

CHAPTER 5

Whom to Exclude: The McCarran-Walter Act

Immigration policy remained essentially unaltered throughout the Great Depression, in spite of the doubling of tariffs, massive unemployment, western migration, and labor organizing. (The only major legislation of this period allocated special entry to a handful of Basque shepherds.) Instead, it was diplomatic imperatives that arose during World War II that forced attention to immigration policy. In many ways, the next debate reprised the earlier one, yet the earlier laws had established what were to become axioms of policy and in this way provided a context for subsequent arguments. By 1924, restrictionists had convinced Congress not only to limit the volume of annual immigration, but also to sift immigrants by ethnicity. Numerical restriction and racial-ethnic exclusion were not, in principle, subject to debate. They defined the status quo, structuring the way that Americans understood immigration policy and the way it might change, and shaping the arguments that all, both conservatives and reformers, offered in the future. The restrictionists' greatest victory was their ability to plant their understanding of absolute sovereignty in the public mind. Later groups had to accept that policy, with all of its assumptions, as their starting point. This benefited those desiring retrenchment.

But circumstances had changed. The United States was involved once again with Europe, but this time it would remain an internationalist and accept or seek hegemony. Restrictionists had either to make their old arguments convincing in new conditions or to fashion new arguments leading to the same policy outcome. Those trying to defend an idea already planted in the public mind, then, also had some difficulty. Continuity too would be an active political choice. The strategies, successes, and failures of those wishing to continue restriction, as well as those of their opponents who were trying energetically to overturn restrictive policy, cannot be explained by reference to inertia; rather, both must be explained with reference to contemporary efforts.

Several domestic and international events in the period following the Quota Acts' passage in 1924 might have provoked a restrictionist backlash: the Depression, the international and domestic spread of Bolshevism and fascism, war and upheaval abroad, direct involvement in war, the

beginning of the cold war, and the creation of the United Nations, OECD, Marshall Plan, NATO, and other multilateral institutions. During this period, the United States repealed the Chinese Exclusion Acts (1943) and other Asian exclusions, enacted legislation to assist resettlement of displaced persons (1948), and overhauled basic immigration policy in what came to be known as the McCarran-Walter Act (1952). (Table 4 summarizes the ways in which McCarran-Walter departed from the Quota Acts.) It also, at times, did nothing: during the Depression, for example, there was no new general legislation: reasons proved unpersuasive.

Reason: Depression

In 1929, the same year that the Census Bureau finished going back through its records to determine the population's national origins, the stock market crashed. Unemployment rose from 3.2 to 23.6 percent in three years. It was at or above triple the 1929 value until 1942.¹ If restrictive immigration policies are designed to shrink both the pool of competitors for jobs and the population for whose welfare the government is responsible, during the Depression legislators should further restrict, or even ban, immigration. They should also make efforts to target the immigrants most likely to compete with Americans economically. Yet they did nothing. During the decade following the stock market crash, legislators were indeed concerned about unemployment, banking, and investment. They were not any more concerned about immigrants in the 1930s than they had been in earlier decades; in fact, they rarely discussed immigration. When they did speak, legislators voiced the same types of convictions and worries in the 1930s that they had in the 1910s and 1920s. These included economic worries. They also included concern about race and protecting sovereignty more generally.

Over eleven years of depression in the United States, 42 legislators, about a tenth of Congress, spoke at some point about immigration. This includes 3 defending it. Of these 42, only 10 at some point mentioned the economy when discussing immigration. Their purpose was to continue their old battle to ban immigration altogether. When they claimed the floor, they argued in terms indistinguishable from those they chose one and two decades earlier, such as race-based criminality: it "is quite singular that the assassins of Presidents and would-be assassins, many of them, have not been American citizens";² "For one, I am tired of seeing the name of Capone and other such names in every crime record that we read in our papers. I do not see the names of the Germans, the Swedes, of the English, of the Danes, the true American names, appearing in the crime records of

the country, in the agitators of the country who are trying to overthrow our form of government and do away with our laws and our institutions.”³

Control of immigration was still control of sovereignty. “America has the absolute right not only to determine the number, but to exclude immigrants of occupations not needed here, just as every other nation has that unquestioned sovereign right and exercises it”;⁴ [so in] “1924 we . . . practically cut out foreign immigration. That (Quota) act is called the second Declaration of American Independence.”⁵ Sovereignty depended on control over citizenship. “Here we have a country, but if there is not a soul living in that country there is nothing to it. The same thing would apply to a State if there were no people living in the State. The same thing applies to a nation; unless there are people living in that nation, it is no nation. A nation is simply made up of individuals.”⁶ Control over citizenship, moreover, was unilateral and plenary. “This country has a right to do whatever it wants to do to protect itself. This country must have immigration laws looking to the good of this country without consulting any other country [or we are] undone as a nation, . . . we are lost.”⁷ “No people in the world have a right to come into our country unless they come by our invitation. There is no right for the peoples of any country to come into our country and seek the advantages of American citizenship. We have a right to, and we should designate, what peoples may come into our country, and under what conditions they may come.”⁸ Legislators were, however, barely disturbed by the prospect of immigrants worsening the Depression.

The causal model implicit in Depression-era arguments is the same as that typical of the earlier period. Social friction, economic-racial in origin, would lead to war. Either civil war (with sides defined ethnically) would engulf the country, or an alienated group would invite a foreign country to invade, or people would bicker so extensively that the country would be too weak to resist opportunistic invasion. Whatever the spark, racial division marked the route to disastrous loss of integrity and sovereignty. Economic isolation thus served defense.

Some emphasized one stage of this chain, such as the link between immigration and unemployment. The legislators who had focused on unemployment after World War I blamed immigration for the Depression. One claimed that “if we should deport the aliens now in the United States, I do not believe we would have a single American citizen out of employment.”⁹ Notably, only legislators who already supported restriction—had supported the Quota Acts—used depression conditions as evidence for exclusion. In fact, John Robsion used consensus on immigration restriction as a lever to argue for economic protection, not the other way around as is implied by the notion that restriction has an economic motivation. “It will not do our working people much good to keep foreigners

out of this country, and send aliens back to their home countries where they will produce shoes, clothing, pottery, machinery, and hundreds of other articles in industry and agriculture—working long hours with low wages and using the materials and products of their own country to produce these articles and then dump them into our own country. Restricted immigration and the protective tariff must go hand in hand.”¹⁰ Representatives declared that “it is primary that we protect our people and secondary that we solve our problems of trade and industry”¹¹ because “the products of foreign labor coming into this country do more harm than the aliens we have coming here.”¹² Economic competition in time of need raised issues of obligation. Why divide the starving world into blocs? Because that way, the government was responsible for a definite number of people. The government had a good idea, too, about which persons it had most interest in protecting. “Let us feed and clothe those who pay taxes and fight for us in preference to those who get our money and return to their own country and then fight us.”¹³

Economic problems mattered to the government because they troubled the taxpayers, but also because they would, specifically, invite communism or fascism. Foreign ideologies were a concern before the Depression, and they got attached to economic problems once it had set in. Just before the stock market crash, Thomas Heflin argued that “foreign agents have intruded themselves into the very temple of American liberty and here at the altar place the Fascist agents of Mussolini are administering a foreign oath to the sons of American Italians and binding them in allegiance to Mussolini, the Catholic tyrant dictator of Rome.”¹⁴ During the Depression, communism could be imported and survive, or it could develop on its own. In 1932, legislators worried that Canada’s new anticommunist laws would provoke an influx to the United States;¹⁵ in 1935, a representative usually liberal on immigration questions worried that Boy Scouts coming to the United States for a jamboree would be able to bring in their communist parents.¹⁶ In hearings held during the Depression, legislators focused on communism as the outgrowth of industrial decadence.¹⁷

The outcome that legislators feared was the one that populists and leftists hoped for, though they could not agree on how to bring it about. J. Louis Engdahl, representing the National Council for the Protection of the Foreign Born, argued that immigration control “has but one object in view, to create deep-going divisions in the ranks of the working class, to destroy the solidarity of native and foreign-born workers through putting them in separate categories, which at the same time reacts against the unity of white and negro workers.”¹⁸ On the other hand, Hugo Black argued that open immigration hurt workers. “My own idea is that foreign immigration has been utilized by the big business interests of the country as a

direct weapon to break down the price of wages of the people of the land.”¹⁹ Communists could not agree whether open or closed immigration hurt workers, but legislators could agree that closed immigration kept out communists.

The economy, when it was discussed, was most often listed among several areas of concern. Economic troubles mattered not in themselves but because they could ignite race war, which would lead to the collapse of sovereignty. Belief and ability arose organically from race. “As a student of population and of heredity and of genetics, I know that if a man with a civilization standard, say, of 10 marries a woman who has advanced on civilization’s path to the point of only 4, you will not reach the standard of 10 again in the posterity of that family for 300 years. . . . Self-preservation is a law among nations as it is among men.”²⁰ Heterogeneity led to degradation of the American way of life, then to crime, subversion, war, and finally to dissolution. “We are face to face with unrest, social problems, race problems, crime waves, riots, anti-American propaganda, wage reduction and other evils which are largely brought about by the seething hordes of undesirable aliens in America.”²¹ Depression would accelerate this process. Albert Johnson, for example, made a point of objecting to communists not out of fear about their economic ends but out of concern for American sovereignty. “We are not going to attempt to prevent the arrival or cause the deportation of those who have sympathetic feelings for people generally as communists; we are aiming at the international political communist who believes in one big union of government and against individual government.”²² Sovereignty protected civilization.

Economic shock threatened sovereignty because people’s reactions threatened social order. The dramatic rate of downward change was, in the short run, more worrisome than the low level of economic output. “We are in the midst of one of the most violent and sudden economic changes our country has ever experienced. To adjust ourselves to these changes a new social policy must be adopted. Drastic curtailment of immigration from all sources is one of the first steps necessary before we can put our own house in order.”²³

The aliens did not want to come anyway. A depressed country was hardly a magnet, and those who wanted to move were likely to be too poor to do so, emigrating from a country hit just as hard. Immigration to the United States slowed to 13 percent of its 1930 level, 4.5 percent of its 1924 level.²⁴ Moreover, net migration was negative. Table 3 shows unemployment, immigration, and emigration figures for the period 1929 to 1945. Some of this was attributable to administrative efforts to control immigration, efforts that angered the Congress because they circumvented its

authority. Consuls and immigration officials relied on the public charge provision to bar a large proportion of applicants:

Our Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson . . . said that his great office takes the credit for reducing immigration by 97 percent, without any law at all. . . . In each case the consul would ask the prospective immigrant whether he has a job awaiting him in the United States. If the answer is yes, then the immigrant is refused a visa because he is a contract laborer; if the answer is no, then the immigrant is refused a visa because he is likely to become a public charge.²⁵

Stricter enforcement was easy in any case when the pool was small and self-selected. The self-regulating nature of economic migration, on one hand, and legislators' identification of immigration with sovereignty, not with poverty, on the other, combine to explain legislators' lack of interest in immigration during the Depression. Table 3 displays how immigration and unemployment covaried. Unemployment jumped up near 20 percent in the late 1930s when legislators began again to discuss restriction, but it was not unemployment that caught their attention. It was the prospect of war in Europe.

Reason: Isolation from Postwar Europe

Decades of debate about European wars, immigration, and sovereignty had sensitized Congress to changes in Europe that might force Americans face-to-face with Europeans, either as soldiers together in Europe or as neighbors in the United States. Involvement with Europe—including involvement with immigrants from Europe—was a slippery slope leading to war and undercutting democracy. Foremost in their minds in 1938 was the country's experience during World War I. Explaining American Legion opposition to immigration, in 1929 a representative explained that “it was natural, I think, that those who had served abroad during the World War and had come into contact there with the elements of the French army which included the French territorial Asiatics and the French territorial Africans, and who had seen something else of the foreign element there, should look with alarm upon the idea of a great influx of those people or any of the foreign people to our shores.”²⁶ Isolationism a decade later focused still on Europe and its wars. “Those who believe in reaching hands across the sea are in opposition to those with whom I find myself in accord, who stand for America first, and who are desirous first of keeping

TABLE 3. Unemployment and Immigration during the Depression

Year	Unemployment Rate	Immigration	Emigration	Net Inflow or Outflow	Admissions	Departures	Net Inflow or Outflow
1928	4.2	307,260	77,457	229,803	500,630	274,360	226,280
1929	3.2	279,680	69,203	210,477	479,330	252,500	226,830
1930	8.7	241,700	50,661	191,039	446,210	272,430	173,790
1931	15.9	97,139	61,882	35,257	280,680	290,920	-10,240
1932	23.6	35,576	103,300	-67,719	174,870	287,660	-112,790
1933	24.9	23,068	80,081	-57,013	150,730	243,800	-93,070
1934	21.7	29,470	39,771	-10,301	163,900	177,170	-13,270
1935	20.1	34,956	38,834	-3,878	179,720	189,050	-9,330
1936	16.9	36,329	35,817	512	190,900	193,280	-2,380
1937	14.3	50,244	26,736	23,508	231,880	224,580	7,300
1938	19.0	67,895	25,210	42,685	252,700	222,610	30,090
1939	17.2	82,998	26,651	56,347	268,330	201,410	66,920
1940	14.6	70,756	21,461	49,295	208,790	166,160	42,630
1941	9.9	51,776	17,115	34,661	151,780	88,477	63,303

Source: Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report* (Washington, DC: GPO, various years).

Note: Immigrants are those admitted eligible to file for citizenship; emigrants are exiting citizens. Admissions includes both immigrants and “nonimmigrants,” those traveling to the country for business or pleasure. Similarly, departures includes emigrants and “nonemigrants,” temporary visitors on their way out.

the United States out of war by staying clear of any foreign entanglements or embroilments.” Robert Reynolds wanted to ban immigration and thereby “ban all the isms.”²⁷ Samuel Dickstein, a friend of immigrants, similarly explained, “Naturally we want no war. We want to keep peace with the world. We talk about neutrality. We want neutrality not only from the standpoint of what the term implies but also in order to keep out of any trouble, particularly European trouble. In these times we must keep our borders protected, and when I speak of borders I am referring to protecting against the entrance of people who have no right to come here.”²⁸

Isolation was the country’s right.

The Constitution forces us to confer certain rights upon people born within our territory—but I don’t see why anybody who does not live within the United States and who does not have the opportunity to take part in American institutions, who does not have opportunity to grow up to be what we look upon as an American and to speak the English language, who doesn’t have any contact with our form of government—I don’t see why that person, no matter what their birth, what their lineage, I don’t see why we should confer citizenship on them.²⁹

Immigrants, as armies, threatened to gut the country. “It is my opinion that the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, when they have in their power such items as these, are just as much a line of defense as is our Army, our Navy, our airplane defense. If we are destroyed in this manner, we are just as surely destroyed as if our Army were defeated, our Navy sunk, and our air defense annihilated.”³⁰

When Europe began its next war, Americans prepared to shield themselves from its fallout. The group over whom the public was later to feel such remorse, refugees from Nazi Germany, provoked the greatest amount of initial fear. In a *Fortune* poll conducted in 1938, 86 percent of respondents were against adding places for refugees.³¹ It was not that legislators were wholly ignorant of the conditions the refugees faced. “They are practically all Jews and will be sent back to a country where they are not wanted and will be subjected to hardship and persecution. On the other hand, I feel that we owe to the dignity and integrity of the citizenship of the United States a very strong duty. . . . I think too much of my own citizenship to degrade it in that way.”³² They believed that refugee immigration was no more than a “wedge” prying open the borders and enabling a flood of relatives to enter.³³ If restriction had been based on claims about immigrants’ motives, then demonstrating that the new supplicants cared only for freedom would have changed legislators’ minds. But restriction

was not a response to arguments about motives. It was a response to arguments about Europeans' essential Europeanness, their congenital inability to live democratically.

For this reason, one group of Europeans persecuting another was to be expected; it was definitely no reason to admit the persecuted. "Mr. Speaker, we have had enough experience with these European countries to know that we will get the worst of this deal. We always get the worst of it even when we are trying to save ourselves from them. In this new proposal we are attempting to save them from themselves."³⁴ Such was also true of Asians and Africans.

Almost every disgruntled element that ever got into trouble in its own country had pleaded for admission into the United States on the ground that they were oppressed at home. . . . Suppose we should. . . . We would be inviting all the Communists in Germany and Italy and all the Fascists and Communists in Spain who are dissatisfied with their present regime. . . . then what about the oppressed of Ethiopia? Would we be expected to invite every Negro in Ethiopia who feels he is oppressed? Should we invite every Chinaman . . . ?³⁵

"But the American people are not going to be deceived by this refugee bunk. This is just another scheme to bring additional thousands here who are not wanted in Europe."³⁶ Later representatives reviewed this period bitterly, using it as evidence to aid displaced persons. "There was no effort of any kind to save from death many of the refugees who could have been saved. . . . But the destructive policy of our organs of Government, particularly the State Department [by relying on the public charge provision during the Depression] brought about a condition so that not even the existing immigration quotas are filled."³⁷ The regrets that some Americans felt were insufficient to reopen the question of restriction. Aliens "have no rights to citizenship. They have the privilege of becoming citizens if they follow a path that we lay down to all of them alike. This is a straight and narrow path, which some do not like to take. Every country in the world guards its citizenship against people who are not in sympathy with their country and form of government."³⁸ Sovereignty was sovereignty.

During the three years between the German annexation of Austria and American military engagement, the period when wars declared were not fought and adversaries were uncertain, American legislators lived in dread of being overrun by immigrants fleeing Europe.

Mr. Speaker, our President seems bound to embroil us in European entanglements. He is now asking the people of the United States to

make a haven for those who are undesirable to European dictators. . . . The President has gone on a visionary excursion into the warm fields of altruism. With actual death-dealing red warfare being carried on between two great nations off to the west of us, and with rumors of wars coming to us every day from Europe—a veritable powder keg—why should we project ourselves into this danger? . . . Why add to our troubles and threaten our very existence?³⁹

That fascism might threaten American interests or values, and thereby be sufficient cause to join in the war, was implicitly rejected. Instead, “the restriction of immigration and the deportation of alien criminals is a subject in which the American people are more thoroughly interested at this hour than any other subject . . . because it unquestionably has a relation to the mammoth subject of adequate national defense. . . . Are we for the Americans, or are we for those who live beyond the lucid blue waters of the Atlantic or the briny waves of the Pacific?”⁴⁰

Refugees’ potential admission was not, however, the greatest danger the country faced. More dreadful was the prospect of immigrants dragging the country into war, then assuring defeat once fighting started. Immigrant subversion would be the key to defeat—but immigration was necessarily subversive. Safety did not depend on immigrants’ benign motives but their absence.

Our defense, in a sense, lies within the confines of the United States. We have made vast preparations against the forces which would be used against us in time of war. If war were declared against us, if an invasion were attempted or were made, our observers maneuvering and operating our great airplanes could easily locate the enemy forces without. That would not be difficult. But, Mr. President, there are millions and millions of aliens in this country who have been here for years upon years.⁴¹

In this view, “‘all enemies’ includes both foreign and domestic enemies. . . . I say that if war were to be declared tomorrow against the United States, . . . we would have 7,000,000 potential enemies spying within our midst. Termites are more dangerous than enemies from without, because an enemy from without may be observed.”⁴²

Believing that immigrants’ presence alone was subversive enough to assure defeat did not stop many from pointing out specific groups’ nefarious motives. Echoing earlier fears about Japanese colonies, representatives declared that “frequently we have read that prior to the subjugation of countries by aggressor nations tourists in large numbers have been sent

by the aggressor nations to the countries to be subdued and overrun. I am not at all sure that America and the West Hemisphere are not now being subjected in part to the same or a kindred procedure."⁴³ The danger grew both from Europe and from Japan. "I believe that ahead of America are perhaps some rather dark days. I think it is time we turned our attention definitely toward the question of the presence in this country of 5,000,000 aliens. We have seen the map of Europe completely changed by the operations of a Nazi government which has boasted of the presence in each of the countries they have conquered of what is referred to as a 'fifth column.'"⁴⁴ Specifically, "no one knows how many agents of warring nations are posing as lecturers and journalists for the principal purpose of shaping American foreign policy."⁴⁵ Immigration and infiltration were indistinguishable, synonymous.

This would be true, by definition, of any country, but American democracy made the country particularly vulnerable to propaganda. The First Amendment and advanced technology combined to create particularly bad conditions. "Propaganda was one of the main avenues for developing a war attitude in the minds of the American people from 1914 to 1917. Today the masses are more subject to direct appeal than in 1914, because of the radio. . . . Foreign propaganda agents are using our freedom of the press and of speech for a purpose which may result in the destruction of our form of government."⁴⁶ Arguments about particular circumstances, such as American democracy, Nazi refugees, or Japanese intentions, though logically unnecessary, joined the main, principled claim—that any immigration destroyed sovereignty—to create a barrier of words protecting the country.

Opposition to this renewed restrictionist wave also echoed that of earlier years, and liberals, too, rarely voiced opinions at all. Representatives noted that "in periods of war—and we are now in such a period—considerable hysteria develops and oftentimes injustice is done to very good people in our midst."⁴⁷ If democracy was right, it should be right in any circumstances. "In a period such as this period, the test of a democracy lies in the ability of that democracy to maintain its liberties, to preserve those liberties, and to have more freedom rather than less freedom during the period of crisis."⁴⁸ If citizens were free, they should be free in any circumstances. "Concentration camps, or their equivalent, should be kept beyond the pale of our democracy. They may prove to be a two-edged sword, cutting at our enemies today but striking at our patriots and defenders of democracy tomorrow."⁴⁹ Particular circumstances could not circumscribe the application of democratic principle.

From the Depression's beginning through its end and through the early war years in Europe, nothing changed. Neither the generally

accepted, public characterization of immigration nor policy itself was altered. Immigrants remained a racially distinct army threatening to steal sovereignty by “eviscerating the body politic”; therefore, policy held to its 150,000 annual level, divided among the (white) world’s peoples according to the nationality of the U.S. population. The 1920 census on which the quotas were based, picked because it was most recent, was never even updated. Individual immigrants mattered because of their race, not their skills. Congress gauged immigrants’ effects on a depressed nation by measuring not wages, nor investment, savings, or public expenditures, but “race problems, crime waves, riots.” The only change that prospective immigrants faced was the State Department decision to enforce the public charge provision more rigorously.

Isolationist policies had accomplished what they were intended to accomplish: the country had isolated itself so effectively that its image of immigrants and of the outer world they represented did not change in spite of massive changes at home and abroad. It was not until Americans again faced Europeans and Asians in war that they again considered whether and how to establish borders between themselves and those outside.

Reason: Internationalism and World War II

Americans ultimately drew lessons from the war different from those they had drawn from World War I. It was not that their experience was so different objectively. An isolationist country again waited while Europeans started attacking each other, an internationalist president again advocated alliance with England, France, and Russia against Germany, the country was again confused about the relationship it should have with China and Japan, U.S. troops again went overseas and provided decisive force, and the country subsequently worried about employing its veterans and establishing an organization that would prevent a recurrence of European war. Some saw repetition too clearly: “We again have hundreds of thousands of Europeans knocking at the doors of the paradise of their fondest dreams.”⁵⁰ The war did prompt one new observation that affected immigration policy. Geopolitical lines cut across lines of race. The major racial categories embedded in American law were “oriental,” “Southern European,” and “Nordic,” but in World War II, the United States allied with China against Japan, while Indians and Burmese fought for the Allies; Germans, Austrians and many French joined with Italians as enemies of the United States, while Switzerland and Spain held a neutrality sympathetic to the Axis powers. Ideology appeared as a second confounding factor, determining both sides in World War II and cohesion within sides, as

it had not done in the earlier war. What a nation racially was, what it believed, and what it did had no clear relationship to each other, though such a relationship had been assumed in the Quota Acts. Debate sought to reconcile these.

Emerging from World War I had been a consensus about the war's causes that had implications for immigration policy. Heterogeneity led to division; division led to domestic and foreign conflict—and also negatively affected the country's ability to fight. This inability to fight a clear external foe meant disintegration. Immigrants administered the fatal blow either through numbers, as armies, or by gradually eating away the country's core, as subversive colonizers. Admitting immigrants from the belligerent countries would make the United States similar to them: racially confused and liable to slip into war at any time. It also rewarded the foreigners who had started the war, when they should in fairness be expected to stay and put right the damage.

Continuity through 1943 is striking. The only pressing issue was what to do with enemy nationals stranded in the United States when war was declared. Once again the country had to externalize the threat if it were to fight a war, and once again the threat was racial. Concentration camps were proposed to sequester German sailors in port and Japanese living on the West Coast. The camps were “partly for their own protection,” though primarily to isolate them from war operations because they “have highly developed espionage systems.”⁵¹ At least 6,000 native-born Japanese expatriated themselves by signing an agreement:⁵² “as a result of this evacuation or detention of the Japanese population a number of American citizens of Japanese ancestry, either because of political loyalty to Japan, or because of their reaction to the way they felt they were treated, expressed their desire to drop their United States citizenship.”⁵³ Mandatory identification papers likewise, it was argued, protected good aliens and controlled bad ones.

Administrators were especially sensitive to the possibility that Americans' generalities about their enemies would alienate, if that were possible, friendly aliens in their midst. “We cannot, on one hand, revile the Nazi theories of racial supremacy, and, on the other, ignore the sinister implication of our immigration legislation that bars one people and not another, restrictions based on no moral or ethical ground save that of a man's origin. We are paying a bitter price to learn the lesson of the interdependence of the world and its inhabitants. [Removing national origins quotas] will rob the Axis of their most telling barbed weapon on the battle of psychological warfare.”⁵⁴ For instance, the problem they saw with deporting the expatriated Japanese was that “we are going to send back to Japan a group that knows us, knows our language, and feels very bitter toward us. We

are going to create a great problem for the Allied military government of Japan.”⁵⁵ For this reason, the attorney general called on Americans not to discriminate against German, Italian, or Japanese permanent residents.⁵⁶ The war dragged only one other problem into view, but it was one whose solution had wide implications for immigration policy. The Chinese, invaded by Japan and keeping fascist troops pinned down over a wide area, had been barred since 1882. Some Americans viewed this as a moral problem.

All viewed it as a practical problem when the Axis powers began reminding the Chinese of this in their broadcasts over the Pacific. Congress then entertained proposals to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts by adding a quota of 105 for Chinese. To this time, that country’s quota of 100 applied to whites, usually of British ancestry, born in China; Chinese were barred for racial reasons. President Roosevelt declared that he regarded “this legislation as important and desirable, and I believe that its enactment will help us to win the war and to establish a secure peace.”⁵⁷ He received a great deal of support. “If legislation permitting 105 Chinese to come into this country annually for permanent residence will help in anywise in the prosecution of this war and save and protect the lives of American soldiers to any extent whatever I believe there will be no objection to it by the American people.”⁵⁸ Roosevelt, with an eye to the future, argued for materiel: “But China’s resistance does not depend alone on guns and planes and on attacks on land, on the sea, and from the air. It is based as much in the spirit of her people and her faith in her allies. We owe it to the Chinese to strengthen that faith. . . . It would be additional proof that we regard China not only as a partner in waging war but that we shall regard her as a partner in days of peace.”⁵⁹

Slowly, but surely, we forge ahead to the realization that no man, no government, no people are islands entirely unto themselves; that inasmuch as what happens in one corner of the earth reverberates throughout all corners, or, to change the figure, like waves that wash one shore because [of] stones that had been cast into the waters from the opposite shore.

We in the West can no longer remain indifferent to what happens in the East, especially as the world shrinks daily in size. Our good President has stated: The United Nations are fighting to make a world in which tyranny and aggression cannot exist; a world based upon freedom, equality, and justice; a world in which all persons, regardless of race, color or creed, may live in peace, honor, and dignity. And in so saying, the President of the United States was delineating our war aims. That is a mighty large program. It means the lib-

eration of oppressed peoples, as well as (and this I want to emphasize) the removal of discriminatory measures, not so thoroughly advertised, on the statute books of our own country.⁶⁰

India, too, was an ally. "We are asking that the United States of America do not continue a discrimination against a people whom we want to have as our fellows in arms and to help us establish a peace in this world based on the good neighbor doctrine."⁶¹ Legislators, however, continued to oppose admitting Chinese, for racial reasons. A quota "will not mislead anyone, even the Chinese whom it is intended to mislead, and go down in history as one more master stroke of meaningless diplomacy at the expense of a very important part of our immigration system."⁶²

Ironically, it was Japanese propaganda that finally convinced Americans that the war was fundamentally not about race.

China is being divided by Japan through propaganda which tells the Chinese that they should throw in their lot with the Asiatic race, that . . . the American people are not going to carry out the terms of its promises because they do not like the Chinese as shown by the Chinese Exclusion Acts. . . . Hitler could come in under a quota, Mussolini could come in under a quota, but Madame Chiang Kai-shek, or the finest type of Chinese people, cannot. After the war it may be too late. China may not be in the war unless we give her some sort of moral support.⁶³

This argument had power since many believed that Americans' exclusion of the Japanese in the Quota Acts had led to Pearl Harbor. "In my opinion, that was what finally brought on World War II."⁶⁴ "I could not help thinking of some Japanese who were saying, 'What kind of people do you think we are? Do you think you could write into your statute books a law permanently branding us and stigmatizing us as inferior human beings because of the color of our skin without having us hate you and grit our teeth and strive until we could become strong enough to stick a knife between your ribs and twist it as we did at Pearl Harbor?'"⁶⁵

Pearl Buck, in 1943 testimony, remembered "the tremendous evil effect that our exclusion had on the Japanese navy, many years ago. . . . It was the death blow of liberalism; . . . had we been able to see what denial at that time meant, we probably would not have had this war. That has been the single thing that has made Japan regard us as an enemy."⁶⁶ Americans had to construe the conflict as nonracial if they were to believe that they had a chance of winning.

We could not win a race war, even though we won all the battles. The colored people are two-thirds of the world's population, and they can outwork and undereat and outlast the white man.

Fortunately this is not a war between races. . . . This is still a war between those who believe in human freedom and those who believe in human slavery. We must keep it so. There cannot be a great war between the white and colored races in the next 10 years, or the next 100 years, or the next 300 years, if we keep ourselves—the white people—and the Chinese, the largest and strongest of the colored peoples, on the same side.⁶⁷

Separating social purpose from race affected how people thought about the war, their enemies, and themselves. They took this new understanding into their analysis of Nazism as well and thus transformed the image of America that they projected into postwar immigration policy.⁶⁸ This position gained so much rhetorical power that the commission President Truman established to decry the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act after it did pass made the same link between Japanese exclusion and Pearl Harbor.⁶⁹

Rescinding Chinese exclusion was the one issue where Congress systematically discussed immigrants during the war. At the time, it drew no general conclusions from this reversal, and emerging from the war was a consensus similar in many ways to that prevailing after World War I. Heterogeneity led to disintegration; armies and subversive colonies did the country in. Admitting immigrants from belligerent countries would make the United States resemble them. This was all the same, but the war experience made the “them” different.

In World War I, the problem that Americans saw with allied as well as enemy countries was racial; innate differences explained the anarchism and czarism propelling Europeans into conflict. In World War II, the problem was ideological. Fascism, and to a lesser degree communism, motivated European belligerence—but fascism could not be innate. If it were, Americans had to expect a fascist interlude as well: since 1929, they had protected a 17 percent quota for Germans and a 4 percent quota for Italians because the Census Bureau uncovered these proportions in the national origins of the whole (white) population. Ideological heterogeneity thus joined racial difference as sufficient spark for national implosion. Communism and fascism arose from a diseased institutional culture, so they could not attract Americans unless American society and institutions were wanting; therefore, ideological and ethnic demands came from immigrants and enemies. Heterogeneity was still the problem, but it was ideological diversity more than racial difference that triggered disaster.

Consensus that ideology and ideological subversion should be the country's focus arose slowly and vaguely during the war years, as a way to distinguish the country from the Axis powers. Fascism was not described in Congress as intrinsically or morally wrong: the problem was that fascist authoritarianism led to war. But fascism never threatened subversion. If the United States were to be overtaken by fascism, it would not rot from within. To the contrary, it would itself become militaristic, authoritarian, and expansionist, in a sense hypersovereign. Fascism was, in addition, not a transcontinental identity but an ideology that magnified the state.⁷⁰ There was no such thing as international fascism that would draw fascists around the world to surmount the state system.

It was precisely such a trans-sovereign movement that legislators feared. During the era of World War I, Congress fixated on ethnic identity as a danger of this type. By the end of World War II, communism presented the menace. Truman declared that "Communist tyranny has taken up where Hitler's brutality left off."⁷¹ Congress did not react against movements simply because they were novel and un-American. Fascism was both. The war did not change enough about the country to change immigration policy, but it did leave a legacy that was to affect how policy would be changed when the time came. Race and ideology had to be separate. Both or neither could present a problem, but in any case, they were not necessarily coincident.

When Americans did react, they did so against movements whose logic demanded an identity beyond American borders. "Hyphenism" following the first war, and communism following the second, each threatened just this. Legislators never worried simply that they would lose a war. They worried that they would lose their country. Communism, like ethnically based foreign-policy irredentism, could not be fought once it had taken hold. Subversion had to be prevented.

Reason: Reconstruction for Security against Fascism

Debate about immigration policy after the war focused on its role in assuring that fascist aggression would not recur, or if it did, it would not draw the United States into war. The two possibilities were to isolate the country more effectively or to use immigration policy to prevent the recurrence of the dynamics that led to war. A strategy to achieve the first was clear: isolation. A strategy to achieve the second would depend on a theory of what had caused the war. The possibilities offered were financial catastrophe, alliances made weak by racial insults, isolation, and lack

of American credibility as either an opponent of eugenics or a user of force; the corrective was therefore money, deracialized policy, or an active internationalism.

The debate's boundaries, for both sides, were defined by sovereignty. Immigration was, still, central to the country's understanding of its sovereignty in relation to the rest of the world. "The subject matter is immigration, but the pending legislation involves far more than immigration. . . . The very meaning of the word 'citizen' is at issue. Fundamental problems of our foreign policy are involved. Our internal security is involved."⁷² Because sovereignty underlay any discussion of immigration, legislators had to take care to separate policy concerning immigrants from that covering citizens. "The immigration law is different from any other law with which we have to deal. For instance, most of our laws deal with American citizens. An American citizen has rights under our law. He has recognizable rights, but an alien or a foreigner who has not yet arrived in our country has no such rights under our law. He must be here before he has any standing under our law. Then when we speak of the 'rights of these people being invaded' we are taking an untenable position."⁷³ It was also a tricky subject because it connected with so many other types of policies.

In the light of our experience since World War I, there can hardly be a doubt that the regulation of immigration from foreign countries is a question pertaining to the field of international relations. It is true that, with a few outstanding exceptions, immigration has been regulated by domestic rather than international law, that is to say, by statute rather than by treaty. But so are tariffs or armaments. The domestic form of regulation should not obscure its international substance; immigration is a kind of human tariff and the liberal or restrictive immigration policy is as much a part of the foreign policy of a country as that of liberal or restrictive international trade.

This has long been clear to every responsible statesman.⁷⁴

The centrality of immigration policy was one powerful reason for letting it alone.

Letting policy alone meant letting immigration policy secure an isolationist sovereignty. "What is the American doctrine, and what is the doctrine of every sovereign nation on the globe? It is that a country has a right to say who shall become one of its citizens. There is no right in any foreign person, whether he comes from the race from which I sprang or from any other race, to demand entrance here. The whole question is, What is a sound policy for America? That is all."⁷⁵

Our problem in the future, until this superstate some people talk about or something else is devised, is to make America safe for the American people. We need to make up our minds that the period of idealistic preachings that has been going on for some years is at an end. We need to get back to the fundamentals and the bedrock idea that the highest type of political society that has yet been developed in this world and one which will at the same time work is the type known as a nation. The attribute of a nation is sovereignty. We have had immigration laws to protect our sovereignty and to protect the domestic economy of the Nation.⁷⁶

Into the 1950s, congressional discussion of immigration meant discussion of sovereign isolation.

“As a sovereign Nation we have a right to protect ourselves”⁷⁷ because

the Supreme Court has repeatedly and uniformly held that the right to exclude or to expel aliens, absolutely or under certain conditions, in war or in peace, is an inherent and inalienable right of every sovereign and independent nation. The exercise of that sovereign power by the United States of America should not be hampered, limited, nor thwarted by any other nation. If it be, by just so much has our Nation lost its sovereignty and independence.⁷⁸

Sovereign isolation still prevented apocalypse. “The best proof that a nation can be ruined by unwise immigration policies is afforded by the history of Greece and Rome, which nations remained great and productive, and with a high state of civilization, so long as there were full-blooded Greeks and Romans to carry on their civilization. But they rapidly deteriorated when unwise immigration policies resulted in intermarriage with other races.”⁷⁹ And internationalism still tempted fate. “I refuse to follow a leadership that is once again getting us dangerously involved in international affairs which might precipitate world war III.”⁸⁰

Possible future economic troubles sometimes provided a rationale for restriction. Immigration could, for example, be banned for five years to help the postwar economy. “I think the time has arrived to close the gates, and not let anyone come into the United States until we have provided jobs for the citizens of our country, jobs for our men and women in uniform all over the world, jobs for our men and women who are now in war plants, and who will be unemployed, and who will have to be taken care of by the taxpayers when the war is over. When the war ends, the great flood of money will cease.”⁸¹ Too much Filipino labor, in another example,

could justify granting the Philippines the independence prerequisite to being placed under a quota.⁸² Unemployment, real or possible, served as a symbol of the harm that international contact did to the country. Employing foreigners could be bad in principle or simply self-defeating. "We now have a country to which millions of people want to come from all over the world, and I do not blame them. But, if we let down the bars in a misguided spirit of humanitarianism and let them all come in or let groups of favorites come in based on political pressures here, we will dilute and ultimately destroy the thing they came for."⁸³ Either way, only isolation could protect those already in the United States.

Ignoring Europe meant shunning recent allies, which might set a precedent that would later haunt the country. Many argued, however, that these allies should not be rewarded with an increased quota; after all, they fought for their own homelands.⁸⁴ Of course, "allies" might not even have fought. "We speak frequently of our allies, the treatment that should be accorded them. I think technically we had 30 or 40 allies in the World War, when for a vast majority of them the extent of their participation was to go down to the dock and unload lend-lease merchandise."⁸⁵ Of the best Europeans the American Legion believed in 1946 what it had in 1920, "that it would be better for the nations that were our allies that that type of adult immigrant who would be good for admission to this country could better serve us and his own country by staying at home for awhile and helping in the rehabilitation of his country."⁸⁶ If good people stayed put, immigrants were by definition bad people. "Is it too much to ask of Europe's millions that all must share the burden of reconstruction, the burden of each contributing his share so that Europe can some day achieve the standard of living we enjoy?"⁸⁷ The United States owed Europe nothing. "I cannot join with those who think we are indebted to all the world and are obligated to cure the ills of all peoples. On the contrary, the world will not stand long enough for these peoples to pay their moral and material debts to this country."⁸⁸

This view had its roots in a general isolationism, but it slowly became popular with those advocating isolation only in the field of citizenship. Europeans staying put in Europe would help a country generally isolationist but also helped a country beginning to expand overseas. Pat McCarran argued that "Europe is not likely ever to pay its own way if it rebuilds its economy along the nationalistic lines that prevailed before the war. The only way in which Europe can make the maximum use of its resources is to develop into one big market and concentrate its production in the most advantageous locations."⁸⁹ This required labor. "We are now preparing to spend billions abroad in our grandiose plan of rehabilitating Europe. Tens of thousands of our young men will be occupied with this

task for years to come. In all fairness we should insist that for at least 10 years the citizens of France, England, Germany, Italy, and the other nations may not seek within our shores the civilization they could create in their own homelands.”⁹⁰ Those who left had signaled by their leaving their unworthiness for American citizenship. “An adult male or an adult female wants to come to this country. If they are worth anything to this country they would be worth much more to the devastated countries in which they now live. . . . those who just want to run away from a problem would not, in my opinion, be very desirable to come here.”⁹¹ It also applied to the persecuted and uprooted.

I notice in the State Department report on the Marshall plan the statement that there exists a shortage of labor in Europe, and that if the Marshall plan industries are set up as contemplated in the plan there will be a shortage of more than 600,000 workers. Is there any reason why displaced workers should not stay in Europe and become part of the life there and take their place in the economy which is being established there? . . . A great many persons entertain the opinion that the United States is a charity organization, that we are conducting an eleemosynary institution.⁹²

If the displaced persons desire to work and better their condition, I want to know why they do not stay in Europe, cooperating under the Marshall plan.⁹³

The first, isolationist view focused on keeping Europeans anywhere but in the United States; the second focused on keeping them in Europe.

In spite of this change in reasons for restricting Europeans, those opposed to restriction used unchanged arguments, often those invoking universal principle. To exclude immigrants was to say that the country had “no room, Mr. President, even as there was no room at a certain inn at Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.”⁹⁴ Since war’s horror was universal, compassion should be universal.

There is a moral obligation that civilization and Christianity owe to their fellow man. It is not a legal obligation; it is not an obligation that can be enforced in any court of justice. But there is a moral and a humanitarian obligation that civilized Christian men owe to their less fortunate brothers, growing out of the great holocaust which has cost so much in treasure and in blood and in morale among the people of the world.⁹⁵

The state boundaries that caused so much pain deserved not to be honored. "I do not know who it was that divided the world geographically by sections, but it certainly was no divine power."⁹⁶ Restrictionists "cannot justify it from anything that has ever been written in Scripture or in Democratic philosophy, nor can they justify it on the basis of practical politics or practical human relations in the world in which we live. The day of materialism and discrimination is over . . . this is a debate about what the philosophy of the Government of the United States is going to be about people."⁹⁷ To recognize a universal humanity meant not only to refrain from harming others but also to help them.

If principle were not sufficient, practical benefits might be. As in the earlier era, restriction's opponents connected migration to wealth and power. "If we are to view the present position of the United States in accordance with unbiased historical judgements, we must recognize that our rapid rise to world power during the past 175 years has been based upon an increase from 4,000,000 to over 150,000,000 people."⁹⁸ Rivalry with the Soviet Union meant total, global preparedness, and it required "additional skilled manpower to realize the American production potential, to staff defense mobilization, and to give us elbow room in our population considering the world responsibilities which we must carry for the foreseeable future; second, to maintain the strategic balance between our population and that of the USSR."⁹⁹ Immigration could produce population asymmetry, which would deter attack. "A country with a static population is a country of the middle-aged, without the vigor and inventiveness of a growing people. From a defense angle alone we have to consider increasing population needs of this country,"¹⁰⁰ because "the population of the Soviet Union, which is our principal rival in the world, is gaining rapidly, while ours is not making the progress it should to keep pace."¹⁰¹

Modernity implied movement. If the country wanted to keep up, it had to recognize that interconnections among countries fed liberal power. "I think it is about time we began to think in terms of one world; that humanity is international; that human misery, distress, chaos, disease, economic instability, anywhere in the world, leads to the instability of our own Nation, as well as to the Nations immediately affected."¹⁰² Closed borders invoked images of the Depression but also fascist Europe. "You remember that when the Nazi drive to conquer the world began, a dramatic phrase was coined—'the lights went out' in country after country. Today the gates clang shut. . . . There is a problem, I grant you, because more and more gates clang shut, and more and more barriers rise in the path of free intercourse of people."¹⁰³

Internationalism was not "a visionary excursion into the warm fields

of altruism” but a practical, thrifty strategy for a new world power. In this way it differed from the universalism of the earlier era. “Our joining the United Nations Organization is an act of international cooperation that will save money for the United States, will carry out our agreed share of the support, repatriation, and resettlement of these victims of war and its aftermath, without change in our immigration laws or policies, and will terminate existing responsibilities for the displaced persons in the United States occupied zones.”¹⁰⁴ The United States had to pay special attention to immigration because it had achieved global prominence in a time when all the world’s territory was claimed by some state.

There was a time when a citizen who fled from persecution or tyranny in his own country could escape to a new world there to make valuable contributions to the welfare and history of a new democratic republic. That is the way we grew and became great. But today, in the year 1952, when travel is so swift and easy and when great governments are ostensibly and ostentatiously engaged in the work of international organization, a man who loses his country loses his place in the world too. As a stateless person he has no status in the world community.¹⁰⁵

Liberals in the 1910s and 1920s argued that modern technology had at last reached a point where universal humanity’s fundamental equalities could be recognized, that generosity increased wealth and power, that internationalism benefited America as well as others. Liberals in the 1940s and 1950s argued the same.

In the 1950s, however, these same arguments began to be made with a subtle new twist. Ideology, not race, defined the enemy. In fact, it was the enemies who were now racist. Allied unity and war propaganda depended on Americans eschewing racial grounds for exclusion. Actions, not characteristics, had to justify discrimination. “Any one of you who saw the picture *Hitler Lives* or any of the other authentic records of the master race philosophy and psychology, I think could not help be convinced that any adult who has ever felt or believed as these people feel and believe, cannot become a good American citizen.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore, “no person who bore arms against us in World War II, no member of the Nazi party or of the Fascist Party, of the Gestapo, of the Storm Troopers, of the Schutz Staffel, of the Sturm Abteilung, or any organization or associations associated with or allied with the afore-mentioned parties or organizations can be admitted to this country.”¹⁰⁷

As important as adding ideological categories was eliminating racial ones. “We should not give such great preference to the Nordic race, the

person with the blond hair, the Nazi who was guilty of murder.”¹⁰⁸ Restrictionists, bigots, and liberals all had to come to terms with the new situation. “Germany is the second preferred nation of the world, with 27,000 quota numbers. It would seem to me that you haven’t the same Germany now you had before, and that it would be dangerous to this country to use up those numbers on any Nazis or Fascists or storm troopers, as I do not believe they can be assimilated now or a century from now.”¹⁰⁹ Eliminating these categories would have a symbolic, diplomatic benefit. “All I want to do is simple justice, take those wasted quota numbers and put them to good use by dividing them amongst the nations that have quotas of less than 7000. . . . we would do away with the theory that was promulgated with such tremendous havoc, loss, and sadism to the world, promulgated by the man who came to power on a cannon top in Germany, Hitler, who advocated that which is very much akin to the national origins theory, namely, the herrenvolk and scarbenvolk . . . slavenvolk.”¹¹⁰ Some tried to reconcile the new fact that Germans were enemies with old fact of their desirability by targeting the Volkdeutsche for preferential treatment.¹¹¹

Allies as well as enemies appeared different in this light. Racially unacceptable India supported the Allied cause with the largest army ever raised, so Asian exclusions became “a continued affront to the pride and self-respect of a valuable ally.”¹¹² Security suddenly depended on equitable treatment, which could only be assured if Americans judged allies in neutral terms. “There should be equity somewhere and we cannot isolate ourselves from the rest of the world and we cannot say ‘we will do this for you but we will not do that for you.’”¹¹³ Ideological struggles changed how the country began to think of its partners. “The good opinion of our neighbors abroad is not to be purchased by economic favors alone. Moreover, it is not important to us solely as a means of securing military alliances. If we cannot do more than talk,” then there was no way to assure the “voluntary cooperation in our aims which I believe essential to our survival in a threatening world.”¹¹⁴ American interests were not in conflict with European interests, and the world, at least among the Allies, was not zero-sum. “The displaced persons now in European camps are a deterrent to our attempts to bring order out of economic chaos, and a drain on the resources we are able to devote to such attempts”;¹¹⁵ they were not seen as Europeans who deserved to be penned up in Europe.

Labor unions for the first time adopted the same view. In an ideological battle, loyalty mattered, and loyalty, unlike race, could change. Enemies in the war could not change their race but they could change their minds. To prevent this, some costs had to be accepted. “The CIO believes that the only hope of future peace, stability, and an improved standard of

living for workers everywhere in the world, lies in international cooperation and good will. A narrow isolationist position on immigration is contrary to current American foreign policy in regard to tariffs, relief, and other economic matters."¹¹⁶ Immigration could even help labor. "We are assuming that all the people coming in under this quota are workers, and not possible employers of labor, and consumers"; moreover, if a quota of 153,000 damages the United States, "if that is so, gentlemen, then the faith in our economic system proclaimed to the world as the best, cannot be very strong."¹¹⁷ Interests were served. "From a purely selfish point of view, we can use these special skills, talents, and labor of these individuals in our expanding and dynamic economy."¹¹⁸ The country should realize that "we need the rest of the world more than they need us. Our economic salvation depends upon the maintenance and extension of their good will won at such bitter cost. The potential market would keep our factories and wheels of industry at full peak."¹¹⁹ Opening India, for example, would accomplish a dual purpose: "create a feeling of good will, that we will so need after the war [and] increase our exports—remember that."¹²⁰

Immigration would also help the cause. "Men and women who cannot be productively employed in the free countries of Europe are a net loss to the free world."¹²¹ Attorney General Francis Biddle contended that "it is tremendously important in this coming world that we have friendly relations with these great nations. And I cannot believe that Americans, for instance, would be very eager to trade in the Orient if the orientals treated them as untouchables."¹²² Unity was crucial.

In several subtle but important ways, assumptions about other countries changed following World War II: global dynamics were not all zero-sum, and alliance could benefit the United States; but allies could change their minds and slip away. The most impressive difference, however, was the awed self-consciousness that infused all arguments, all discussions, and all speeches. Legislators and interested parties never escaped the feeling that people around the world were listening to what they said, and, most surprisingly, that the country had a stake in how those people responded to even the most frivolous of American pronouncements. "Today the entire world is looking to America for human leadership, and it would seem inopportune at this postwar period to enact laws which might produce a bad effect upon peoples of our Allied Nations, and probably detrimental to our foreign policy."¹²³ Through its own actions, the country was thrust into the spotlight. "America formerly had a privileged position in the world. Other countries got into conflicts and we stood on the side and watched until we determined where our interests lay, and then we threw in our strength on this side or the other, and that usually tipped the scales. That fortunate day has gone. Today we are not an observer, we are one of

the main contenders.”¹²⁴ Preeminence was irreversible without enormous social cost because it was the necessary result both of the country’s domestic arrangements and of its defense choices. The country had not just chosen leadership once, it had to choose leadership continually.

Since it had retreated into isolation following the last war, it was especially important that it make clear to others that this would not happen again. “The American Federation of Labor therefore feels that we should maintain our present immigration quotas as an indication to the world that we intend to remain an active participant in world affairs, believing that to do otherwise, and especially to reduce our immigration quotas, would indicate that we are not willing to accept the responsibility of leadership.”¹²⁵ Immigration restriction would indicate “that we were really isolationist at heart,” but this the country should see as a “complete abrogation of its responsibilities.”¹²⁶ Like the AFL, “the Congress of Industrial Organizations at this time unequivocally opposes the passage of discriminatory legislation which in any way encourages national isolationism and belies the principles of American democracy upon which this country has been built.”¹²⁷

For some, internationalism should engulf the country and carry over into defense, trade, and cultural exchange, just as isolationism had become total. To them, the new self-perception mandated a reinterpretation of the restrictionist past. The 1924 act “was formulated as an expression of self-interest, not necessity, at a time when this Nation had not assumed its position as one of two leading nations of the world. From policies undertaken during tranquil years of secure, isolated peace and plenty, we can draw no guidance now in making policies for an insecure peace, when the mantle of leadership rests uneasily on our unaccustomed shoulders.”¹²⁸ John Foster Dulles reflected that “it is ironic and wrong that we who believe in the boundless power of human freedom should so long have accepted a static political role. [The founders] were not content merely to build a snug haven but they sought to create a political system which would inspire just government throughout the world.”¹²⁹

Power, for the first time, depended on reputation—not a reputation to be materially powerful, but one to be morally authoritative. “This nation has the greatest aggregation of power on the face of the earth. We like to say that we possess moral power as well as physical power. Unless the United States gives moral leadership to its physical power, physical power will not long remain in America.”¹³⁰ Where liberals and restrictionists disagreed was on the issue of whether that authority carried with it a responsibility to others. Antirestrictionist Hubert Humphrey argued yes, that leadership meant setting an example, while restrictionist Pat McCarran claimed that it did not: “This Nation is the last hope of western civi-

lization; and if this oasis of the world shall be overrun, perverted, contaminated, or destroyed, then the last flickering light of humanity will be extinguished.”¹³¹

Moral authority required the country to match its words and its actions. Sometimes this meant changing its words, but more often it meant changing its actions. Immigration policy, because it contained American foreign policy in micro form, became the most central but the toughest arena for working out the mandated changes.

I pointed out that in the kind of world in which we live, we, as Americans, must recognize that as we legislate in the field of immigration we are not only legislating in the field of domestic policy, which some would like to separate neatly from foreign policy, but we are legislating in terms of our relationship to all the rest of the world. The philosophy which is embodied in this legislation may have a profound effect upon American policies and American relationships in areas of the world where today we stand very, very weak. I submit that there is nothing more important today than to remove from immigration policy the kind of slap-in-the-face which the present law gives, namely, racial discrimination, as it applies to those from the Asiatic area.¹³²

Congress had to work out a consensus on what new circumstances meant for American policy. Clearly, the country was faced with a choice between sufficient allies—racially distinct allies—and immigration quotas not only based on race but excluding “bad” races. “In our so-called exclusion laws we had branded and stigmatized as inferior human beings the brown and yellow races, on the basis of the color of the pigment in their skin; something they were not responsible for and could not do anything about.”¹³³ Following this, “the war in Europe was a war to decide which type of idea is to control the development of a billion people—the enormous resources and manpower and potential markets of Asia. Our democratic ideas have a better chance now than ever before to play that dominant role. But they cannot win if the democracies refuse to treat individual Asiatics as equal human beings.”¹³⁴ It damaged morale during the war—“Is not such an exclusion an echo of the totalitarian ideas we seek to crush today?”¹³⁵—and would damage alliance during the peace.

Such morally appropriate measures benefited the country materially and strategically.

Indian good will, however, and our own moral satisfaction is not all we shall gain by the adoption of this resolution [to allow Indians to naturalize]. Our position at the San Francisco Conference will be

greatly strengthened in regard to discussing colonial policies with our allies. The criticism voiced frequently and widely in the United States against the colonial policies and imperialism of other nations has a certain degree of hypocrisy so long as, in our immigration laws, we ourselves refuse to treat all our allies on a basis of equality. We cannot successfully deplore a policy we practice.

The practical aspect likewise should be taken into consideration. Next to Russia and China, India offers us the greatest potentiality for foreign trade during the rest of this century.¹³⁶

These measures also prevented harm.

Retaliation lurked in the background. Emerging from the war was a sense of American dominance, but it was dominance in a world composed of huge powers much more likely actively to threaten the United States.

If we persist in telling other peoples that they are inferior, and supporting such a declaration by public law, America may well be consigned to ashes and sackcloth under the fire of bombs and under the terrible atrocities of people who are furious because they have been denied status and stature in the eyes of the citizens of the United States and the laws of this country. . . . I shall not cast my vote in this body to antagonize, to irritate or to humiliate a billion and a half people in this world.¹³⁷

“China will emerge from this war as one of the four major powers. She will be a sovereign and independent nation, enjoying all the sovereign rights of other independent nations. If we persist in maintaining a policy of exclusion, what is to hinder China, and who could criticize her, if she in retaliation exercised her sovereign right to exclude our nationals from China?”¹³⁸

Robert Alexander, from the Visa Division at the State Department, argued that China was not the only country that would retaliate and harm business travel.¹³⁹ “I foresee grave consequences both abroad and at home through this constant, year after year, agitation against the European immigrants and their children and these repeated voices of distrust, discrimination, and disdain. You will learn that the poverty-stricken, war-depleted nations of Europe will not allow your contemptuous attitude toward them and your repeated affronts to their racial values to pass forever without challenge.”¹⁴⁰ Once initiated, retaliation would spiral, as it had during the Depression and during World War II.

Europe and South America are not going to stand idly by and take that kind of punishment. In retaliation and revenge they do the self-

same thing. We build high walls against France, against England, and against Canada, shutting out their persons and their goods. They build higher walls against us. We and these countries stand on top of those walls and thumb our noses at each other. Trade becomes stagnant and depression ensues.¹⁴¹

The executive branch and the Senate had become particularly sensitized to the negative as well as positive consequences of a tit-for-tat strategy. “We in this country, and particularly we in the Senate who deal with foreign relations, should realize that we should not throw brickbats at our neighbors across the sea by the passage of laws calculated to antagonize them.”¹⁴² Doing so in the nuclear age was especially dangerous. “Our scientists tell us that in this atomic age the only hope of the world is now to fracture the incrustations of the human heart and develop just a little good will.”¹⁴³ The cold war changed the context within which risks were calculated.

Reason: Cold War—Consistency in Opposition to Communism

If leadership was the form, cold war was the substance of America’s place in the postwar world. Strangely, American leadership against an ideological foe during a real, tangible war had no effect on how legislators discussed immigrants or the country’s social goals, while American leadership against an ideological foe during an abstract, intangible war transformed perceptions of the enemy’s nature and the country’s purpose.

The American people and the American government are learning today the moral equivalent of war. We are learning to do in peace what we did in war. The war has taught us that we cannot be happy all by ourselves. Our Government has recognized that the problems of food, labor, trade, security, and peace, in short everything which affects the national welfare, is international in scope. . . . Our immigration policies must be studied in the light of our present and future economic and foreign policies.¹⁴⁴

Every move had significance. “In the war of ideas that is going on all over the world today, the fierce contest for people’s loyalties, this is a step of the utmost importance [against the] glacier of tyranny moving out of the Soviet Union over parts of Asia as well as Europe.”¹⁴⁵

American society would have to change to meet the country’s new, self-declared international responsibilities. Believing that foreign policies

had to combine in a single package, some argued that an internationalist superpower could not tolerate a xenophobic society.

In this period of high emotional tensions in our Nation, a spirit of blind, biased, nationalism seems to be overcoming millions of our fellow citizens. We see such blind nationalism manifest itself in connection with a great many policies and issues, and most prominently in connection with issues affecting foreign policy. Of course, questions of immigration are directly connected with the entire foreign policy attitude of the American people. [If the United States abandons openness] we shall antagonize millions of persons the world around, whose support, cooperation, and alliance we shall sorely need in the century ahead, as we go forward in that troubled period, in the contest between the free way of life and the enslaved way of life, the latter represented by Russian communism.¹⁴⁶

Just as Chinese exclusion and the U.S.-China alliance during World War II could not coexist, southern European (refugee) exclusion and the Atlantic alliance could not coexist during the cold war. The 1924 Quota Act had declared the “new” immigrants from the Balkans to be racially suspect, but these suspect people became allies against communism. “We must ask ourselves what effect restrictions have upon the people of Greece, of Yugoslavia, and of Turkey—those key countries in our stand against communist aggression.”¹⁴⁷ When an internationalist foreign policy and an isolationist immigration policy conflicted, many argued that it was the immigration policy that had to change. As in the case of the Balkan exclusions, internationalists argued against expatriating naturalized Italians who had voted in Italy after the war. Because a communist government could result, the Italian-American had to be forgiven: “The ballot cast by the individual Italian was weighed with consequences not only for his nation, but for the future of Europe and the peace of the world.”¹⁴⁸

Moral authority would cap American power to assure alliance stability. Strategic defense centered in Europe. “Thoughtful persons are becoming increasingly aware of the direct and important relationship between the immigration policy of the United States and our policy of joining with other nations of the world in defense of our way of life. However the restrictive features of this bill will work the greatest hardship against those countries on the continent of Europe which are joined with us in the North Atlantic Pact.”¹⁴⁹ Defense also depended, as it had in the past, on keeping enemies out of the Western Hemisphere. “The Caribbean is right on our doorstep, as are the other countries of South and Central America. Those are important defenses at our door. This is the goodwill of people which

we certainly want to keep. . . . I think it ought to be considered entirely in terms of American security, foreign policy, and friendship with our next-door neighbors.”¹⁵⁰ Immigrants from western Europe as well as from the Americas should, therefore, be welcomed as a sign of American intent.

Immigrants from Europe should be welcomed for practical reasons as well. Europe contained a population too large and too loosely tied to local community to remain politically stable. “In the past, what has happened when they have bulged to the seams? When their seams split, we had Mussolini, who tried to expand into Ethiopia.”¹⁵¹ Immigration to the United States would allow Europe to depressurize. One proposal, known as the Humphrey-Lehman bill, “would open our doors to limited numbers of otherwise qualified aliens from the teeming and overcrowded cities and villages of Italy, Greece, Holland, Germany, and Austria—areas where surplus populations, indigenous and refugee, now strain the political stability and internal economy of the countries involved.”¹⁵² President Truman too argued that “one of the gravest problems arising from the present world crisis is created by the overpopulation in parts of Western Europe, aggravated by the flight and expulsion of people from the oppressed countries of Eastern Europe. The problem is of great practical importance to us because it affects the peace and security of the free world.”¹⁵³

Overpopulation and immigration solutions affected other strategic areas. European overpopulation created problems in other areas. Truman argued that “overpopulation is one of the main factors preventing the fullest recovery of those countries where it exists. It is a serious drag on the economies of nations belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. A solution to this problem, therefore, becomes vitally necessary to strengthen the defense of the North Atlantic Community.”¹⁵⁴ Immigration would solve those problems and solve problems in other areas as well. The transplanted Europeans could benefit the United States.

A sound national policy would make it practicable for us to admit larger numbers of worthy immigrants from the overcrowded countries of the Old World. Thus, we would contribute our share toward the relief of population pressures in war-torn countries abroad and we would, at the same time, add to our supply of manpower so urgently needed here in order to assure continued and expanded productivity on our farms and in our factories which is so vital to our national security.¹⁵⁵

Postwar security concerns differed from those understood before the war.

A totalizing bipolar ideological conflict meant that for the first time great powers had to be concerned about the way they were viewed, not just

by other great powers but by those in the periphery as well. Immigration policy's symbolism gave it great weight.

Owen Lattimore . . . suggests that after the war there is going to be a great deal of shopping around, so to speak, among the smaller Asiatic nations to see into whose orbit they would prefer to 'cuddle,' if I may use that phrase. . . . They are not so retarded in their thinking as we suppose. . . . They are adding up the political score, and certainly are going to try to veer in that direction which gives them the most advantage. . . . the three countries that have the most political attraction, or shall we call it 'sex appeal' toward the Asiatic people are America, Russia, and China. The other imperial nations are not in the picture.¹⁵⁶

Not all of those concerned to fight the ideological war drew the conclusion that internationalizing relations and liberalizing immigration were necessary to cement alliance. Pat McCarran, chair of the senate's immigration committee, argued the opposite. Liberals and internationalists aided the communist cause.

There is in custody of the subcommittee evidence which establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that there is extensive subversive activity being carried on in this country under the active direction and leadership of agents of foreign countries. . . . this situation has been vastly complicated by the growth of numerous international organizations and commissions with headquarters or offices in this country, and the resultant groups of aliens that have been permitted to enter the United States.

Our entire immigration system has been so weakened as to make it often impossible for our country to protect its security in this black era of fifth-column infiltration and Cold Warfare with the ruthless masters of the Kremlin.¹⁵⁷

He continued: "The results of the war have placed the USSR in a position to take complete advantage of the facilities afforded by international bodies."¹⁵⁸ In an official Senate report, a committee under his supervision concluded that "Communist agents have used international organizations in this country as a vehicle for carrying on anti-American activity."¹⁵⁹ Communists worried about foreigners; therefore, "The communists are behind this so-called anti-genocide movement which they are trying to force onto this country through the so-called United Nations."¹⁶⁰ If internationalism aided communism, then the immigration guidelines that were to be liberalized in support of this internationalism also aided communism. Immi-

gration guidelines in this way became the first line of defense against communism.

Weapons could prevent threats by states, including the Soviet state, but only immigration restrictions could prevent threats by foreign ideologies. Even before the war, subversion was greatly feared.

If we hope to preserve our free democracy as was handed down to us by an illustrious ancestry; if we mean to perpetuate our liberty, we must immediately take steps to rid our land of these enemy aliens who are busily engaged in spreading the doctrines of hate and discontent, and who are boring from within, with a view to the final overthrow of our Government. It may require some painful surgery to remove this suppurating cancer. Mr. Speaker, the greatest menace to this country today does not come from abroad. Our greatest danger lies in the activities of these subversive influences, and the sooner we suppress them the better for our country—the last pure democracy on the face of the earth (Applause).¹⁶¹

Communism had to be foreign in origin and thus arrived only as an import. It also threatened to rot the country, to tear it apart starting on the inside. “We have as much to fear from our enemies from within as from without.”¹⁶² An external threat could be seen and protected against, but such an internal threat to the country’s sovereign integrity, once it took hold, the country could do nothing about. “Mr. President, this is a time of world tension and climactic struggle, when we should labor unceasingly to make America strong. . . . Should a third world war occur, I feel that this Nation would be faced with sabotage of its industrial resources by Red agents already in our midst, who have come into the country in the past few years.”¹⁶³ Communist subversion would have two devastating consequences: it would eliminate social consensus and result in domestic chaos, and it would establish groups in the United States that were ready to sell the country to a foreign power.

Since the rise of Soviet Russia during the past three decades, the problem of subversives has become a vital consideration in any evaluation of our immigration and naturalization policies. The impact of world events on our immigration system can no longer be ignored. As an international conspiracy, communism has organized systematic infiltration of our borders for the purpose of overthrowing the democratic Government of the United States of America by force, violence, and subversion. . . . Communism is, of necessity, an alien force. It is

inconceivable that the people of the United States would, of their own volition, organize or become part of a conspiracy to destroy the free institutions to which generations of Americans have devoted themselves.¹⁶⁴

The Soviet state was communist and subversive, but it was also a state ready to conquer the United States.

Communists necessarily immigrated, so protecting against communism meant excluding immigrants. Subversion “is not a home grown product [but] a fifth-column infiltration of an international conspiracy.”¹⁶⁵ In fact, “nine out of every ten of the Communists that have been convicted of treason in this country were foreign born. If you want more of that element in here to wreck this country, first continue to tear down the gates of immigration. . . . We have a Cold War against these Reds here at home.”¹⁶⁶ Communist versus anticommunist fights were not the only problems that communist subversion would precipitate. Racial strife, always imminent, would be touched off. “Communists are trying to force this so-called anti-segregation onto the people of the South, . . . try[ing] to force amalgamation of the whites and Negroes and in that way destroy the white race.”¹⁶⁷ The Immigration and Naturalization Service prepared to guard against precisely this danger: “The guerrilla warfare of ideas is fought principally by infiltration into the body politic of those people whose political convictions and dogmas conflict with those of this democracy. The uniform of communist ideology is not easy to identify—it may be a guise worn by a citizen or an alien. When worn by an alien or a naturalized citizen, it becomes the proper function of the Service, by every adjudicatory and enforcement means available, to subvert these ideological warriors.”¹⁶⁸

At stake was internal cohesion. “America must have the power to expel these parasites who utilize our freedom as a cloak from which to slay free government.”¹⁶⁹

It appears to me that the present world situation is being rather satisfactorily reflected in this proposed legislation. While on the one hand we intend to correct certain shortcomings of our immigration and naturalization laws hampering the free and highly desirable international exchange of skills, scientific experiences, and professional abilities by the free nations of the world, on the other hand we have taken notice of the activities of subversive elements inspired and directed by our enemies and we have tried to the best of our abilities to strengthen the safeguards protecting the internal security of the Nation.¹⁷⁰

The cold fact is that agents of international communism today move freely across our borders to engage in espionage and anti-American propaganda, to plot with impunity the destruction of our free institutions. . . . today we are spending much of the treasure of this Nation to maintain our military might. Our efforts will prove futile, however, if the gate is left open for the entry of Trojan horses.¹⁷¹

What was at stake was government, for communist “favors the abolition of individual sovereign governments and the establishment of a major government.”¹⁷² For this reason, “the time has long passed when we can afford to open our borders indiscriminately to give unstinting hospitality to any person whose purpose, whose ideologic goal, is to overthrow our institutions and replace them with the evil oppression of totalitarianism.”¹⁷³ The country had to prepare, through immigration policies, to accelerate the “battle which we are waging for the hearts and minds of men, a battle which we are waging not for self-interest but in order to preserve the peace and security of the world.”¹⁷⁴

Policy Proposals: Displaced Persons, Humphrey-Lehman, McCarran-Walter

These strands of argument came together somewhat differently in each of the debates over a specific policy proposal. The debate about displaced persons contained in microcosm the ideas and fears embedded in postwar discussion of immigration. Humanitarian reasons combined with interest in rehabilitating Europe to suggest allowing the displaced to resettle in the United States. Even those generally opposed to lifting restrictions on immigration favored settling displaced persons, for they “were displaced, were they not, as a result partly of the connivance of our own Government at Potsdam?”¹⁷⁵ Humanitarian considerations could be served while pursuing the country’s self-interest as well. “Not only would such action save untold human suffering. It will be one more step toward solving the problems of settling Europe, and of lessening the necessity for large forces of occupation. It will be proof to the world that we are more than willing to pay the price of peace, the price of tolerance, of humanitarian understanding, and of realistic use of our riches to the end of world-wide freedom, justice, and peace.”¹⁷⁶ The United States not only had an interest in developing its credibility, but had a duty to fulfill: “The war placed upon our country a great moral obligation to see to it that justice was done at the close of the war to the thousands upon thousands of displaced persons

who have, in fact, been placed in what amount to concentration camps.”¹⁷⁷ Hegemonic leadership gave the country new tasks.

Let us now consider the whole situation in the light of our foreign policy. The United States enjoys the highest moral credit of any nation in the world today. Any cause for which we plead had the sympathetic consideration of the majority of the nations of the United Nations. The maintenance of this position of leadership in the world gives us the opportunity of attaining a century of peace from today through the effectiveness of the United Nations, but it also involves the responsibility that we shall participate in the world’s problems and take our share of the world’s burdens. One of the most plaguing problems of the postwar era and constantly a stark reminder of the imprint of war are the refugees and displaced persons. We must take our share of this responsibility and in good season.¹⁷⁸

But complicating this rather straightforward proposal to admit some refugees was the problem of the war. It was one thing to admit refugees from a war that had passed, another to admit refugees from a war just getting under way. With a war that was just starting, the refugees could be enemies.

The stakes were higher for both sides, those for and those opposed to immigration. “After we have dealt with the problem of the displaced persons who were driven out by the Germans, we now have the problem of the displaced persons who were driven out by the communists.”¹⁷⁹ President Truman pointed out that by definition, displaced persons are neither communist nor fascist.¹⁸⁰ “Is it likely that people who have been subjected to slave labor would try to bring the doctrine of communism into this country?”¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, Francis Bolton argued that displaced persons must go either to the United States or the Soviet Union, so the United States had better try to win.¹⁸²

Those who disagreed viewed the displaced as they viewed all other Europeans: agitators. “There is certainly no good sense in any program that imports a great segment of European agitation into the American hemisphere.”¹⁸³ Yet Truman had already set a policy in motion. Presidential Directive of 22 December 1945 had allotted 90 percent of the nonpreference portion of national quotas for displaced persons. It did not raise the numerical limit, but it did give displaced persons preference over the category remaining after all relatives and skilled persons had been admitted.

The Displaced Persons Act, like immigration legislation before it and after it, passed by a large majority distinguished from its opposition not so

much by party as by region and support for a particular justification for evaluating immigrants.¹⁸⁴ Although immigrants in general were undesirable—and these same legislators were to reaffirm the 150,000 ceiling and the national origins system four years hence—those who were displaced by the war were seen as an unusual subset of the population of prospective immigrants. They were viewed as the victims, not the initiators, of war; those who were unable to return to their homes at the war's conclusions slid directly from the role of World War II refugees into the role of cold war refugees. Also entering into this vote was commitment to the principle of non-refoulement. It was morally impossible for representatives to vote to repatriate refugees, by force, into the areas from which they fled, even while those same representatives would refuse to allow those who had never left in the first place to emigrate to the United States. Commitment to non-refoulement seems to have increased during the postwar period; its strength helps to explain what otherwise appears to be an anomaly, anti-Nazi, anticommunist and anti-European anti-immigrant legislators voting at the height of McCarthyism and postwar debates on internationalism to admit European refugees. It should be noted that those similarly displaced by the Americans, their allies and enemies—again, of World War II but also the cold war—in the Pacific were not covered by this legislation and were never seriously considered for assistance. Europe was not only the center of the “geo” in geopolitics; it was also the center of “human” in humanitarian.

In June 1948, the Displaced Persons Act gave countries housing refugees an extra 205,000 over the next two years. As a way to admit refugees without admitting more people than the ceiling allowed—and without displacing relatives and others given preference within those limits—the act provided that any excess would be charged against the country's quotas in future years. Many of the smaller countries found their quotas mortgaged into the twenty-first century, but the settlers who would have come to the United States then were allowed entry immediately. After an amendment to reinstate the displaced persons mortgages was rejected,¹⁸⁵ the act passed in the House 289 to 91, with 50 not voting; and in the Senate 58 to 15, with 23 not voting.¹⁸⁶

Communism's actual military threat remained hypothetical until the Korean invasion in 1950. That invasion gave anticommunist restrictionists the evidence that they needed to sway opinion. “We have seen in Korea and elsewhere that the threat is a serious one. It is not going to do us any good to have a powerful army in Japan or in Germany, or in Africa, if millions of potential subversives are here in the United States where they can destroy us without military invasion.”¹⁸⁷ The war could escalate. “The gathering of war clouds resulting from the Communist aggression in

Korea only serve to undermine [*sic*, underline] the threat to our national defense from the invasion of our borders by indeterminate numbers of illegal aliens.”¹⁸⁸ The need for consistency reinforced the need for security. “Nothing can be more inconsistent than for us to pass the pending bill while at the same time we face growing casualty lists in the Korean war.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, “we are fighting a war in Korea in the hope of checking world communism in that part of the world. The least we can do at home is to make sure that Communists do not take over our own part of the world.”¹⁹⁰ The war in Korea presaged World War III and thereby showed legislators what American security demanded.

Those opposed to restriction used the war to draw a very different lesson. Allies offended by racial exclusions were liable to become communist with enthusiasm. Restrictionists

would erect an iron curtain around the United States—an iron curtain of arbitrary standards which would mark us for the rest of the world as a nation which declines to practice the principles which we preach. . . . What folly it is . . . to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on defense and to incur more than 100,000 casualties in Korea, and then to undercut this great investment of our boys’ blood and their parents’ money by passing a bill which turns the world against us, as the McCarran bill would do. . . . ‘We love you, but we love you from afar. We want you, but for God’s sake stay where you are.’¹⁹¹

Koreans would be offended, but Americans would also be handicapped. “As long as this needless insult, for example, to Koreans, remains on our statute books, we are sending our soldiers into that land to fight with one hand tied behind their backs, or at least without the full moral armament they deserve and which it is our business to provide them.”¹⁹² Decisiveness was crucial to effective containment.

Following the Displaced Persons Act, restrictionists and liberals each proposed a general law to overhaul general immigration policy. Table 4 summarizes the arguments made during this period for and against the restrictions that the McCarran-Walter Act eventually reaffirmed. The Humphrey-Lehman proposal liberalized both numbers and characteristics. While the legal ceiling would not rise, numbers actually admitted would increase because the slots that went unused each year, such as those for England, would be pooled and reallocated. The bill would abolish all discrimination on the bases of race and sex, instead establishing four equal preference categories: family members, refugees, “national need” (labor), and nonpreference.

It was sold as anti-Nazi, for example, “This bill knocks in the head the

theory of superior races. This bill is opposed to the theory advanced by Hitler's Germany and the war lords of Japan, and accepts the American theory of equality."¹⁹³ The Humphrey-Lehman bill did not, however, survive in spite of its supporters' attempt to filibuster. Because of its failure to protect the country against an "invasion" by communists and Europeans, a motion to recommit the bill was rejected 28 to 44, with 24 not voting; it was again rejected in the Senate 27 to 51, with 18 not voting. Figure 7 portrays the arguments about immigrants that followed World War II.

World War II prompted the return of attention to immigration policy, and evidence culled from the country's experience with the war helped to change the types of arguments that could be considered consistent with the public interest. The war was, like its predecessor, initiated by Europeans and fought primarily by them. It was also decided by the Americans, who had entered late and had, in their opinion, saved the Europeans from themselves again.

The recent context was less conducive to trans-Atlantic cooperation than had been that following World War I; depression, protectionism, and isolationism had separated the countries for decades before World War II. Americans' propensity to get involved with Europeans had not changed. What had changed was their perception of threat. Nazism was simultaneously bellicose and racist; Stalinism, like fascism, was an ideological rather than an ethnic threat.

The McCarran-Walter proposal kept the national origins quota system intact, including its reliance on the 1920 census. Its innovations were two. First, it established a Chinese quota and a single Asian quota. For the first time, those of Asian ancestry were eligible to immigrate. Most controversial was its insistence that those of Asian ancestry, no matter where born, count against this quota. The Asia-Pacific Triangle ancestry provision held that residents of "every country wholly situated north of 25th parallel of South latitude and between 60 degrees east and 165 degrees west longitude" would be chargeable to the 100-person quota. This applied to persons descended from residents of this area, as well as the region's current occupants, to anyone "born outside the Asia-Pacific triangle who is attributable by as much as one-half of his ancestry."¹⁹⁴ Whereas a white French citizen would count against the French quota, a French citizen of as little as half Chinese ancestry would count against the Chinese quota.

The other innovation was its communist exclusion provisions. The bill specified organizations whose membership, past or suspected, was sufficient to ban any applicant. Opponents labeled it racist, xenophobic, inimical to the country's foreign policy efforts, and destructive of civil liberties. Adam Clayton Powell declared that "the ancestry test smacks

included an allowance for temporary labor while deporting “slackers” and tightening deportation, especially of communist infiltrators. He added that the bill continued to rely on the 1920 census because the 1940 and 1950 censuses were not yet ready.¹⁹⁸ Pat McCarran, the bill’s cosponsor, argued that the law kept national origins quotas but did away with racial discrimination.¹⁹⁹ McCarran-Walter passed the Senate by a voice vote on 22 May 1952. The conference report passed the House on 10 June 1952 by 203 to 53.

One outcome of this bill was that the country excluded the same group of people for very different reasons. In some cases, the transition between justifications was smooth. The Chinese had been racial outcasts until 1943; after 1949 they were ideological outcasts. In other cases, it was filled with tension. Southern Europeans had been racially unsatisfactory, then were fascists or collaborators, but became refugees from communism. The old view and the new compromised uneasily by giving refugees preference within country limits that were no higher than before the war.

Truman vetoed the act on 25 June 1952, arguing that

What we do in the field of immigration and naturalization is vital to the continued growth and internal development of the United States—to the economic and social strength of our country—which is the core of the defense of the free world. Our immigration policy is equally, if not more, important to the conduct of our foreign relations and to our responsibilities of moral leadership in the struggle for world peace. . . . Today we have entered into an alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty, with Italy, Greece, and Turkey against one of the most terrible threats mankind has ever faced. We are asking them to join with us in protecting the peace of the world.²⁰⁰

Dean Acheson, of course, supported this position. “Immigration, like most important facets of our national life in these times, is closely linked with our foreign policy and objectives. Our immigration policy with respect to particular national or racial groups, will inevitably be taken as an indication of our general attitude toward them, especially as an indication of our appraisal of their standing in the world.”²⁰¹ The executive branch, then and always more sensitive to the international implications of “national” policy, opposed the reaffirmation of restriction.

Congress, however, supported it overwhelmingly, voting to override Truman’s veto. Those who had voted to welcome some displaced persons also voted to restrict their compatriots; in spite of turnover in the House, 117 representatives voted both for the Displaced Persons Act and for

McCarran-Walter. Liberals did not change their minds. Victor Anfuso, Emanuel Celler, Jacob Javits, and Peter Rodino were among those who voted against McCarran-Walter, and they had argued others should. The 117 were, rather, those who had transferred their analysis of World War II onto the cold war: safety meant distance from Europe. They were prudent humanitarians, worried about American sovereignty and security, and not certain of how to handle the post-World War II era.

They included, for example, Thomas Jenkins, who had argued that “we have had enough experience with these European countries. . . . We always get the worst of it even when we are trying to save ourselves from them. In this new proposal we are attempting to save them from themselves.”²⁰² But they also included Edward Rees, who had declared in 1943 that “If legislation permitting 105 Chinese to come into this country . . . will help in anywise in prosecution of the war . . . there will be no objection to it by the American people.”²⁰³ The majority position could have been summed up by John Vorys, when he argued, “We now have a country to which millions of people want to come from all over the world, and I do not blame them. But, if we let down the bars in a misguided spirit of humanitarianism and let them all come in or let groups of favorites come in based on political pressures here, we will dilute and ultimately destroy the thing they came for.”²⁰⁴ The world was too uncertain, and sovereignty too fragile, to take a chance on opening the borders.

The executive branch never wavered in its support for liberalizing immigration policy. After Truman, Eisenhower, a Republican, joined its opponents. “We say—and we know—that the Communists are on the side of slavery, the side of inhumanity. Yet to the Czech, the Pole, the Hungarian who takes his life in his hands and crosses the frontier tonight—or to the Italian who goes to some American consulate—this ideal that beckoned him can be a mirage because of the McCarran Act.”²⁰⁵ Table 4 outlines the changes that the McCarran-Walter Act made to the Quota Act legislation.

The executive branch wanted to abolish national origins restrictions, establish an overall maximum of 250,000 (up from 150,000), make preferences flexible to meet refugees’ needs, and do away with mortgages. This meant keeping the one-sixth of 1 percent formula, but using the whole U.S. population, rather than only that of white ancestry, and basing quotas on the 1950 census. The executive derived this from a population total of 150,697,361 (134,971,622 white; 15,042,692 Negro; 369,637 Asian; 343,410 American Indian). Nevertheless, the House overrode Truman’s veto 278 to 112, with 40 not voting; the Senate overrode it on 27 June 1952 by 57 to 26, with 13 not voting. “The history of immigration laws,”

TABLE 4. The McCarran-Walter Act

Act	Numerical Restrictions	Preference Categories	Unrestricted (Non-Quota) Immigrants	Exclusions
National Origins Quota Act (Johnson-Reed) Immigration Act of May 26, 1924	<p>To 1929 <i>Overall ceiling:</i> 164,667 <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 <i>Overall ceiling:</i> 153,714 <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
Immigration and Nationality Act (McCarran-Walter) Act of June 27, 1952	<p><i>Overall ceiling:</i> 154,657 <i>Method of allocation:</i> Each country given a cap equal to one-sixth of 1 percent of the persons in the U.S. in 1920 whose ancestry derived from that area. Established a minimum of 100, and granted Asian countries a general ceiling of 2000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •1st: Aliens with special skills, with their spouses and children, 50 percent •2d: Parents of U.S. citizens, 30 percent •3d: Spouses and children of resident aliens, 20 percent •4th: Other relatives of U.S. citizens, 25 percent culled from unused slots above •Nonpreference: Any remaining unused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Husbands of U.S. citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communists, as outlined in the Internal Security Act •Drug addicts •Anyone attempting fraud •Additionally established the alien address report system, which required aliens to report their addresses annually for inclusion in a central security file

observed the Immigration Commissioner in 1950, “has been one of increasing restriction.”²⁰⁶ Table 4 summarizes the changes that the McCarran-Walter Act made to American immigration policy.

Supporters and opponents of immigration restriction generally, and the McCarran-Walter Act specifically, agreed about the facts. The United States’ power gave it global preeminence, while its democratic system made it a model for others to emulate. Trade with American allies benefited all involved. The Soviet Union, a second of disturbingly uncertain distance, sought to impair the United States by underwriting American communist groups and eastern European military satellites. Refugees from communist countries begged entrance into the United States; how the country handled their widely publicized entreaty would affect America’s ability to counter the Soviet threat.

What these facts meant, though, the two sides could not agree on. They drew different conclusions about relations among the NATO countries; American interest in Europe and the Third World; the relevance of American leadership to the cold war’s outcome; the importance of consistency between domestic and foreign policies; and refugees’ motives and effects on American society, the economy, and political life. In short, they disagreed about the boundaries of American attention and interests. This difference accounts for an acute divergence between the immigration policies each side recommended.

Isolationists saw the United States as a pure, and necessarily lonely, exemplar. Foreign policy was designed to prevent the outside world from affecting the country; interdependence subverted sovereignty. The society that American boundaries sheltered was fragile, based upon the slowly acquired—and tenuous—assimilation of non-English to democratic institutions. Government’s first duty was to deflect foreign influences, to allow social and political integration to continue to the benefit of citizens. This was also government’s only duty; the world beyond its borders was none of its concern. In fact, attention to foreign people and problems would precipitate the country’s downfall. Enlarging or complicating the direct, two-way link between government and people would undermine domestic sovereignty. The relationship between ruler and ruled had not only to be tight but mutually exclusive in order for the country really to be sovereign.

Further, if government enacted policies based not just on citizens’ values and interests but also on those of foreigners, the country was no longer sovereign domestically and was therefore not sovereign in relation to others. Taking a specified group of people into account was the essence of a government’s claim to sovereignty. If the group that a government considered increased because people renounced a foreign membership in exchange for American citizenship, then the country was structurally sta-

ble, sovereignty unthreatened. It was quantitatively but not qualitatively altered. If the group increased, however, because the government took into account views of people not citizens—or worse, took foreigners' interests into account while ignoring segments of the local population—then the pact between citizen and government was broken. The boundaries separating those within and those outside the country were uncertain, sovereignty in jeopardy. Its citizens' good, the value that a government must pursue, had nothing whatever to do with events or people or processes beyond the country's borders.

Internationalists conceived of America differently. Foreign policy should strengthen the United States; interdependence empowered the nation. Their image of the United States included American allies, so the boundary they thought crucial to the country's survival, and sought to defend, was that between East and West, not that between the United States and others. They were as concerned as isolationists with separating "us" from "them," but whereas isolationists defined "us" as American citizens, internationalists included in the category other states and peoples, allies in the fight against communism. American interests were tied up with Europe's, and later the Southern Hemisphere states', future. Taking potential allies' views into account strengthened the United States. Enlarging the group of people that the country considered when evaluating policies that codified its relation with the rest of the world allowed the government to anticipate and control other countries' concerns. Internationalism extended American power.

To isolationists, internationalism eroded American sovereignty. This crucial difference underlies further distinctions between the points of view. To isolationists, what other countries thought of the United States mattered not at all. Foreign policy operated according to a logic unrelated to domestic values. For this reason, isolationists did not care whether others viewed American foreign policy, which might support ends at odds with domestic values, as hypocritical. Consistency between domestic and foreign policy, or among foreign policies, was valuable only if it strengthened policies' mutual support in practical terms. Internationalists, in contrast, saw foreign policy as a sphere in which ties of interest and value bound others to the United States. Inconsistency meant hypocrisy, enough to turn potential allies away from the United States and toward its enemies. Internationalists believed that American power depended on leadership, leadership depended on credibility, and credibility depended on consistency. In this way only could norms and regimes of principle govern allies' relations.

Consistency of principle or value implied, as well, a consistent means of dividing citizens from aliens. To isolationists, immigrants were by

definition subversives in that they comprised a class to which the government owed protection but which had no historical or legal tie to the country. Immigrants were likely also subversive in practice, since they by definition had to arrive from communities at odds with the United States—and, to isolationists, all countries were at odds with the United States. If they were damaging with benign intent, they were profoundly destructive with subversive intent. Their presence was logically troublesome, practically exasperating, or directly threatening. In all cases, they muddled the border between what was inside and what outside sovereign purview.

Internationalists, on the other hand, saw strength in immigrants. Those emigrating from allied countries increased ties of affection between the United States and its allies, added to the American work force, and relieved population pressure overseas. Those emigrating from enemy countries added to anticommunist convictions at home, provided intelligence, weakened the communist countries that could no longer exploit the emigrant, and provided important propaganda material. Wherever immigrants came from, they helped to clarify the divisions between East and West upon which American security and identity had come to depend.

The difference between setting boundaries of concern at the American border or at the frontier between East and West had enormous implications for policy in other areas. It complicated the familiar left/right split. Internationalism of this sort could lead to liberal foreign and humanitarian aid policies; it also could justify neoimperialism or hegemonic paternalism. Isolationism, similarly, could protect reactionary racism and paranoid conservatism, but could also support efforts to curb the effects that American businesses and international bureaucracies had on Europe and the Third World. What that difference did mean was that internationalists viewed change at home and abroad as relevant for American foreign and immigration policies (and saw the difference between “at home” and “abroad” shrinking), while isolationists insisted on its irrelevance. Developments within the United States, such as the Depression and labor socialism, internationalists asserted, had implications for foreign policies. So, they claimed, did processes beyond the country’s borders, such as war and European colonial expansion. Such events sparked debate about policy boundaries and hence about immigrants. This debate eventually created consensus on an image of the country different enough from that embedded in the McCarran-Walter Act to justify revamping immigration policy.

McCarran-Walter served as a pillar of isolationism. McCarran-Walter was not, however, in support of an isolationist foreign policy since there was no isolationist foreign policy. The U.S. government had concurrently organized a multitude of institutions to tie its fate to that of Europe,

Japan, and Canada. Its trade, weapons, and fiscal policies integrated its future with that of other countries. Nor were the isolationist immigration policies outlined in McCarran-Walter merely a holdover from an earlier time. Believing that external change had forced a reconsideration of its immigration policies, Congress examined the immigration and naturalization laws, held extensive hearings, set up independent commissions, and debated possible revisions. They did not let policy slide; they chose change in response to altered circumstances. But although the new circumstances involved American dominance and international reach, as well as a set of policies institutionalizing the new order, the new immigration policy codified more rigid boundaries between American citizens and others.

McCarran-Walter represented a new way of thinking about sovereignty. Different issues, in different realms, could have different borders. Economic boundaries encompassed all noncommunist areas. Tourists, business travelers, laborers, commodities, manufactured goods, capital and financial flows all traveled where private citizens wished them to go; moreover, others could buy and sell parcels of American territory as well as industries. Ideological boundaries extended through the Western Hemisphere to Europe and Japan. Primary military boundaries divided NATO allies from others; secondary military boundaries were just the other side of communist-controlled regions. Political boundaries, those separating citizens from noncitizens, were the only boundaries coincident with the forty-eight states' common borders.²⁰⁷ The United States secured direct control over people while eroding its control over goods and territory. The country increased its power by eliminating earlier borders channeling territorial allocation and trade flows.²⁰⁸ It secured its sovereignty by creating borders that strengthened the division between citizens and aliens. Although the McCarran-Walter Act would be challenged and eventually overturned, this bifurcation between policies toward citizens and toward things was to become characteristic of policy throughout the West for the remainder of the century.

Change was significant but subtle. Americans ascribed their dominance in the war in part to their vast industrial base, huge work force and consumer market, and technological edge; their victory they ascribed also to their willingness to lead. Europe especially needed American guidance to save itself and to realize its economic potential. This was a potential dilemma. To Americans, sovereignty still meant independence from others' influence as well as control. But whereas true interdependence and absolute sovereignty could not coexist, an expansive, dominant internationalism preventing others from controlling the United States could protect American sovereignty. The country could adopt an outgoing eco-

conomic internationalism without endangering its authority. Former congressman Nathan Perlman argued:

Whether or not the policy of that time was wise, Congress could then have claimed for itself at least the virtue of consistency. The 1924 act was an integral part of the American attempt at international isolation.

Since 1924 we have reversed our foreign policy and, in the interest of consistency, it is necessary that any immigration legislation now proposed likewise reflect this reversal.²⁰⁹

Sovereignty depended not on complete control over resources, territory and people, but only over territory and people. Resources meant power; territory and population meant sovereignty.

After both wars, Americans could reach back into their history and point to a tradition that was threatened by foreign involvements. The public culture was Anglo-Saxon, most people were of European descent, and American institutions had a republican basis. Americans did, in this sense, remain the same and judge immigrants' threat to essential Americanness. But the "America" that immigration policy protected was plastic. There was by the 1950s no national identity that was definite enough and excluded enough to provide a constant standard. It is not that the country went from thinking of itself as white to thinking that race did not matter; rather, it moved from thinking in racial terms to thinking in ideological terms. What was important changed; the context for American identity, and hence the standard to use in thinking about what to protect, changed with the external threat.