against change, if they wished. Most, however, argued for the status quo: individual-level screening with no numerical or categorical limits.

Reason: Geopolitics—Consistency across Hemispheres or Pan-Americanism

Restriction applied to all Asians, and to most Europeans, but to no Americans. Congress exempted the Western Hemisphere from the quotas. In fact, the possibility of including them was hardly discussed. Legislators on the fringes, those who believed in comprehensive openness or in immigration suspension, attempted to use open immigration from the Americas to demonstrate hypocrisy, to show that restrictionists did not really care for restricting numbers, protecting labor and social stability, but intended instead to exclude based on race or to include for base economic reasons. Each side believed that “this bill is the kind of bill that locks the front door and leaves all the back windows and all the back doors open.”¹⁷⁷

Ultrarestrictionists argued that the American public wanted to extend restriction to the Western Hemisphere¹⁷⁸ and opposed “exceptions which would flood the country with Mexican peons and other pauper laborers.”¹⁷⁹ Mexicans they found distasteful. “On the basis of merit Mexico is the last country in the world to which we should grant a special favor or extend a peculiar privilege. . . . Henceforth let us meet Mexicans and all

other immigrants in excess of the minimum quota at the international boundary line and the water's edge with the stirring Garibaldian battle cry with which Pétain's heroes turned the tide of victory at Verdun and proclaim to all the world 'they shall not pass.'¹⁸⁰ Inconsistency and Mexicans' undesirability were, however, the only reasons ultrarestrictionists gave. When staff pointed out that annual intra-American immigrants numbered only in the hundreds, the ultrarestrictionists abandoned this tack.

Opponents of restriction, on the other hand, asserted that restriction threatened pan-American accord.

The policy dictated by this amendment [to exclude Western Hemisphere migrants] is obviously unwise if we intend to attach any importance to the Pan-Americanism idea. We are alien to our neighbors in South and Central America by language. Their natural resort is to Paris and to Madrid. For every thing they buy and almost every thought they think they naturally refer to those two centers. If we want to hold them to us—and I think we do so long as we maintain the Monroe Doctrine—we have got to treat them differently from the rest of the world.¹⁸¹

Money was also at stake. "It is to Latin America, South America and Mexico, that this country must look for the promotion of trade, and, in large part, to increase our foreign commerce in order to build up and aid American industry."¹⁸² Mexican laborers created prosperity for the United States and Mexico, and "trade and commerce mean peace."¹⁸³ Domestic peace would also be assured. "You speak about your socialism and everything like that, but whenever a man becomes a land owner that goes out the window and he becomes a different citizen."¹⁸⁴ Whereas European immigration promised nothing but social and political headaches, Mexican immigration had entirely economic consequences and would thereby maintain international accord.

Because restriction's opponents, largely northern and eastern legislators, had argued on principle, they would not reverse to support Western Hemisphere exclusion. Because restriction's supporters, largely southern and western legislators, had not based their arguments on principle but on particular charges against Europeans, they could support continued openness without risking charges of hypocrisy. Because they represented large ranching states, they did so. The alliance of pan-Americanism and ranching interests, eased by a convenient lack of principled argument, exempted the Western Hemisphere from restriction with no fight at all. This debate was entirely derivative of the main debate on European exclusion. Chang-

ing European policy became the strongest reason given for changing policy toward the Western Hemisphere. The debate, for this reason, makes no sense apart from the larger context.

Resolving the Public Interest: The Quota Acts

Restrictionists valued sovereignty, autonomy, plenary exclusion, vigilant defense against domestic and foreign enemies, homogeneity to ensure social and institutional stability, and high racial and political standards to assure that the unfit could not enter. They assessed the country's options as if the country were an egoist (though they themselves might not be): of most value were a strong, independent identity, corporal health, and the means to defend oneself and reproduce. Opponents of restriction stressed liberal values: neutrality, equity, wealth. They assessed the country's options as if the country were a universalist (though they, too, might not be): of most value was treating individuals as they deserved to be treated based on their past acts, as well as shunning behavior that categorized people according to characteristics that they had no control over.

Restrictionists' weakest point politically was their advocacy of arbitrary (racial) discrimination against citizens, that is, the charge that they were degrading citizens by disparaging others of their ethnic groups. Americans were, after all, supposed to consider citizens equal before the law. Monarchies, not democracies, separated citizens by law into classes. Their opponents' weakest point was their denial that instability was a valid fear. As Americans, they could not pretend indifference to subversion. Both groups selected the proposals that became the Quota Law and the National Origins Quota Law from many other proposals; these are themselves a subset of imagined alternatives.

Coming out of this debate could have been any number of policy decisions, ranging from doing away with screening altogether to suspending all immigration permanently, with the decision simply to maintain the status quo far more toward the liberal than the restrictive side. Rarely did contestants discuss the policy's effects on others, but when the issue of relative power did come up, no one offered evidence other than that which would suggest that Europe would in fact be worse off than the United States.

Restriction was the most popular proposal, for all of the reasons outlined above, and restriction's advocates were far more numerous than its opponents. Figure 6 outlines the arguments that were made during this debate. Massive numerical restriction therefore became the starting point from which the final policy would be constructed. Those arguing against restriction on the grounds that it was wrong in principle should have been

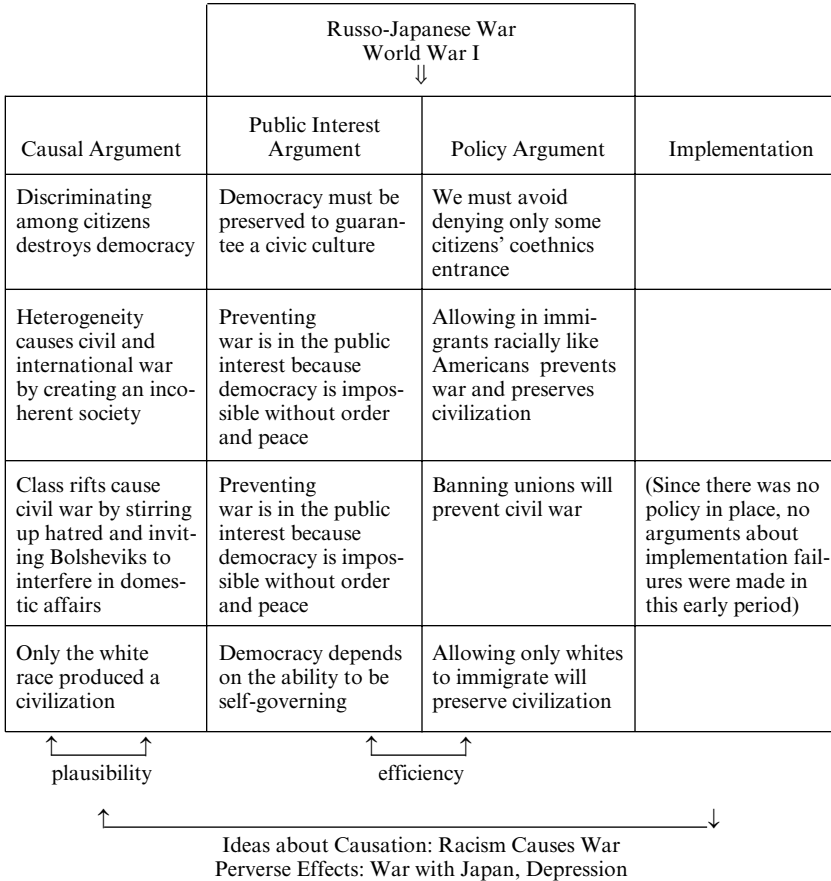


Fig. 6. Arguments made preceding the Quota Acts

least influential in finalizing policy. Few took their position at all seriously, and they never even made a counterproposal. An assumption underlying their view, that Americans should not ignore foreigners' claims, was anathema to all but a handful of nationally elected officials. Yet two elements of it, that discrimination was wrong and that a policy that favored some subgroups over others was an insult and an injustice to everyone, struck a chord. The legislators would not go so far as to accept that Americans should not be favored over others—that was too radical, and their jobs, after all, were premised on a discrete electorate—but they were deeply enough committed to the view that citizens should be treated

equally to cringe at the accusation of favoritism. The proposal at the center of debate shifted from one outlining numerical restriction based on country of recent immigrants' origin to one based on all (or rather almost all) Americans' countries of origin.

National origins quotas solved this dilemma. They did so, ironically for the liberals, by reducing even further the number of non-"Nordics"; the law's amendment reflected a move toward a more, not less, conservative policy than the one preceding it. Its amendment did, though, respond to the more resonant objections that the liberals brought. By basing the quotas on the national origins of the entire (Anglo-European—Africans and Asians were excluded from the assessment)¹⁸⁵ population instead of the recent immigrants, no one could complain of discrimination. There were no longer second-class citizens. "Discrimination of citizens is unwise and improper. It is just and proper for a host to invite as his guests whomsoever he pleases, but having invited them it is unjust and improper to show any distinction among them."¹⁸⁶ Immigration would perfectly reflect the citizens' makeup.

This justification persuaded not only most of those who had been restrictionist all along, but also most of the new members and most of those who had withheld their votes the first time. In 1921, the House chose, 276 to 33, with 120 not voting, to impose a ceiling of 150,000 immigrants per year, allocated by country according to the country's contribution of immigrants in the recent past. Those who were strongly committed did not change their votes; only 18 of those who had voted definitely yes or no changed their minds and voted the opposite way. Change came rather from two other directions, from selection through elections, which that year focused on the immigration question, and from the persuasion of those who had been teetering. Table 1 shows the actual immigration flows from the parts of the world discussed in the immigration debate, and then indicates the allotment given them by Congress. New members, who voted three to one for national origins quotas, replaced the old, and of those who had refrained from voting in the earlier period, twelve times as many chose restriction as chose to oppose it. In 1924, the House decided 308 to 62, with 63 not voting, to change the basis for distributing immigration slots: the national origins *of the entire population*, rather than of recent immigrants, was a more justifiable basis for assigning quotas than were the alternatives. Although those opposed to restriction offered "national origins" as a way to free immigration, its logic meant a far more restrictive policy than restrictionists had ever advocated or even contemplated, and this is what the country got.

Henry Cabot Lodge, a staunch restrictionist, was one of the first to propose national origins as a solution. "If such a basis is adopted, there

can be no question then of discrimination, because it will treat all races alike on the basis of their actual proportion of the existing population.”¹⁸⁷ Others repeated this argument almost verbatim, establishing consensus by repetition.

If we divide up our immigrants exactly in accordance with the national origins of our whole population, there can be no charge of discrimination.¹⁸⁸

The idea of the national origins amendment is that we will establish a method against which there can not be the slightest accusation of discrimination . . . We talk about the melting pot to-day, and what we mean by the melting pot is that a nation of one kind of people is getting an inflow of different kinds of people; but we will not need any melting pot if our immigration is just a cross section of our present population.¹⁸⁹

If Congress were to adopt that figure, 300,000, it would apportion that quota exactly in accordance with the national origin of every man, woman, and child in America today according to the 1920 census. The trouble with the present system and with this 1910 suggestion is that it divides the quota according to the foreign born of 1910 . . . dividing the quotas 45 [northwestern European] and 55 percent [southeastern] in a country whose actual population has its origin as 74 is to 13.¹⁹⁰

I do . . . insist that we are entitled to consider those of us who were born here as another element in determining the quotas. But no plan except the ‘national origins’ plan recognizes this elementary point. . . . there is not one word that anyone can say against the principle of dividing our immigrants according to the national or racial origins of those already here.¹⁹¹

The fairest basis would be one which would make our immigration from European countries most nearly approximate in racial qualities the present population of the United States.¹⁹²

The national origins system would make immigration restriction fair to United States citizens. It would treat new and old immigrants equally when allocating quotas.

Legislators valued the nondiscrimination aspects of the law for this reason, but they also valued them particularly because of their experiences

TABLE 1. Immigration Patterns Preceding Quotas and the Quotas

	Actual			Legal		
	1898	1907	1915	1922	1925	1930
EUROPE	222,213	1,209,399	192,268	355,929	341,770	150,815
Albania				288	100	100
Andorra					100	100
Armenia					124	124
<i>German Empire</i>	17,111	37,807	7,799	67,607	51,227	27,370
Austria	39,797	338,452	9,215	7,342	785	
(or Austria-Hungary)						
Hungary				5,747	473	869
Czechoslovakia				14,357	3,073	2,874
<i>Belgium</i>	695	6,396	2,399	1,563	512	1,304
Danzig Free City				301	228	100
<i>Denmark</i>	1,946	7,243	3,312	5,619	2,789	1,181
Estonia				1,348	124	116
<i>France</i>	1,990	9,731	4,811	5,729	3,954	3,086
<i>Great Britain</i>	38,021	78,977	27,237	77,342	34,007	65,721
<i>Ireland</i>		34,530	14,185		28,567	17,853
Greece	2,339	36,580	12,592	3,063	100	307
<i>Iceland</i>					100	100
Italy	58,613	285,731	49,688	42,057	3,845	5,802
Latvia				1,540	145	236
Liechtenstein					100	100
Lithuania				2,629	344	386
Luxembourg				92	100	100
Monaco					100	100
<i>Netherlands</i>	767	6,637	3,144	3,607	1,648	3,153
<i>Norway</i>	4,938	22,133	7,986	12,202	6,453	2,377
Poland	4,726			30,977	5,982	6,524
Portugal	1,717	9,608	4,907	2,465	503	440
Romania	900	4,384	481	7,419	603	295
San Marino					100	100
Spain	577	5,784	2,762	912	131	252
<i>Sweden</i>	12,398	20,589	6,585	20,042	9,561	3,314
<i>Switzerland</i>	1,246	3,748	1,742	3,752	2,081	1,707
Trieste						
Turkey (“Turkey in Europe” plus “Turkey in Asia”)	4,451	28,820	4,551	2,654	100	226
USSR/Russia (and Finland 1898)	29,828	258,943	26,187	24,405	2,248	2,784
Finland				3,921	471	569
	1,898	1,907	1,915	1,922	1,925	1,930
Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro		11,359	1,403	6,426	671	845
Bulgaria				302	100	100
Australia (including New Zealand)	153	1,947	1,282	121	121	100
New Zealand				100	100	100

Northwestern Europe	79,112	227,791	79,200	197,776	141,220	127,466
Southeastern Europe	143,101	981,608	113,068	158,153	20,550	23,349
MIDDLE EAST				800	800	800
AFRICA	48	1,486	934	1,000	1,000	1,000
OCEANIA	8	42	117	400	400	400
ASIA	4,301	32,085	11,434	700	700	700
Afghanistan				100	100	100
Bhutan				100	100	100
China	2,071	961	2,660	100	100	100
India		898	161	100	100	100
Japan	2,230	30,226	8,613	100	100	100
Nepal				100	100	100
Siam				100	100	100
WEST HEMISPHERE	5,356	41,762	111,206	no limit	no limit	no limit
Unspecified or other	102	515	1,445			
Total	229,299	1,285,349	326,700	357,803	164,667	153,714

Source: All data taken from the Bureau of Immigration Annual Report, various years, table III.

Note: Italics indicate Bureau of Immigration classification as Northwestern Europe.

during the war and because a national origins basis appeared to be scientific. Many believed that heterogeneity had almost cost the country the war. Unity was especially important when Europe and others threatened the country. "If the war made for national unity in a larger sense than ever before, it seems to me that it would be wisest and best to base immigration not upon a percentage of foreign born in the country in any one year but upon all those who have come to our shores at any time since the foundation of the Government."¹⁹³ Unity would be little disturbed if the quotas were distributed fairly, and nothing was fairer than science.¹⁹⁴ "I live in a sphere that is entirely above politics. . . . Congress shall fix the total of immigration to be permitted in any one year; that it shall then apportion that total to the various nations in exact accordance with their proportionate representation in the whole population of the United States at the present time."¹⁹⁵ Congress amended the Quota Act until it was less easily challenged on the grounds that it violated a universal principle on which public interest arguments in the United States were based: that abhorring legal distinctions among those given citizenship.

The American people identified a threat from within. Believing that heterogeneity was permanent and must lead to political dissolution, they

TABLE 2. The Quota Acts, 1921 and 1924

Act	Numerical Restrictions	Preference Categories	Unrestricted (Nonquota Immigrants)	Exclusions
Immigration Act of February 5, 1917	[none specified]	[none specified]	[none specified]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Illiterate aliens •Natives of Asian Barred Zone
Quota Act (Burnett-Smith) Act of May 19, 1921	<p><i>Overall ceiling:</i> 356,995</p> <p><i>Method of allocation:</i> Each European country received a cap equal to 3 percent of the persons born there who were living in the U.S. in 1910 (the latest available census).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1st: Parents of citizens over the age of 21; persons with agricultural skills; some husbands •2d: Wives and unmarried children of resident aliens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Those who had resided continuously for one year in an independent country of the Western Hemisphere •Domestic servants •Professional classes such as nurses and ministers 	
National Origins Quota Act (Johnson-Reed) Immigration Act of May 26, 1924	<p>To 1929</p> <p><i>Overall ceiling:</i> 164,667</p> <p><i>Method of allocation:</i> Each European country received a cap equal to 2 percent of the number of persons born there residing in the U.S. in 1890.</p> <p>After 1929</p> <p><i>Overall ceiling:</i> 153,714</p> <p><i>Method of allocation:</i> Each country received a cap based on the proportion of all U.S. residents, in 1920, of that nationality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unmarried children under 21 •Parents •Spouses of U.S. citizens over age 21 •Skilled agricultural workers and their wives and children under 16 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •U.S. citizens' wives and unmarried children under 18 •Western Hemisphere natives, or residents for at least 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No one ineligible for citizenship

created borders as a way to create an outside and an inside. This made it possible to externalize difference, the threat, and protect against it. Numerical restriction came in response to a fear that sovereignty was at stake; they framed qualitative restrictions in oppositional terms.

National origins quotas were the product of a long process of debate, in which legislators revised their arguments until they more fully evoked the principles on which the idea of a public interest in the United States rested and formed an “identity response” to America’s changing involvement with the international environment. Or, as Woodrow Wilson described it, immigration policy was “a policy in which our people have conceived the very character of their Government to be expressed, the very mission and spirit of the Nation in respect of its relations to the people of the world outside their borders.”¹⁹⁶ Table 2 summarizes the way in which the Quota Acts altered immigration policy. Whether this way of seeing policy change fares as well (or badly) in general can be seen through its performance throughout the next three periods during which Americans considered immigration policy.