

Dutch reactions to American immigration restrictions

The polarized Dutch press and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924

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Introduction

In het kort gezegd, deze nieuwe immigratie is eigenlijk het probleem van heden. De stroom donkere, niet-Germaansche of Angel-Sakische landverhuizers, met wie elke fatsoenlijke Amerikaan zich beslist niet geparenteerd weet, kwam dus in de laatste jaren als een niet te stelpen zondvloed opzetten.

Het Vaderland, August 20, 1924.¹

Terwijl we deze ingenieuze baas maar rustig alleen verder zullen laten wroeten in zijne beschouwingen en ontdekkingen, is het toch wel de moeite waard op te merken dat de officieele handelingen van den Senaat en het Huis van Afgevaardigden te Washington als het ware den menschen het recht gegeven hebben het "ik dank U dat ik niet ben als deze" luide uit te spreken.

Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant, May 17, 1924.²

This thesis will investigate Dutch reactions to American immigration policy in the 1920s. Immigration has always been essential to an understanding of American society and a fundamental element of the debate about the American identity. America is a nation of immigrants from all over the world. As Oscar Handlin argued in his 1952 study *The Uprooted*, a study of immigrants in America is a study about America itself and vice versa.³ The way Americans have handled immigration has always been a clear indicator about how they have identified themselves in the past.

Over the course of history the way the United States handled immigration has shifted however and therefore also the definition of an American has changed. Even before independence Americans were determined to decide who could join them. In 1790 the Naturalization Act was the first official immigration regulation and it stated that every free white person could immigrate to the United States and become a US citizen.⁴ One might focus on the exclusive part of this law - only white people were allowed to enter and get citizenship - but as Aristide Zolberg pointed out in his book *A Nation by Design* the

¹ "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger I," *Het Vaderland*, August 20, 1924.

² "Immigratie en preferentie," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 17, 1924.

³ Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 6.

⁴ Jon Gjerde, edited. *Major Problems in American Immigration and Ethnic History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 80.

Naturalization Act was in fact inclusive for that time. It included all Europeans "regardless of nationality, religion, language or even gender".⁵

However, between 1890 and 1914 Americans slowly started to change their opinion on immigration. The old-stock Americans - early white immigrants from northern Europe - became worried by a shift in the origin of the immigrants and the immigration volume. Immigrants no longer originated mainly from northern Europe, but came mostly from eastern and southern Europe. Those new immigrants were seen as inferior to those from old-stock countries. The constant fear was that Europe was dumping its unwanted on American soil. Despite an important critical report on the new immigration by the Dillingham Commission in 1911, led by Senator Dillingham, before World War I, no significant restrictions were adopted.

The restrictionist movement, however, was growing and restrictions soon would be adopted. In 1917 a literacy test became a requirement to immigrate to the United States and in the years after the Great War the Anti-immigration movement, fed by racial theories, grew stronger. This led to the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act in 1924 that set quota per country to the number of immigrants to the United States. From then on only two percent of the number of people that immigrated prior to 1890 from a specific country could enter the United States annually from that country. This law favored northern and Anglo-Saxon countries and severely cut the immigration from most of southern and eastern Europe because the immigration from those parts started after 1890.⁶

The laws were highly controversial at the time and have led to much academic discussion and debate ever since. An important and influential study in the current debate was John Higham's 1955 study *Strangers in the land*. Higham was the first to focus on restrictionism which he attributed to nativism what he saw as a recurring disease in the American society which he defined as "intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., "un-American") connections". Nativism can furthermore be divided into three main sentiments, anti-Catholicism, racism and anti-radicalism. Higham argued that the immigration restriction laws were the culmination of one of the great

⁵ Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁶ David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

nativism waves in the United States.⁷ Because Higham was the first scholar who searched for the essential reason behind the restrictions his book his book will also be the starting point of this paper.

The book *Dividing Lines* by Daniel J. Tichenor is a good example of a different analysis of the immigration laws.⁸ In his book he stresses the importance of to the process of policy formation itself instead of the intolerant ideologies and social movements behind them. The emphasis he put on the role of the institutional settings led others to criticizing him for neglecting the economic interests and conditions at stake.⁹

The main opinion of researchers who later studied the passage of the laws and their consequences was that the laws were a result of a combined and related convergence of nativism, nationalism and eugenics. This led to a growth of hostile feelings against non-northern European immigrants. Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil disagree with this popular notion in their article "The Antiracist Origin of the Quota System". They stress that nativism, nationalism and eugenics were three different things and did not always apply in the same proportion, or at all, for different restrictionists. They argue that restrictionists were highly divided when it came to their intensions and believes about immigration and immigrants. The discriminatory immigration restriction system that was implemented in the 1920s had racist, but antiracist roots that had nothing to do with eugenics in their view. Other scholars put more emphasis on the role of one particular historical figure that in their views is underrated, like Desmond King in his book *Making Americans* does on Albert Johnson, claiming that he was the "key congressional actor".¹⁰

The immigration laws of the 1920s and their origins are controversial and thoroughly studied, for their impact in the United States was big and it made a clear division between European emigration countries. Most European countries were severely cut on the number of people that were allowed to immigrate to the United States. For instance before 1921 a yearly average of 200,000 Italians migrated to the United States, from 1921 only around 40,000 were allowed and after 1924 that number was reduced to

⁷ John Higham, *Strangers in the land: Patterns of American nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

⁸ Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁹ Tichenor, *Dividing lines*.

¹⁰ Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil, "The Antiracist Origin of the Quota System," *Social Research* Vol. 77, No. 1 (2010), 47.

4,000. Other countries, however, like the United Kingdom and Germany were allowed a quota as high or almost as high as they used to deliver.¹¹

As much as the immigration policy of the United States says something about how the United States saw themselves and who was a real or potential American, the European reaction on these laws tells us a great deal about how Europeans saw America. One can imagine that the Italians were displeased, but it is equally interesting to investigate how countries relatively unaffected by the laws responded. One of the countries that was favored in this legislation, although not as much as the United Kingdom and Germany, was the Netherlands.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and during the beginning of the twentieth century the United States was also an important emigration destiny for the Dutch. Between 1846 and 1914 over two hundred thousand Dutchmen emigrated to the United States. This is on a population of six million in 1914.¹² For the Dutch America was the most important overseas emigration destiny and that was a main part of how the Dutch saw America. This paper will focus on the Dutch reaction to the laws.

The main research question this thesis will focus on will be how the largest daily newspapers from the four different pillars of Dutch society at that time responded to the immigration restriction laws in the United States of 1921 and 1924. From the American perspective this research can help to analyze the Dutch image of the US, and how relatively favored countries thought about the United States restriction laws. From the Dutch perspective this research will also tell us something about how the Dutch felt about immigration during the 1920s. This is interesting because the Netherlands have restricted immigration to the Netherlands as well in recent decades, before the 1920s they were on the other side of the exchange. Also, the US could have served as a case of which one could write or say things about, one could not write or say about issues in the Netherlands. It can give a strong insight on how the Dutch felt about immigration, minorities, race and social cohesion as a whole during the 1920s.

The division of the Dutch reaction to the restrictions to the reaction per pillar is made because Dutch society was pillarized in the 1920s. There was a deep social and religious division between four pillars, the catholic, the protestant, the socialist and the

¹¹ Daniels, Roger, *Guarding the Golden Door* (Hill and Wang: New York, 2004), 55-57.

¹² "Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek," 25-05-2011, <http://statline.cbs.nl>

liberal pillar. The different pillars could have totally opposite beliefs about fundamental issues and their vision on the world was fundamentally different. They were socially divided and had their own newspapers, political parties, clubs, schools etc. This makes it difficult to investigate the main Dutch opinion on a big social issue as immigration. In order to analyze the Dutch reaction to the immigration restrictions in the United States, one has to take the possible differences between the pillars into account. One can imagine that the Catholic pillar would have a different attitude to the restrictions that clearly favored immigrants from protestant origin than the protestant pillar would have. Also, it is interesting to see how the socialist pillar reacted to the restrictions and what their opinion was on the emigration. Did they see immigration to the United States as desirable, or did they condemn the social conditions of the poor immigrants.

The first chapter will start with an overview of the academic discussion followed by an analysis of the new immigration after 1890. Then it will give an overview of the developments that led to the immigration laws of the 1920s. What were the essential motives for these laws? Why were they installed in 1921 and 1924 and not earlier? It will end with the consequences of the quota laws. The second chapter will start with a short overview of Dutch immigration in the United States prior to the immigration laws and will introduce the four principle pillars of Dutch society at that time. The third chapter will contain an analysis of the reaction in the main newspapers of each pillar. What was their opinion on the laws? What did they think of the selectiveness on racial grounds of the laws?

The method applied in this thesis to investigate the newspapers was to screen them day by day on articles about the immigration restrictions in the US around the time those laws were going to and through Congress and during and a little after the adoption of the laws. I will discuss news on the immigration restriction laws and their consequences in the following newspapers: *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant (liberal)*, *Het Handelsblad (liberal)*, *Het Vaderland (liberal)*, *De Standaard (protestant)*, *De Maasbode (catholic)* and *De Tijd (catholic)*. These were the biggest newspapers with an ideological background of a pillar in Dutch society at the time.¹³ The goal was too use two of each pillar to support stronger claims and prevent too much emphasis on one source or newspaper. However the

¹³ Jan van der Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse Dagblad- en Opiniepers* (Otto Cramwinckel Uitgeverij: Amsterdam, 2005), 193.

protestant pillar only had *De Standaard* as their daily newspaper and the liberal newspapers of that time are now fully digitally available and therefore this research could also include the smallest of the liberal newspapers *Het Vaderland*.

The research on the response of the socialist newspapers *Het Volk* and *Voorwaarts* was problematic. *Het Volk* was printed with low quality ink and therefore is difficult to read. This especially makes the scanning for articles related to the immigration quotas hard. Besides that, articles on the quota laws were scarce and short. The articles do not contain enough information to make clear remarks on how *Het Volk* reacted to the immigration restrictions. Combined with the fact that it is unsure whether the few found articles are all there were published, or that there was more in the unreadable parts of the paper, makes it impossible to judge them.

The socialist newspaper *Voorwaarts* was available and in good condition. However it never even mentioned the immigration restrictions. This is strange because *Voorwaarts* did write on foreign affairs. Although this section was not large, there were reports on the main foreign affair topics of the time. Also events in the United States were discussed from time to time, but immigration was never the subject. This is interesting, however, it leaves hardly anything to analyse. In the knowledge that the conducted research is also incomplete it seems best to leave the socialist pillar out of the results of this research.

The first pillar of which the reports on the immigration restriction legislation will be investigated is the protestant pillar with *De Standaard* as its newspaper. It will be followed by the liberal pillar, divided in a chapter on the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and the *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant* and a chapter on the reaction of *Het Vaderland*. Then, at last, the catholic reaction in the newspapers *De Tijd* and *De Maasbode* will be analysed.

Chapter 1 - Immigration restriction in the United States

The Chinese exclusion act of May 1882 was the first law seriously restricting part of the immigration to the United States. This act has long been regarded as a minor, relatively unimportant, incident. But it can also be regarded as the first step of many to come closing the "golden doorway of admission to the United States", as Roger Daniels puts it in his book *Guarding the Golden Door*.¹⁴ The question this chapter will try to answer is why this door was being closed between 1882 and 1924 and how.

The Naturalization Act of 1790 stated that immigration to the US and becoming a US citizen was permitted to "free white men". It was later used to ban Asians from the United States because of the fact that they were not white, but this was not intended when the law was installed. Why was this fairly open policy before 1882 substituted for the relatively restrictive one of 1924? It is important to answer this question and to get clear what is essential to the change of immigration policy before we can analyze the Dutch reactions to them.

To answer the question this chapter first will give an overview of the academic discussion and the different approaches that can be used to explain the immigration restrictions. This will be followed by a short analysis of the new immigration to the US. Who were those immigrants, where were they coming from and why were they coming? Then this chapter will try to answer why and how immigration to the United States slowly got more restricted from 1882 to 1924. The last part of this chapter will try to explain what the exact content and meaning was of the laws and what their consequences were.

Academic Discussion

One of the most influential books written about the changing immigration policy of the US is *Strangers in the land* by John Higham. Higham was a scholar who wrote a history of nativist spirit in American society by which he shaped the debate on the immigration restrictions for a long time. In his book, published in 1955, his core argument to explain the changing attitude towards immigration in the United States is that America suffers

¹⁴ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 7-8.

from time to time from waves of nativism,¹⁵ a term that was coined first by Ray Billington in 1938.¹⁶ Nativism came in various forms, from a non-violent soft scientific study or literary book to a violent form like the Ku Klux Klan. Nativists also came in all forms, they could be working men, southern conservatives or northern reformers. The target of the nativists also varied, sometimes it was one group, like the Chinese, other times the (wrong) half of Europe.¹⁷

Nativism, according to Higham, comes in waves and that is why it is different from prejudice. Nativism generally comes from internal problems rather than from new immigrants or external causes. Whenever the economy was strong and Americans had faith in themselves prejudice could still exist, but nativism was at a low level. There was no fear that a group of immigrants, although unpopular, could bring America down or could take over. Only during difficult times due to economic heavy weather or external dangers Americans lost their faith in assimilation and nativism rose.¹⁸

Whether they were fearing that catholic influences would disrupt American liberty or were afraid of a flood of pauper labor coming to the country, nativists believed that "some influence originating abroad threatened the very life of the nation from within"¹⁹. Nativism is directed at various things that could change the American character of the United States and it acts in various ways, but it is always fueled and connected with modern nationalism. Nativism draws on broader cultural antipathies and ethnocentric judgments and as Higham puts it "Nativism translates them into a zeal to destroy the enemies of a distinctly American way of life".²⁰

The nativist's main complaint is that some (perceived) foreign group in society is unassimilated and therefore could be disloyal. Sometimes this loyalty is directly questioned, but mostly the suspicion of disloyalty will express itself through a charge of being un-American or resentment of un-American behavior. Nativistic discontent has focused on certain themes rather than on direct questioning of loyalty. Higham divides the nativist responses into three main themes, Anti-Catholicism, anti-radicalism and racism.²¹

¹⁵ Higham, *Strangers in the land*.

¹⁶ Reed Ueda, *A Companion to American Immigration* (Blackwell: Malden, 2006), 193.

¹⁷ Donald L. Zelman, *International Migration Review*, Vol.23, No. 4 (Winter, 1989), 952.

¹⁸ Zelman, *International Migration Review*, 952.

¹⁹ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 4.

²⁰ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 3-4.

²¹ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 4-5.

The oldest of the nativistic traditions found its origin in the Reformation. Protestant hatred of Rome and the pope had such an overwhelming presence in nativist thinking before the civil war that the two concepts sometimes have been regarded as the same. It has its roots in the reformation and in the link between popery and moral corruption. The first English immigrants that came to the United States in the seventeenth century took the anti-Catholicism with them. England was in the sixteenth and seventeenth century constantly struggling with catholic countries or their own pro-catholic monarchs.²²

This anti-Catholic tradition got a new meaning across the Atlantic because the American colony was located between two rival catholic colonies of France and Spain. Protestantism therefore became deeply embedded in the national American identity. The anti-catholic sentiments grew stronger in the second quarter of the nineteenth century for two reasons. First was that the catholic tradition, with its authoritarian organization and its association with feudal and monarchical countries, had problems fitting in the American concept of individual freedom and political liberty. The second reason was that instead of having Catholic neighbors the US now saw a flood of Catholic immigrants coming in.²³

Anti-catholic nativism by that time overshadowed all others forms of nativism. Still this wasn't enough to become a major political force, enforce stricter naturalization laws and ban catholics from public office. It was not until the 1850s when the crisis in American society dissolved the old parties and brought the union to the breaking point and that the American Party of the Know Nothings offered national homogeneity as a solution that Anti-Catholic measures became prominent in the national affairs. However, the division between North and South did go through and the nativists movement submerged because of that instead the other way around.²⁴

The second of the three main nativist traditions was a fear of foreign radicals. It started to take shape in the 1790s. While anti-Catholic feelings were based on the assumption that the immigrants were submissive to a Roman despot, conservatives were afraid of immigrants starting a revolution. While submissiveness to tyranny and revolutionary thought are two contradicting charges, the underlying assumption is the same, the European is being disloyal and that is a threat for the republic and its freedom.²⁵

²² Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 5.

²³ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 5-6.

²⁴ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 10-11.

²⁵ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 7.

Still it is a strange accusation because the United States themselves originated in a revolution. The difference between the American Revolution and other revolutions in other European countries was however that the American involved little political or social change. It was aimed at perfecting an existing society instead of tearing one down to build a new one. The American Revolution was different in temper to some foreign revolutions, a violent and sweeping revolution became to be seen as typically European and un-American.²⁶

The third and last main nativist tradition is racial nativism, it originated in the early nineteenth century. It is different in comparison to the two others in the fact that where anti-Catholicism and anti-radicalism tried to make clear what American identity was not, racial nativism worked the other way around, identifying what America was in a positive manner. The notion was that the US in some way belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race. The idea of the Anglo-Saxon race can be traced back to seventeenth and eighteenth century England.²⁷ When the Americans copied this love for the Angles and the Saxons they did it as a means to identify themselves with the Anglo-Saxon gift for political freedom. The Anglo-Saxons, they believed, had "a unique capacity for self-government and a special mission to spread its blessings".²⁸ It is important to stress that race was a very vague concept prior to (pseudo) scientific research that gave it more definiteness. When talking about race people would actually mostly mean national character.²⁹

All together it must be mentioned that the influence of nativism in the US prior to the Civil War was limited. Only during the crises of the 1790s and 1850s it gained widely appeal. But even during these times less exclusive thinking on national ideals prevailed and ultimately won the struggle. Americans had faith in themselves and the universal appeal of the principles of their republic. Nativistic thinking however did establish the structures on which the later anti-immigrant waves would develop.³⁰

For some time after the publication of *Strangers in the land* the immigration restrictions were seen purely as a logical consequence of the third wave of nativism from 1880 till 1920 as described extensively in *Strangers in the land*. However, this is a little too simplistic. One of the first scholars to acknowledge this was Higham himself. Immigration

²⁶ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 8.

²⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 9.

²⁸ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 10.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 10-11.

reform and nativism aren't the same thing and Higham concluded in 1958 that it is too one sided to only look at irrational motives. Nativism derives as a concept from the first anti-immigrant wave of the 1830 to mid 1850s, and it is an inadequate framework to investigate the period prior to the immigration restriction laws of the 1920s. This for the reason that besides a fear of foreigners there were real social costs to the unregulated flow of immigration that have to be taken into account.³¹

Political scientist Daniel J. Tichenor is an example of a scholar who approached the immigration restriction in a whole new way, that of the 'new institutionalists'. Instead of looking at cultural forces to explain the shifts in immigration policy in the United States, in his book *Dividing Lines* he emphasizes the role of the process of policy making itself. The institutional settings and the people involved made the changes in immigration policy happen the way they happened. He divides four related elements that influenced immigration policy. The first element was the fragmentation of power and the dynamism between those powers as a result of the fragmentation. The second element was the shifting coalitions cutting through partisan lines. The third element was the role of experts in the development of policy. And the fourth element was the level of international crisis.³²

Tichenor still acknowledges the tradition of intolerance towards strangers and the resulting frequent calls for restriction, but he thinks this part has been overemphasized. Economic self-interest and more open ideologies have also made their contribution to the laws. Although he mentions the possible economic motives for the restrictions, the main critique on his book has been that he seems to underestimate economic influences. Businesses were almost always in favor of open immigration, supplying them with cheap labor, apart from a few times as for instance during the Red Scare of 1919 out of fear for the spread of labor unions and radicalism. The fact that this twist preceded the immigration restriction laws of 1921 and 1924 might have had a bigger influence than Tichenor suggests.

A good example of a scholar who approached the immigration issue from a mainly economic perspective is Jeffrey G. Williamson. Together with Timothy J. Hatton he argues in his paper "The impact of immigration on American labor markets prior to the quotas" that although for instance the Dillingham report of 1911 has been widely criticized by

³¹ Otis Graham, "John Higham Revisited," *The Social Contract* Vol. 14, No. 3, (2004), 227.

³² Tichenor, *Dividing lines*, 1-16.

historians and contemporaries because of its “racial overtones, sloppy analysis and incomplete or selective use of the vast body of evidence collected”³³ its conclusions regarding macro impact were right: immigration had a negative influence on the growth of real wages and living standards.³⁴

In a second study, this time conducted with economic Ashley S. Timmer, they come to the conclusion that long-term influences on immigration policy have been overshadowed by short-term influences on immigration policy in the historical debate on the quota laws. They state that racism or xenophobia weren’t the main motivation for the immigration restrictions. Also the real wages of the unskilled did not matter as such, nor did the level of unemployment or economic growth. It was the relative economic position of the unskilled laborer, compared with the skilled laborer that the United States, and other countries for that matter, tried to preserve. When more unskilled immigrants entered the country, unskilled laborers became more abundant and so their wages dropped and then so did the wages of the native laborers. The more immigrants were seen as a threat to the relative economic position of the native unskilled laborer, the more restrictive policy was adopted. A rise in sheer numbers or a relative rise of unskilled immigrants could lead to a perceived threat. The recent tendency towards immigration restriction in the United States and Europe can be explained by the same process, according to Timmer and Williamson.³⁵

Son-Thierry Ly and Patrick Weil share the notion with Higham that the restrictions were the result of different kind of motives behind the policy change. In their 2010 article “The Antiracist Origin of the Quota System” they argue against the common notion that the quota laws were the result of a combined convergence of nativism, nationalism and eugenics. Instead they stress that a clear split between restrictionists and liberals should be questioned and that the notion of a convergence of restrictionist, racist and eugenic ideas into one homogenous restrictionistic ideal is wrong. There were major disagreements among restrictionists about the goals and means of restriction. For instance the first plan for a quota system, by William Walter Husband a secretary of Senator Dillingham and the

³³ Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, “The Impact of Immigration on American Labor Markets Prior to the Quotas,” *NBER Working Paper Series* No. 5185 (1995), 30.

³⁴ Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, “The Impact of Immigration on American Labor Markets Prior to the Quotas”, 30-31.

³⁵ Ashley S. Timmer and Jeffrey G. Williamson, “Racism, Xenophobia or Markets? The political Economy of Immigration Policy Prior to the Thirties,” *NBER Working Paper Series* No. 5867 (1996), 30-31.

secretary of the Dillingham Commission, was made to restrict immigration mathematically and efficiently and to end discrimination against Asians by including all foreign countries in one immigration system. Restrictionism was not always associated with racism and eugenics, the first quota plans had a positive side to them. They did not make a new special discriminatory status for southern and eastern Europe, they included Asian countries and could generate reliable predictions about future immigration. Husband relied on some classic stereotypes of southern and eastern Europeans, but he never ascribed those problems as something rooted in their nature.³⁶

Some restrictionists were in favor of immigration restrictions because of the social economic situation in the larger cities. Therefore they supported the idea of reducing the entrance of some nationalities or ethnicities, but this was not necessarily on the basis of their supposedly inassimilable nature. For the same reason Senator Dillingham of the Dillingham Commission was in favor of immigration restrictions, aimed at some groups more than others, but also stepped up for the new immigrants many times during his speeches in the Senate.³⁷ Seemingly similar ideas can have very different motivations and goals behind them.³⁸

In the scholarly debate about the immigration restrictions these are the main topics and approaches. There are also scholars who tried to emphasize the role of certain persons or processes that they thought were underestimated or had another role than most scholars assume. A fitting example of this kind of scholarly work on the immigration restrictions is *Immigrants, Progressives, and Exclusion Politics: The Dillingham Commission, 1900-1927* by Robert F. Zeidel in which he tries to alter the perceived role that the Dillingham Commission played in the political process leading up to the restrictions. Opposite to popular scholarly opinion he argues that the Dillingham Commission was not biased, did proper research and was actually in favor of immigration and thought well about the new immigration. The acknowledgement of social problems with the new immigrants and recommendations to restrict immigration were made to protect the new immigrants and did not come out of the notion that they were ineligible to become truly American. The report that followed the years of extensive research was hijacked by restrictionists. They selectively used some chosen parts against the open

³⁶ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 45-50.

³⁷ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 50-51.

³⁸ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 71.

immigration policy, but this was, however, according to Zeidel, a wrong interpretation of the report.³⁹

This analyse of the academic discussion on the immigration restrictions is far from complete, but contains the rough approaches and disputes. This research will also comprehend other scholarly works not described here. It incorporates some outstanding but less controversial works like *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* by Thomas J. Archdeacon, because for this research it is more important to address all possible reasons for the restrictions, than to make a judgement about which was more important.

Changing Immigration

Between the end of the civil war and the start of the Great Depression the United States changed their attitude towards immigration. One of the things that also changed – and was one of reasons for the change in attitude - was the immigration itself and most notably the origin of the immigrants. Figure 1 shows the increase of immigration between 1850 and 1920 in absolute numbers.⁴⁰ Around 18.2 million immigrants came to the United States between 1890 and 1920 compared to 10 million between 1860 and 1890 and 4.7 million between 1830 and 1860.⁴¹ This increase should not be underestimated, however, Figure 2 shows that the percentage of foreign-born citizens stayed remarkably stable. Between 1860 and 1920 the percentage of foreign-born varied only between 13.2 and 14.7.⁴²

³⁹ Zeidel, Robert F., *Immigrants, Progressives, and Exclusion Politics: The Dillingham Commission, 1900-1927* (Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb, 2004).

⁴⁰ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 4.

⁴¹ Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 113.

⁴² Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 4.

Figure 1: Immigration to the United States, 1851-1940⁴³

Years	Number (in millions)
1851-1860	2.6
1861-1870	2.3
1871-1880	2.8
1881-1890	5.2
1891-1900	3.7
1901-1910	8.8
1911-1920	5.7
1921-1930	4.1
1931-1940	0.5

Figure 2: Foreign-born in the United States, 1850-1940⁴⁴

Year	Number (in millions)	Percentage
1850	2.2	9.7
1860	4.1	13.2
1870	5.6	14.0
1880	6.7	13.3
1890	9.2	14.7
1900	10.4	13.6
1910	13.6	14.7
1920	14.0	13.2
1930	14.3	11.6
1940	11.7	8.9

Besides their sheer numbers it was also the origin of the immigrants that changed. Especially the origin of those arriving after 1890. They belonged to ethnic groups not often

⁴³ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

found in the United States prior to the Civil War and even little before 1890. A larger proportion of these new immigrants were also single young males and more immigrants came without the intention of staying permanently.⁴⁵ They were also predominantly catholic or Jewish and thus religiously different from the old stock immigrants. Because of the closing frontier more of them became concentrated in the industrial cities of the northeastern part of the United States.⁴⁶

Figure 3 shows the clear shift in the origin of immigrants. While the northern and western European immigration to the United States reached its peak in the decennium between 1880 and 1890, the southern and eastern European immigration multiplies several times each decennium from 1870 on.

Figure 3: European Immigration to the United States, by region, 1871-1910

	Northern and western European immigration	Southern and eastern European immigration	Top three countries of last residence
1871-1880	2,070,373	200,551	Germany United Kindom Ireland
1881-1890	3,778,633	956,169	Germany United Kingdom Ireland
1891-1900	1,643,492	1,893,437	Italy Russia Germany
1901-1910	1,910,035	6,106,06	Italy Russia Hungary

In short the new immigrants came predominantly from southern and eastern Europe instead of northern Europe. But when discussing this new group of immigrants too often contemporaries and historians considered this new group as homogenous and downplayed the ethnic diversity between the new immigrant groups and the consequences that had for American society. Also, while less prominent, immigration from northern and western European countries didn't stop. Compared to other major immigration countries like Argentina, Australia and Brazil, the United States absorbed the widest and most balanced variety of ethnicities. Still 17 percent of the immigrants that stayed between 1899 and

⁴⁵ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 112.

⁴⁶ Martin N. Marger, *Race and Ethnic relations: American and Global Perspectives* (Wadsworth: Belmont, 1991), 119.

1924 were Italian, Jews accounted for 14 percent and Poles and non-Polish Slavic countries each 9 percent.⁴⁷

There are a couple of reasons for this shift in immigration origin. The most important one was that countries in Asia and in southern and eastern Europe experienced the demographic boom that western and northern European countries had experienced during the middle of the nineteenth century. This led to a human surplus that these countries balanced with high emigration rates.⁴⁸ The second reason was that due to industrialization employment opportunities in the United Kingdom and Germany rose at the end of the nineteenth century and thus the pressure to leave was lower.⁴⁹ The third reason was that technological improvements made it easier and cheaper to travel to the United States. Railways in Germany made ports accessible for central and eastern Europe. Steamships could reach deep in the Mediterranean sea and the ships that crossed the ocean were more numerous, faster, and bigger which made travel cheaper.⁵⁰

Although the frontier was closed and therefore land was no longer the motivation to come to the United States, the industrialization brought even more job opportunities, especially for those unskilled.⁵¹ Driven by overpopulation and the prospects of economic gain combined with better transportation made people travel all over the world. From China and Japan to southern and eastern Europe, but also from bordering countries Mexico and Canada people came to the United States. Within the United States there was also migration going on, the most important was the movement of the afro-Americans from south to north.⁵²

The new immigration made the American population more diverse and complex. There used to be simple divisions in the non-Indian population. In the North the native whites welcomed new whites from western and northern Europe and in the South there were several million enslaved Africans. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were native stock, new arrivals from old immigration countries, Asians, Mexicans, free blacks and various new immigrants from new parts of Europe. This scared the native stock immigrants. They saw this development as the mongrelization of the American identity.⁵³

⁴⁷ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 116.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Marger, *Race and Ethnic relations*, 120.

⁵⁰ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 117-120.

⁵¹ Marger, *Race and Ethnic relations*, 120.

⁵² Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 117-120.

⁵³ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 142.

Road to restriction

The first steps on the road to immigration restrictions were measures directed against Chinese immigration. The Chinese first immigrated in significant numbers during the gold rush of 1849 in California. Their numbers further increased when the Pacific Railroad Company directly imported thousands Chinese for the completion of the transcontinental railroad.⁵⁴ Between 1850 and 1882 almost three hundred thousand Chinese emigrated to the United States. Their arrival immediately led to opposition and the Chinese were soon accused of working for low wages, spreading disease, and being heathens.⁵⁵ In the same month as the golden spike was placed in the transcontinental railroad, Henry George, an economic theorist, first published an article expressing the fear of an Chinese invasion, what later came to be called the Yellow Peril.⁵⁶

In 1879 the Senate passed the Passenger Bill, an effort to limit the number of Chinese immigrants to fifteen per ship. The House of Representatives also passed the bill with 155 votes out of 293. The bill was vetoed by President Hayes, but it showed broad congressional support for Chinese immigration restrictions.⁵⁷ President Hayes vetoed the measure as a violation of the Sino-American treaty of 1868 that authorized free movement of people between China and the United States. In the hope to break the political impasse without making international turmoil in 1880 Hayes sent diplomats to Peking to renegotiate the treaty of 1868. The Chinese government caved after some struggle to the wish of the United States to have the ability to temporarily stop Chinese immigration when their interests required them to. The United States soon took advantage of this revision and suspended the entry of Chinese for ten years in 1882.⁵⁸ The act was renewed in 1892, 1902 and became definite in 1904. It came to be known as the Chinese Exclusion Act by which the Chinese became the first group of immigrants to be excluded from the United States.⁵⁹ The Chinese exclusion was a law in the tradition of American prejudices against non-whites and an early example of the xenophobia that led to ethnically based restrictions to white immigration.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gates: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 6.

⁵⁵ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 141.

⁵⁶ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 12-13.

⁵⁷ Gyory, *Closing the Gates*, 4-5.

⁵⁸ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 148-149.

⁵⁹ Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door*, 18-26.

⁶⁰ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 149.

After the exclusion of the Chinese there followed a period with small restrictionist measures against undesired immigrants. Already in 1875 the Page Act had banned prostitutes from entering the United States, a measure that at the time was directed at the Chinese. Also it forbade bringing anyone without their approval, it made contract labor forbidden and it banned criminals from entering the United States, except those who committed political crimes or those who received a pardon in return for leaving their country. After the Page Act more laws on who were not allowed to immigrate to the United States were adopted. Along with the Chinese exclusion in 1882 congress instated a head tax of 50 cents per immigrant to cover the costs of immigration. This head tax would be raised in 1895, 1903, and 1904 and would finally amount to eight dollars in 1917. In 1885 the Alien Contract Act made it illegal to prepay an immigrant's voyage in return for labor services.⁶¹

The immigration act of 1891 extended the list of undesirable groups with people "likely to become public charges", polygamists and those with various contagious diseases and disabilities. The act also banned all advertisement encouraging immigration, except by offices of the states. The list of undesirables was further expanded in 1903 with the exclusion of professional beggars, epileptics, the insane and anarchists. This act also prolonged the period of deportability to two years after admission. From 1907 on unaccompanied immigrants under 16 years, induced immigrants and the disabled were excluded. Also there was a financial barrier instated of twenty-five dollar per individual or fifty per family. In 1917 a literacy test, requiring all immigrants to read forty words in any language, became the last immigration restriction prior to the quota laws of 1921 and 1924.⁶²

Although symbolically for the changing attitude towards immigration, all these laws combined excluded only about one percent of the potential immigrants. It must be stressed that immigration itself was still encouraged and seen as a positive influx to the United States by most. The attitude on Ellis Island was according to one immigration inspector that it was better to risk the admission of an undesirable immigrant than to slow

⁶¹ Ashley S. Timmer and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "Immigration Policy Prior to the 1930s: Labor Markets, Policy Interactions and Globalization Backlash," *Population and Development Review* Vol. 24, No. 4 (1998), xxviii-xxx.

⁶² Timmer and Williamson, "Immigration Policy Prior to the 1930s", xxviii-xxx.

the whole process of admission down.⁶³ But still voices in favor of immigration restriction grew stronger near the end of the nineteenth century.

The post Civil War era was a period with a weakened confidence on whether America was able to keep absorbing immigrants. The end of the industrialization in the late nineteenth century saw an unprecedented gap between the rich and the poor. The industrial growth also stretched out the limits of national prosperity and depression. The question who had to pay for a depression, the rich or the poor, led to tensions. Labor unrests were quickly interpreted as an importation of the new European radicalism. This was when the identification of left-wing radicalism with immigration started.⁶⁴

During the same period the introduction of the ideas of Charles Darwin made an impact on the opinion of the new immigration. Many Americans became convinced that the theory of Darwin not only applied in biology, but also in the study of society. Satisfying a need to explain the growing disparity of wealth Social Darwinism rapidly became successful in universities and among the educated. Social Darwinism could be used to defend harsh competition and the bad social conditions of the poor and as an argument against governmental interference. The most important aspect of Social Darwinism was that it gave some sort of scientific ground for the idea that some people in the United States, including the new immigrants, were inferior.⁶⁵

Despite its wide spread appeal, Social Darwinism was also challenged. It left little room for the human mind and modern warfare casted doubt on whether the fittest always were the ones to survive.⁶⁶ Therefore it lost popularity at the end of the nineteenth century at the benefit of the more scientific eugenics movement. Where Social Darwinism was based on a philosophic laissez-faire idea, instead, the eugenics movement, a more explicitly scientific descendant of the theory of Darwin, advocated social engineering. Led by Charles B. Davenport the eugenicists argued that in order to ease social misery reproduction of the fit should be encouraged and that of the unfit discouraged. This of course would have no effect if unfit people could still freely enter the United States.⁶⁷

⁶³ Wayne A. Cornelius, ed., *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 151-152.

⁶⁵ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 160.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ June Dwyer, "Disease, Deformity, and Defiance: Writing the Language of Immigration Law and the Eugenics Movement on the Immigrant Body," *MELUS* Vol. 28, No.1 (2003), 107.

Despite the fact that eugenics was much in vogue during the first and second decade of the twentieth century, it lacked the ability to clearly identify unfit groups. American restrictionists had to turn to anthropology, also a new science, to make clear judgments on individual nationalities. Imported from Europe, it gave Americans the tools to make more precise divisions among Caucasians leading to a popular hierarchy of Nordics and Teutons over Alpines and Alpines over Mediterraneans and Jews.⁶⁸

Together, the pseudoscientific movements like Social Darwinism, eugenics and anthropology led to a scientific racism that gave Americans a strong theoretical basis for their concern about the new immigration. They created important arguments to temper immigration and control the ethnic composition of it. The first main argument was that immigrants from inferior origin would reduce the share of superior whites; because of their low standard of living immigrants could also produce more children. The second argument against the new immigrants was the fear that interbreeding between high and low races would lead to the termination of the superior race.⁶⁹

Influenced by (positivist) science a group of Harvard alumni and professors founded the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) in 1894. The IRL was the most effective group propagating immigration restriction based on new scientific arguments, although prior to World War I it kept its tone relatively sophisticated. This success came because a group of academics gave it intellectual arguments and access to an educated and receptive network. The second reason was that the IRL did not use mainly economic arguments against the new immigration; therefore it was able to constantly attract members instead of only during economic recessions. The third reason was that the IRL offered a clear solution for the immigration crisis; a literacy test.⁷⁰

A literacy test was the means by which the IRL hoped to reach its goal. It was a seemingly fair instrument for a discriminatory end. Every immigrant would have to be able to read forty words in his or her own language on arrival in the United States. The IRL mistakenly believed that most of the unwanted immigrants were illiterate, therefore would not pass the test and couldn't get in. In 1897 President Grover Cleveland became the first of three Presidents to veto the literacy test after it passed Congress. He argued that the

⁶⁸ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 161-162.

⁶⁹ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 162.

⁷⁰ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 142-143.

test was against the American principles because it tested prior opportunity instead of innate ability or talent.⁷¹

The IRL and the restrictionist movement grew stronger at the start of the twentieth century. Democratic congressmen from the South became convinced of the problems of unregulated immigration and the arrival of a hundred thousand Japanese caused the alarm for a new Yellow Peril. After the failed attempts of the House of Representatives to install a literacy test in 1905 and 1906, Congress, on initiative of the immigrants' defenders and backed by President Theodore Roosevelt, decided to set up a commission hoping this would resolve the issue once and for all.⁷² The immigration commission, named after its chairman Senator William P. Dillingham, was composed of three Senators, three Representatives, three outside experts and a large staff. In 1911 it published its findings in a massive report of forty-two volumes containing information on the impact of immigration on US society. It concluded that the new immigrants didn't assimilate as fast as the old, were more grouped in the big cities, were less skilled, were uncommitted to stay, were motivated more by economical progress than political ideals, were inclined towards violent behavior, were driving old stock Americans out of some lines of work, were undermining unions and lowered the standard of living. Despite its bias to favor old immigration above the new its advice was to instate no other restrictionist legislation than the literacy test.⁷³

The report was criticized from the start. According to critics the commission had no basis for the distinction between old and new immigrants. It was based on prejudice. Secondly the commission's comparison between new and old immigrants was lopsided, or they at least failed to acknowledge the fact that the new immigrants had had less time to assimilate. Some members of the commission, like Jeremiah Jenks, had made up their mind beforehand and ignored statistical evidence in the rush to get the report done.⁷⁴

Some scholars, like Robert F. Zeidel, have tried to restore the damaged image of the Dillingham commission. He argues that the commissions' report was hijacked by the restrictionists. In general the commission was positive about immigrants and restrictions were advised because of economic reasons instead of racial or cultural beliefs. Whether the report was heavily predisposed or with good intentions, it definitely was used by the

⁷¹ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 143.

⁷² Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 124.

⁷³ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 144.

⁷⁴ Hatton and Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact*, 125.

restrictionists as a tool in the argumentation against immigration and interpreted as a pro-restriction study.

Despite the growing strength of the restrictionist movement and the advice of the Dillingham Commission to instate a literacy test, the law was again vetoed in 1912 and 1915, respectively, by Presidents William H. Taft and Woodrow Wilson. They repeated the argument made earlier by Cleveland. However, the restrictionist won the extension of the exclusion of the Japanese. Also, the growing American desire to set racially based limits on immigration was not unique, in other receiving nations of the world, Canada and Argentina for instance, the same pattern was visible. This strengthened the believe among restrictionists that momentum was on their side.⁷⁵

The outbreak of World War I and its aftermath catalyzed developments leading to immigration restriction. Even before America's entry into the war itself it made Americans more aware of the presence of immigrants in the United States. The question of loyalty became more pressing than ever and a patriotic mood swept the nation. In February 1917, despite a second veto by Wilson, Congress passed the literacy test. It would fail to be a serious constraint on immigration because literacy was way more common in southern and eastern Europe than restrictionists thought; almost all immigrants passed the test. When the US declared war a strong anti-German sentiment spread through the country. Also the Irish support for the Germany - because of their hatred of the English - didn't go unnoticed. Other foreigners were guarded with suspicion. The Russian revolution led to further distrust towards immigrants, now mainly directed at Slavs and Jews, and a new burst of anti-radicalism.⁷⁶

The victory of the Allies only partially relieved the tensions. Not only brought the external peace internal unrest, the peace negotiations in Versailles themselves and Wilson's League of Nations ideal further strengthened '100 percent Americanism' and anti-immigration feelings. The standard notion is that the War further crystallized the nativist feelings that had been building up since the end of the nineteenth century. The war cut ties with Europe, led to a stronger feeling about the American 'nation' and the Russian revolution led to anti-radical feelings. This notion is correct for a large part, but there are a few questions still to be answered. Why did it last two and a half years, until May 1921,

⁷⁵ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 164.

⁷⁶ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 148-149.

before the first restrictions to immigration were made? And why were the Germans not one of the most excluded people from Europe in the quota system, instead of Italy or Serbia who were with the Allied Powers?⁷⁷

Starting with the latter question, during the war the German-Americans turned to advocacy of neutrality because of the anti-German sentiment. After the War the traditionally Democratic Germans turned away from Wilson to the Republican candidate Warren Harding during the presidential election of 1920. Wilson had broken, in the eyes of the Germans, his promise of an equitable peace when he forced Germany to accept all responsibility for the War. The German-Americans, by far the largest non-Anglophone immigrant group in the United States, showed their political power and thereby gained rehabilitation. This rehabilitation was speeded by a fear for world Bolshevism. It was their German heritage that strangely enough brought their re-acceptance; the War was a mistake by an otherwise noble and great race. The Great War and the turbulent years of peace afterwards strengthened anti-immigrant feelings, but did not change American views of the different immigrants groups. The Great War, the Paris Peace Conference and the Russian Revolution provided restrictionist with fresh arguments, but did not change their goal.⁷⁸

The reason why there was a gap between the end of the war and the Immigration Act of 1921 was first that immigration did not immediately started up again after the war. The first ships were full of American soldiers and some immigrants even went back to Europe because they couldn't during the war, or saw opportunities in newly created European nations. During the 1919 economic boom in the United States there was for this reason even a very short fear of labor shortage in some circles.⁷⁹

The second reason was that it were the turbulent years after the war more than the War itself that made the immigration restrictions inevitable. Social unrests escalated several times in 1919 which in part led to industrialists turning their back on the unrestricted immigration that they used to be in favor of. Some felt the new immigrants were too radical, others thought that there were enough laborers to fulfill the needs or felt

⁷⁷ Kristofer Allerfeldt, "Rejecting the United States of the World: The consequences of Woodrow Wilson's new diplomacy on the 1921 Immigration Act," *European Journal of American Culture* Vol. 26, No. 3 (2007), 146, 150-152.

⁷⁸ Allerfeldt, "Rejecting the United States of the World", 146, 150-152.

⁷⁹ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 151.

that mechanization would eventually make laborers unnecessary.⁸⁰ The best example of these industrialists was Henry Ford who lost faith in his massive attempts to educate the aliens and became a vocal spokesperson of the idea that the new un-American immigrants were trying to conquer the United States. With the industrialists the immigrants had lost one of the most vocal groups for an open door policy.⁸¹

During the summer of 1919 besides racial and industrial tensions, political tensions started to rise. At the heart of these was President Wilson's stubbornness involving the plans for 'his' Treaty and 'his' League of Nations. His political rigidity grew further when criticism increased. This led to political polarization. Wilson claimed that opponents of his ideas were not American enough to put aside their associations with their native countries. This argument strengthened the nativist position by condemning immigrants who spoke on behalf of their native countries or had an alternative opinion. Because of the war the foreign-born were at the center of the political stage and through the Red Scare and the Treaty debate they were there to stay until the Immigration Act of 1921 resolved the matter.⁸²

When immigration finally started to rise again and passed the barrier of 50,000 monthly by the end of 1920 the House adopted the proposal by Albert Johnson, then the most vocal restrictionist in Congress, for an immigration stop of two years. The Senate was a little more willing to those in favor of immigration and proposed a yearly limit of five percent of the number of foreign born per nationality, living in the United States in 1910. As a settlement the quota was set on three percent per nationality with a maximum of 357,803 immigrants from Europe each year.⁸³ The newly installed President Warren G. Harding soon signed the Emergency Immigration Act on May 19 1921. It was valid for one year, being a temporary measure, but it was extended in 1922 for two more years.

The Johnson-Reed Act

With this act the United States entered a new phase of its immigration history. The Emergency Quota Act was the first general immigration restriction law that established numerical limits on immigration and incorporated a racial and national hierarchy in which

⁸⁰ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 168-169.

⁸¹ Allerfeldt, "Rejecting the United States of the World", 161.

⁸² Allerfeldt, "Rejecting the United States of the World", 161-163.

⁸³ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 152.

some races and nationalities were more welcome than others.⁸⁴ The law favored immigration from old stock countries who received approximately 200,000 of the 357,000 slots. For instance United Kingdom and Ireland received a quota allotment of 77,342 and Germany one of 67,607, while Italy only received 42,057 where their pre-war yearly average was around 200,000.⁸⁵ It also was for the first time that a hierarchy was made between different European nationalities of whose people were all considered white by law.⁸⁶

The ease with which the legislation had been passed surprised the defenders of immigration, of whom some thought the bill would be a temporary expedient.⁸⁷ However, the legitimacy of the quota system was no longer in question and the extreme restrictionists, like Albert Johnson, were still unsatisfied with the quota bill of 1921 that was, in their eyes, still too lenient.⁸⁸ The Immigration Act of 1921 still allowed 357,000 immigrants per year and allowed too much immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, especially when the northern and western Europeans did not fill the allotments given to them.⁸⁹ During the years after 1921 the immigration debate got a harsher tone. Race theories by Madison Grant gained widespread popularity and elevated the Nordics above the "mongrel" races in popular opinion. This was coinciding with the popularity peak of the Ku Klux Klan and a continuing growth of anti-Semitism since the 1880s.⁹⁰

The IRL and Johnson were working together to change the quota calculations in order to further limit southern and eastern European immigration. In January 1923 they asked Congress to lower the percentage of foreign born from 3 to 2 percent and change the census date from 1910 to 1890, when only very few southern and eastern Europeans lived in the United States. The mild non-racist restrictionists lost their most prominent figure in Senator Dillingham who withdrew from the debate due to his age and died in 1923. Other prominent restrictionists who thought that the 1921 quotas were sufficient, like William H. Husband, stayed neutral in the debate on the new quota system. Therefore the mild restrictionists lacked any serious political representation.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Mea N. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

⁸⁵ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 152.

⁸⁶ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 7.

⁸⁷ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 153.

⁸⁸ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 68.

⁸⁹ Archdeacon, *Becoming American*, 171.

⁹⁰ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 153-155.

⁹¹ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 69.

The new quota plans of Johnson would reduce immigration from southern and eastern Europe even further without appearing too discriminatory. Making 1910 or 1920 the census year of the number of foreign-born US citizens on which the quotas would be based would favor the most-recent immigrants. According to Johnson and his supporters the census of 1890 would better reflect the origin of the entire US population. With these arguments those in favor of the new quota system could mask the fact that the sole goal of the new system was to keep bad blood out and let only good blood in.⁹²

When the plans were considered by the House it was clear that passage was inevitable. The debate fully revealed the motivations of the legislation's supporters, whose speeches left no doubt that the only motivation for new quota system was to keep out southern and eastern Europeans. Their speeches so openly showed their hatred, fear and resentment towards those "inassimilable" groups that one might wonder what language they used in private.⁹³

When the bill was about to be considered by the Senate, the bill's floor manager, David A. Reed made some adjustments to it. He wanted the same as Johnson, but thought that the bill seemed too openly discriminatory. Therefore he came up with the idea to restrict immigration to 2 percent of the foreign-born population of 1890, but to later change this to a percentage of the national origins of the total white population of 1920 with a total maximum of 150,000 immigrants. Reed had no doubt that northern Europeans would still be highly favored after the latter part could go into effect. This would be in 1927, the year that the survey of the national origin of the American population would be complete and when the second part of the bill therefore could go into effect. The Reed version of the bill soon gained approval and the bill was easily passed by Congress. President Calvin Coolidge had not said much about the subject, but he was known to sympathize with the restrictionists and on May 26 signed the Johnson Reed Act.⁹⁴

The result of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act was an immigration policy that even more favored immigration from northern Europe and practically stopped that from southern and eastern Europe. Figure 4 shows the annual immigration quotas under the 1924 Johnson-Reed act, note that the minimum quota was one hundred.

⁹² Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 159.

⁹³ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 161.

⁹⁴ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 163.

Figure 4: Immigration quota's per country.⁹⁵

Northern and western Europe		Eastern and southern Europe		Other countries	
Country	Quota	Country	Quota	Country	Quota
Germany	51,227	Poland	5,982	Africa (other than Egypt)	1,100
Great Britain	34,007	Italy	3,845	Armenia	124
Ireland	28,567	Czechoslovakia	3,073	Australia	121
Sweden	9,561	Russia	2,248	Palestine	100
Norway	6,453	Yugoslavia	671	Syria	100
France	3,954	Romania	603	Turkey	100
Denmark	2,789	Portugal	503	Egypt	100
Switzerland	2,081	Hungary	473	New Zealand & Pacific Islands	100
Netherlands	1,648	Lithuania	344	All others	1,900
Austria	785	Latvia	142		
Belgium	512	Spain	131		
Finland	471	Estonia	124		
FC of Danzig	228	Albania	100		
Iceland	100	Bulgaria	100		
Luxembourg	100	Greece	100		
Total (number)	142,483	Total (number)	18,439	Total (number)	3,745
Total (%)	86.5	Total (%)	11.2	Total (%)	2.3

As shown in this figure, 86.5% of the quota allotments did go to favorable countries. Undesired nationalities were heavily cut, for instance, Italy went from roughly 200,000 immigrants per year in the first ten years of the twentieth century to 42,057 after 1921 to 3,845 after 1924. Other countries like Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Russia also saw their previous quotas almost decimated, or even more. Turkey's were even reduced from 7,388 to 100 a year.⁹⁶

With the new law the responsibility of the selection of the immigrants was transferred from Ellis Island to the countries of departure. Consulate authorities in these countries now had to determine if an immigrant could go to the United States. The reason for this measure was for extreme restrictionists to make sure that all eugenically bad

⁹⁵ *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), 100.

⁹⁶ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 160.

candidates were excluded from the United States before they arrived. For others it was a means to avoid disappointment upon arrival in the United States and to avoid fruitless journeys across the ocean, or races between boats to arrive first each month when a new part of the quota was opened.⁹⁷

Of all countries who were disappointed, Japan had an extra reason to be angry. Despite State Department warnings that it would destroy Japanese-American relations, the Japanese were excluded because of the provision that excluded all that were ineligible to become citizens. If the Japanese had been incorporated in the quota system they would have received an allotment of 240 immigrants per year, but this was still a too high price to pay for some West Coast restrictionists. They rather end the good relations with an upcoming world power, than to allow 240 Japanese immigrants a year and save the Japanese the humiliation the Chinese had received earlier. The Japanese government used to cooperate with the United States to limit Japanese immigration, the Japanese government did not want to see its citizens leave either, but they demanded to be treated with respect. Japan was highly offended to be treated as an inferior nation.⁹⁸

Conclusion

The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 closed the chapter of relatively free immigration from Europe to the United States, the Johnson-Reed act of 1924 made the restrictions more stringent and permanent, thereby entering the American immigration policy into a new phase that would last till the 1960s. The system was consciously built to prohibit unwanted immigration from southern and eastern Europe, especially directed at Italians and Jews.

The old-stock Americans feared that the new immigrants - who were coming predominantly from different parts of Europe than their ancestors had come - would change America. The new immigration at the turn of the century made the American population more religiously, economically and ethnically divers. Old-stock Americans saw this as the mongrelization of the American identity and started to question the open door policy. Starting with the exclusion of the Chinese small legislative acts banning all kind of ill and unwanted immigrants and taxing the others made it clear that the United States were slowly changing its attitude towards immigration.

⁹⁷ Ly and Weil, "Quota System," 71.

⁹⁸ Goldberg, *Discontented America*, 160.

The end of the industrialization brought doubt whether America was able to keep absorbing immigrants and new Darwin inspired sciences gave a theoretical basis for the concern of old-stock Americans that the new immigrants were inferior. These 'scientific' ideas led to the founding of the IRL, the strongest group propagating immigration restriction. Their means for restriction, a literacy test, was vetoed several times even after the Dillingham Commission gave restrictionists new ammunition and advocated the literacy test as the solution to the immigration problem. When the test finally was installed in 1917 it turned out to be useless.

World War I and its aftermath catalyzed developments leading to immigration restriction. A patriotic mood swept the country and any identification with Europe was suspicious. The Russian Revolution fed anti-radical sentiments and led to a Red Scare which pushed the industrialists – long time proponents of unrestricted immigration - to the restrictionist camp. Wilson's League of Nations ideal further strengthened '100 percent Americanism'. Social unrests escalated several times in 1919 and when immigration started to rise again immigration restriction appeared to be inevitable.

In 1921 President Warren G. Harding signed the Emergency Quota Act and thereby limiting immigration to three percent of the foreign-born population per nationality with a total maximum of 357,000 immigrants a year. It was the first numerical restriction law and it incorporated a racial and national hierarchy, favoring northern and western Europe. Encouraged, instead of satisfied, the extreme restrictionists started lobbying for a stricter permanent version of the temporary quota system, which was in their eyes still lenient towards immigrants from unwanted nationalities. With the passage of the 1921 act the quota system became legitimate. The moderate restrictionists in Congress lacked a vocal spokesperson, and a stricter version of the quota system could soon be developed.

The result was the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 which lowered the three percent quota to two percent and changed the census date from 1910 to 1890 in order to, almost, stop immigration from southern and eastern Europe without actual exclusion. In the case of the Asians even a small quota was too much; they were totally excluded, much to their dismay. In the years that followed some 165,000 immigrants could enter the United States annually, 85.5 percent of them from northern and western Europe and only 11.2 percent from southern and eastern Europe. The immigration acts of 1921 and 1924 meant a swift

turn which started a whole new phase in immigration policy which would last until the 1960s.

Chapter 2 – Dutch emigration to the United States

One of the many European nationalities that emigrated to the United States were the Dutch. Between 1820 and 1920 approximately 273,000 Dutch citizens to the United States with a peak between 1900 and 1920 when one third of the 273,000 made the voyage. Dutch overseas immigration during the nineteenth century was not as intense compared to elsewhere in Europe.⁹⁹ Compared to Ireland, Italy, Great-Britain, Sweden and Norway, relatively the greatest suppliers of immigrants to the United States in the century before 1920, the Netherlands played a marginal role in the immigration wave as a whole.¹⁰⁰ Immigration fever, that struck some countries like Italy or Ireland where sometimes up to fifty percent of the countryside would emigrate, never really occurred in the Netherlands. Although the Netherlands ranked only seventeenth among the foreign-born groups in the US and ranked tenth in overseas emigration compared to other European nations, the United States was by far the most popular emigration destiny for the Dutch. Ninety percent of the Dutch overseas emigrants went to the United States.¹⁰¹

The reasons for the Dutch to emigrate varied, but were mostly rational and were seldom driven by a struggle to survive. After the first Dutch immigrants pioneered in the 1820s, driven by economic opportunities, they were followed by a larger group in the 1840s. These immigrants were mostly driven by a potato crop failure and the desire for religious freedom. Firstly, Dutch legal action directed at pietistic Calvinists, who, in 1834 had seceded from the national church, caused the "Groote Trek" led by some secessionist clergymen. The second Dutch group searching for more religious freedom were the Catholics, who received an harsher treatment by the Protestant majority after the Belgian independence made them a much smaller minority in the Netherlands. Besides these motivations, land shortage, high taxes, overpopulation, and excessive governmental regulations were also among the reasons for the migration.¹⁰²

After the passage of the liberal constitution of 1848 religious liberty diminished the desire to leave for the religious minorities of the Netherlands. A period followed when overpopulation became a pressure on the food supply, which was leading to emigration to

⁹⁹ Robert P. Swieringa, *Faith and Family: Dutch Immigration and Settlement in the United States, 1820-1920* (Holmes & Meier: New York, 2000), 11.

¹⁰⁰ Harry van Dalen and Kene Henkens, *Weg uit Nederland: Emigratie aan het begin van de 21^e eeuw* (KNAW Press: Amsterdam, 2008), 7.

¹⁰¹ Swieringa, *Faith and Family*, 14.

¹⁰² Swieringa, *Faith and Family*, 6-18.

the United States. The closing of the American frontier in 1890 coincided with the rise of modern industrialization in the Netherlands. This meant a change in the emigration pattern of the Dutch. The traditional emigration by rural families gave way to the emigration of single laborers. Also, whereas ninety percent of the Dutch overseas immigrants went to the United States in the nineteenth century only a little over a half of them did between 1900 and 1920. With the change from farmers to day laborers and hand craftsmen, the Netherlands caught up with the rest of the northern European countries, who earlier had made the shift from family to industrial migrants.¹⁰³ Figure 5 shows the number of Dutch who emigrated to the United States between 1901 and 1920 and their percentage of the total overseas Dutch emigration.¹⁰⁴

*Figure 5: Dutch emigration to the United States in numbers.*¹⁰⁵

Period	Number of emigrants to the US	Percentage of total overseas emigration
1901-04	9,925	63%
1905-09	19,094	69%
1910-14	22,251	59%
1915-18	4,275	60%
1919-20	6,210	35%
total	61,755	56%

Although Dutch immigration numbers started to rise after 1900, and the two following decades had the highest numbers of Dutch emigration to the United States, the Dutch were not considered a part of the troublesome new immigration. The Dutch immigrants were welcomed from the very beginning of the emigration wave of the nineteenth century. They were the Englishman of the European mainland according to the Dillingham report, that was very positive about the Dutch immigrants and regarded them a valuable asset to the United States.¹⁰⁶ The difference with the new immigration was that the Dutch obviously came from the "correct" area of Europe. Also there had been steady Dutch immigration to the United States from 1846 onwards, the rise in their numbers after 1900 was also not an

¹⁰³ Swieringa, *Faith and Family*, 30, 69.

¹⁰⁴ Swieringa, *Faith and Family*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Hans Krabbendam, *Vrijheid in het verschiet: Nederlandse emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1940* (Uitgeverij Verloren: Hilversum, 2006), 17.

explosive one. Before 1890 fewer than five percent of them re-migrated to the Netherlands and it stayed relatively low after 1890, when re-migration became commonplace among immigrants from Italy and the Balkan.¹⁰⁷ Although the Dutch in some ways were part of the immigration wave of the early twentieth century, they were not perceived as a part of it.

Although the quota laws of 1921 and 1924 were not implemented with the intention to restrict Dutch immigration to the United States, they did. The Dutch immigrants were considered part of the superior Nordic race and part of the old-stock immigrants. Also, since their annual numbers were too low to be a substantial part of the immigration of the early twentieth century, restriction was not necessary. However, the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 did restrict Dutch immigration to 1648 immigrants per year, whereas the annual average between 1910 and 1920 had been around 3,300 immigrants. The pre-war average was even 4,100 immigrants per year.

Despite the fact that Dutch immigration played a marginal role in the United States, for the Dutch the United States were the most important overseas emigration destiny. Those who emigrated to the United States mostly stayed in touch with the ones they left behind by sending letters. Between 1871 and 1919 Dutch immigrants in the United States sent twenty-two million letters back home. In 1919 alone 1.6 million were sent.¹⁰⁸ In a time without television, internet or telephone these letters must have been of an enormous influence on the Dutch view of America. Also they must have made the United States predominantly known as an emigration destiny in the minds of the Dutch in the early twentieth century. The question is if and how the quota laws of 1921 and 1924 affected this Dutch America view.

¹⁰⁷ Swieringa, *Faith and Family*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁸ Krabbendam, *Vrijheid in het Verschiet*, 233.

Chapter 3 – Reactions of the pillarized newspaper press in the Netherlands

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the Netherlands was a pillarized society in the 1920s. Deep social and religious divisions drew sharp lines between four pillars; the catholic, the protestant, the socialist and the liberal. Besides their own affiliated political parties, schools and clubs, each pillar had one or several affiliated newspapers. As explained in the introduction, in order to analyze Dutch reactions in the newspapers during the 1920s one has to take the pillarized aspect of Dutch society at the time into account.

The liberals were the first to have their own newspapers. Since 1830 the *Algemeen Handelsblad* was being published and in 1844 the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* first saw light. The Catholics' first daily newspaper was *De Tijd*, which was founded in 1848, followed by *Het Centrum* in 1884 and *De Maasbode* in 1885. The first protestant newspaper was *De Nederlander*, published between 1850 and 1855. This was followed up by the more influential *De Standaard* from 1872 on. The socialist pillar got their first newspaper with the start of *Het Volk* in 1900, which in 1920 started *Voorwaarts*, a new affiliated paper based in Rotterdam that soon exceeded *Het Volk* in subscriptions. How many newspapers per issue were printed is hard to determine. Only sporadic distribution numbers of newspapers are available prior to 1939, the ones that are available are shown in figure 6.¹⁰⁹

Figure 6: Circulation figures of the newspapers used in this research.¹¹⁰

Newspaper/year	1917/1918	1924/1925	1929/1930	1937
Algemeen Handelsblad	36,000	39,000	44,000	50,000
Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant	43,000		40,000	35,000
Het Vaderland				
De Standaard	11,500			24,000
Het Volk	35,000	44,878		51,950
Voorwaarts		23,900		54,140
De Maasbode			32,000	48,000
De Tijd		6,700	6,000	6,000

¹⁰⁹ Van der Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse Dagblad- en Opinipers*, 35.

¹¹⁰ Van der Plasse, *Kroniek van de Nederlandse Dagblad- en Opinipers*, 192-193.

After a close read of the collected articles the following subchapters will try to answer what the newspapers of the different pillars thought of the restrictions. Were they worried for the Dutch emigration to the United States? Did they understand and explain that the quota laws were a means to keep out inferior races from southern and eastern Europe? Did they - explicitly or not - consider the Dutch a part of the wanted or superior race? What was their opinion of the American desire to only allow superior northern Europeans? How did they place the Japanese exclusion in the whole process? What was their opinion on the American policy makers and politicians?

Protestant newspaper *De Standaard*

When analyzing the articles on the immigration restrictions between February 1921 and June 1921 and between April 1924 and June 1924, it is striking that *De Standaard* does not see the immigration restrictions as an important issue. The peace negotiations and the aftermath of World War I in 1921 are reported on every day and seem to be far more important to *De Standaard* than the immigration restrictions. In 1924, too, events in France, Great-Britain and Germany are still dominating the foreign pages.

When it comes to the Dutch quota given by the United States *De Standaard* is not very critical. It actually only mentions the changes in 1921 and 1924 three times. Once in a list of the various allotments given to European countries in 1921, once in the same sort report in 1924 and once in an article about the critique on the quotas that was expressed by the chairman of the "Emigratie-Centrale Holland", sir Walrave Boissevain, a liberal member of Dutch parliament during and after the First World War and a well-known man with many other positions.¹¹¹ In this article most space is given to the reaction to this critique by the American Secretary of Labor, James J. Davis, who says that the Dutch will still be able to immigrate and that there will be special exceptions for schooled laborers.¹¹² Furthermore there is one article in which is reported that sir Walrave Boissevain and sir Von Baumhauer, secretary of the Dutch-American chamber of commerce, stressed the desirability of the Dutch laborers and offered full cooperation in maintaining this high standard of the immigrants by selection. They also suggest to the Americans to replace

¹¹¹ "Beperking van Immigratie," *De Standaard*, February 23, 1921; "Varia," *De Standaard*, May 8, 1924; Walrave Boissevain, *Mijn leven, 1876-1944* (C. A. J. van Dishoeck: Bussum, 1950).

¹¹² "Nederlandsche emigratie naar de V.S.," *De Standaard*, April 19, 1924.

1890 with 1860 as the census date. This way the quotas would be rearranged – in favor of the Dutch, but this is not explicitly mentioned – but still based on the same principle. According to *De Standaard* Secretary Davis was very interested in this idea, but it was never mentioned in the paper again.¹¹³

There is little critique on the quota plans as a whole either. Only in one article the question is asked how the US is going to further develop their industry and populate the land without the influx of a million immigrants per year.¹¹⁴ That the quota system was a means to keep out unwanted nationalities from southern and eastern Europe and favor the immigration from northern and western Europe is hardly expressed by *De Standaard*. One article in their paper of April 25, 1924 explained that countries like Great-Britain, Germany and France lose only a small portion of the allotments according to the second quota system and countries like Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Norway lose a bigger percentage. Italy is especially mentioned as the country with strongest decrease in their quota. This is especially hard for the Italians because they used to deliver so much more immigrants prior to the quotas, according to *De Standaard*.¹¹⁵ However in none of the articles *De Standaard* notes the difference in allotments between western and south-eastern Europe, or that immigrants from the latter were unwanted in the United States or that the system was set up in pursuit of this goal, for instance to stop Italian immigration. By reporting on the suggestion by Walrave Boissevain and Baumhauer to change the census date the editors of *De Standaard* showed that they do have an idea of how the system works, but that is all. In none of the articles *De Standaard* reports on the motives for the immigration restriction.

The most important issue for *De Standaard*, when it comes to the immigration restrictions, is the Japanese exclusion. About half of the reports on the restriction laws have to do with the fact that the Japanese are not incorporated in the quota system and excluded from immigration to the United States. Most of these articles were published in 1924. In the first article that mentions the tensions between the United States and Japan over the Japanese exclusion *De Standaard* paid most attention to the explanation by the Americans that the measure was necessary because of economical reasons and not racial

¹¹³ "Nederland en het landverhuizersvraagstuk in de Ver. Staten.," *De Standaard*, 22 April, 1924.

¹¹⁴ "Beperking van Immigratie," *De Standaard*, February 23, 1921.

¹¹⁵ "De gebeurtenissen van den dag," *De Standaard*, April 25, 1924.

ones. In the article's conclusion *De Standaard* ascribed the tensions to the idea that both countries suspect the other of wanting a war.¹¹⁶

In 1924 in the extensive coverage of the tensions between Japan and the United States most attention is given to the Japanese side of the conflict. On the United States side of the conflict most attention goes out to the side that does not agree with the Japanese exclusion. On April 16, 1924 *De Standaard* reported for instance that the magazines, it is unclear which ones, in New York were disapproving the Japanese exclusion. It also mentioned several times in the next two months that President Coolidge was not in favor of this part of the Johnson-Reed act, but felt that vetoing it would have had no effect. One article acknowledged the fact that the disapproval of the laws by the press, the President, the clergy and other organizations is worthless as long as the American people did not vote for a different Congress in the next election.¹¹⁷ The Japanese reactions to the measures were the topic of many articles. Student protests, suicides out of protest, the attempt to boycott on American products and the raid on a ballroom filled with Americans in Tokyo are some of the incidents *De Standaard* reported on.¹¹⁸ In the issue of April 25 an editor wrote that from the 1924 quota plans speaks an "enmity against Asians that sooner or later will be revenged" and in the issue of June 10, 1924 the exclusion is casually considered a possible motive for war.¹¹⁹

The special attention that the Japanese exclusion received in *De Standaard* is less strange considering the fact that the Netherlands were de facto a neighboring state of Japan because of the Dutch colony the Dutch East Indies, present-day Indonesia. At the end of the nineteenth century Japan rapidly modernised and became a force to be reckoned with. The victory over China in 1895 strengthened the position of Japan among the Asians and the victory over Russia in 1905 made Japan a new international power. Becoming the paragon of Asian nationalism, Japan and the Netherlands - after two and a half centuries of good relations - became opponents.¹²⁰ Although the United States, Great-Britain, Japan and France in 1921 agreed to respect the Dutch South Asian colonies and the Japanese expansion interest seemed to be directed more at Manchuria in the north,

¹¹⁶ "De immigratiewetten in Amerika," *De Standaard*, April 7, 1924.

¹¹⁷ "De gebeurtenissen van den dag," *De Standaard*, June 3, 1924.

¹¹⁸ "De nieuwe immigratiewet," *De Standaard*, April 22, 1924; "De gebeurtenissen van den dag," *De Standaard*, June 3, 1924; "Varia," *De Standaard*, June 7, 1924; "Varia," *De Standaard*, June 10, 1924.

¹¹⁹ "Gebeurtenissen van den dag," *De Standaard*, April 25, 1924; "Varia," *De Standaard*, June 10, 1924.

¹²⁰ Leo Blussé, Willem remmelink and Ivo Smiths, edited., *Bridging the Divide: 400 years the Netherlands - Japan* (Hotei Publishing: Leiden, 2000), 4.

there still was tension. This tension was not completely unfounded, because the Japanese would eventually attack Pearl Harbor in order to expand unimpeded into Maritime Southeast Asia, so they gained access to oil, rubber and bauxite. A conflict between Japan and the United States and a war in the Pacific would directly affect the Dutch East Indies.¹²¹

When it comes to the opinion on American policymakers *De Standaard* reported quite positive on President Harding and Minister of labor Davis and certainly on President Coolidge.¹²² Both Presidents are seen as a possible stabilizers in European conflicts and *De Standaard* frequently mentioned that Coolidge was not in favor of the Japanese exclusion. It is striking that the supporters of the immigration restrictions and the Japanese exclusion are not mentioned at all. *De Standaard* mentioned Secretary Davis – who was in favor of restricting southern and eastern European immigration because of eugenic reasons – but only in his role of Secretary of labor, not as a supporter of the restrictions.¹²³ The positive image of American policymakers is not surprising given the context of the years after the war, the peace was still fragile and the United States could possibly solve that problem.¹²⁴

To conclude, *De Standaard* describes the immigration restrictions in neutral terms, matter-of-factly even, and nowhere even tries to explain the motives behind the restrictions. It did not have attention for the consequences of the immigration restrictions either. The only thing that is interesting for *De Standaard* is the Japanese exclusion and the tensions between the two nations because of the exclusion from the quota system. Even in this conflict, in which *De Standaard* understands the Japanese point of view, it still reports positively on the American side of the conflict as well, emphasizing the part of the American population and politicians that are unhappy with the Japanese exclusion and ignoring those in favor of it. In the light of the earlier described tensions between Japan and the Netherlands over the Dutch East Indies it seems strange that while *De Standaard* reported positively on the American side of the conflict it also still had attention for the Japanese side. This can be explained however by the fact that expressing the fear of a Japanese attack might have been a taboo, as it certainly was in the years leading up to the actual attack. Also it were not the Japanese themselves – with whom the Netherlands had

¹²¹ Pieter J. Drooglever, *De kolonisatie en dekolonisatie: Nederland, Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië* (Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis: Den Haag, 2006), 75.

¹²² "Varia," *De Standaard*, March 5, 1921; "Nederlandsche emigratie naar de V.S.," *De Standaard*, April 19, 1924; "De gebeurtenissen van den dag," *De Standaard*, April 23, 1924.

¹²³ Hans P. Vought, *The Bully and the Melting Pot*, (Mercer University Press: Macon, 2004), 176.

¹²⁴ "Nederland en het landverhuizersvraagstuk in de Ver. Staten.," *De Standaard*, 22 April, 1924.

a long history of friendship – that were regarded as problematic, but only their imperial aspirations. For instance in 1899 the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies were granted a legal status equal to Europeans, distinguishing them from the other Asians.¹²⁵ This measure was quite the opposite of the Japanese exclusion by the Americans. Considering that, it is understandable that in the reports on the Japanese exclusion there was attention and a notion for the Japanese dissatisfaction with the measure.

Liberal newspapers *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*

The most striking aspect of the coverage of the immigration restrictions in the large liberal daily newspapers is high level of knowledge on the subject and the length and quality of its articles on it. In contrast to the other newspapers, *NRC* and *AH* were fully aware of the motivations for immigration restriction, the goal behind the laws and the consequences they will have on immigration to the United States from various countries.

When it comes to the Dutch immigration to the United States - and the limitation on that immigration after 1921 and 1924 – the *NRC* and the *AH* were relatively short in their response compared to the attention that they gave to the laws as a whole. The consequences for Dutch immigration to the United States and all the rules that accompany the laws are completely explained in both newspapers.¹²⁶ The article in *AH*, however, is very objective and contains no trace of an opinion or protest. The only article that does is from *NRC* on 29 May 1924. This article's main purpose is also to inform the reader of the new Dutch quota and the new immigration rules, but it does contain subtle hints that the quota is considered low. It states that 'only' two percent is allowed and that the new Dutch quota now consists of 'only' 1637 immigrants per year, leading to 'just' 163 per month.¹²⁷ Although the coverage is comprehensive when it comes to informing the readers on the new rules and their consequences, there is not much critique.

The reports on the immigration laws as a whole are much more interesting. The first and foremost thing that is apparent is how well-informed the journalists of *AH* and especially *NRC* were. In several articles the restriction plans and their possible

¹²⁵ Leo Blussé, *Bridging the Divide*, 201.

¹²⁶ "De nieuwe immigratie-wet," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, May 19, 1294.

¹²⁷ "De Amerikaansche immigratie beperkingswet," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 29, 1924.

consequences for various immigration from various countries are thoroughly explained.¹²⁸ A large quantity of attention goes out to the motives behind the quota laws. In *NRC* for instance a two-day article was published about an article in the *New York Times* by Secretary Davis in which Davis pleaded for restriction. The most part of the article is a direct translation of the article by Davis in which he explains that immigration has become a problem since immigrants are coming from different parts of Europe than they used to. A flood of new immigration has to be stopped because the new immigrants do not assimilate and will wreck American ideals, labor, habits, art and what have you. The Dutch author of the article in *NRC* corrects a few assumptions made by Davis and points out that the new immigrants have had less time to assimilate. The author also wonders how someone who immigrated to the United States himself can be so virulent about immigration. In the end the author explains that the point of the article is not whether Davis is wrong or right, but to indicate the importance of the immigration subject and the view of many – intellectual – Americans on it.¹²⁹

Another article in *NRC* deals with the Darwinian anthropology and eugenic beliefs behind the motives for the immigration restriction. In this article large translated parts of an article by Senator Reed in the *New York Times* are incorporated along with two parts of an article in the *New York World*. In the first quotations senator Reed explains that the new immigrants are of a lower quality and that allowing lower quality immigrants was the reason for the fall of Rome. The author of the article in *NRC* then explains the consequences of the new quota laws and points to the closure of Ellis Islands as a positive aspect. The article continues with the American obsession with the – allegedly superior – Nordic race and heritage. It quotes some parts of an article in the *New York World* in which is claimed that the first 'real' human being came from California 500,000 years ago and that Jezus was a direct offspring of Adam and looked Nordic, not Jewish.¹³⁰

The *NRC* author discredits the quoted parts by mocking them, but adds the warning that the House of Representatives and the Senate now gave people the right to say they are of a superior race. To illustrate this point, part of an open letter to the *New York Times* by the director of the Museum of Natural History, professor Henry Fairfield

¹²⁸ "Vereenigde Staten," *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant*, November 21, 1923; "De nieuwe immigratiewet," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, May 19, 1924; "De Amerikaanse immigratie beperkingswet," *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant*, May 29, 1924.

¹²⁹ "Minister Davis en de immigratie I," *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant*, March 5, 1924; "Minister Davis en de immigratie II," *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant*, March 6, 1924.

¹³⁰ "Immigratie en preferentie," *Nieuw Rotterdamse Courant*, May 17, 1924.

Osborn, is quoted. In this letter Osborn claims that to protect the best race from inferior ones is the same as healthcare. Osborn then continues to claim various famous people – Da Vinci, Gallileo, Columbus, Napoleon, Garibaldi and Copernicus for instance – from southern Europe to be Nordic. The fact that these kind of thoughts are now legitimate because of the new legislation seem to disturb the author of *NRC*.¹³¹

The Japanese exclusion was considered relatively less controversial by *NRC* and *AH*. The *NRC* reported on it quite neutrally, it explained the 'gentlemen's agreement' and why the exclusion was painful for the Japanese. It is said that California is not favorable to Japanese laborers, but the reason for that unfavorable opinion is not explained.¹³² In *AH* the same approach is noticeable. The conflict is covered, but it is not considered controversial or important. In an article on April 22, 1924 for instance, *AH* emphasized the efforts of the Americans and the Japanese to maintain a good relationship. It explained that Coolidge is not in favor of the exclusion, but will not veto the laws either. The Japanese reacted calm with acquiescence, although they did find it humiliating, according to *AH*. Nevertheless, the article ends with the statement that the Japanese will never forget the moral and financial support they received from the United States during their big crisis.¹³³

When it comes to the opinion of *NRC* and *AH* on the American policymakers and opinion makers the most striking aspect is that especially *NRC* had a large amount of attention for those in favor of the laws and their reasons. *NRC* analyzed the pro-restriction article by Davis in the *New York Times* in a lengthy article. The goal of the author is to explain the arguments for the restriction, not whether Davis is right. According to the author this is important because of the importance of the subject and the fact that many Americans think like Davis. Although it was not the initial goal of the article, the author does question some suppositions in Davis' arguments and wonders how someone who immigrated to the US himself on the age of nine can be so strictly against immigrants and have such an unfavorable opinion of them.¹³⁴

In the article "immigratie en preferentie" in *NRC* several restrictionists are discussed. The main focus is the preference of the mentioned restrictionists for the Nordic

¹³¹ "Immigratie en preferentie," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 17, 1924.

¹³² "Amerika, Japan en het "Pan-Pacific" vraagstuk," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, March 4, 1924.

¹³³ "De nieuwe immigratiewet," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, April 4, 1924.

¹³⁴ "Minister Davis en de immigratie II," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, March 6, 1924; "Minister Davis en de immigratie I," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, March 5, 1924.

race and why this race is superior. Large parts of articles written by restrictionists like Senator Reed and professor Henry Fairfield Osborn are quoted and made fun of. For instance the author states ironically that the extreme self satisfaction that runs through the article in *New York World* – which claimed that the first human beings came from California – is not hard to appreciate. The jokes are however accompanied with the more serious remark that the quota laws of 1924 are making claims of Nordic superiority accepted in the US. It was the main objective to inform the readership on the arguments that were being used in the US by those in favor of immigration restrictions, however some remarks clearly indicated that *NRC* did not agree with those notions. It found them to be silly and warning at the same time.¹³⁵

In contrast with *NRC*, *AH* had the tendency to react somewhat bourgeois to the immigration restrictions. For instance, a substantial part of the attention to the quota laws of 1924 goes out to the question whether the second class passengers now also have to arrive via Ellis Island, before being allowed to the US.¹³⁶ In the end the measure was cancelled. The second class passengers would be inspected on the boat, as was reported in *AH*.¹³⁷

To conclude, in contrast with the newspapers of other pillars the liberal newspapers *AH* and *NRC* did publish long informative quality articles on the immigration issue. In these articles - again in contrast with the other newspapers – most attention went to the restrictionists and their motives, of which *AH* and *NRC* were very aware. Although its purpose was mainly to inform the readers on the immigration issue, a position was carefully, but clearly, taken.

Liberal newspaper *Het Vaderland*

The third and smallest liberal paper, *Het Vaderland* reacted completely different to the quota system and the immigration restrictions than the other two liberal newspapers. The three newspapers have in common that all three provided the reader with detailed information on the quota laws, the rules and their consequences. However *Het Vaderland*

¹³⁵ "Immigratie en preferentie," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 17, 1924.

¹³⁶ "Tweedeklas-passagier in New York," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, March 4, 1924.

¹³⁷ "Het onderzoek der tweede klas-passagiers," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, March 5, 1924.

seemed to agree with the American restrictionists who wanted to protect America from undesirable races.¹³⁸

The Dutch quota is the subject of only one article. In this article the Dutch quota is considered low, but nothing more. The most part of the article consists of a detailed description of the rules and has the purpose to inform the reader on what is about to change.¹³⁹ This article is almost identical on content as the ones in *NRC* and *AH* around the same date.¹⁴⁰ The difference between *AH* and *NRC* on the one hand and *Het Vaderland* on the other is their coverage of the restriction laws as a whole and the motivations behind the laws.

When it comes to the coverage of the motivations behind the immigration restrictions and the fact that the laws are designed with the purpose to exclude some allegedly inferior races from the US, *Het Vaderland* seemed to agree with the view of the restrictionists. The article "Het immigrantenvraagstuk en de landbouw in Amerika" explains that America on the one hand needs more farmers and therefore should welcome immigrants, but that on the other hand those immigrants tend to move to the cities. The article then clarifies that the American farmers are in favor of a system that selects European races that are fit for agriculture. German and Anglo-Saxon races are fit for agriculture and southern European races are less eligible for agricultural work and do not have the tendency to farm. The author does not disagree with this notion and introduces this view on the immigration problem as "interesting".¹⁴¹

In an article about the Japanese exclusion called "De Japanse immigratie in Amerika" the author states that the Japanese question is a true racial one. Differences between the various European nations mostly boil down to language differences. The three big races are the White, the Negroes, and the Mongols. The Negroes in the south are legally equal, but can not vote because they are too stupid according to the author and in California the Mongols are spoiling the labor market with their soberness and tendency to work hard. They do not assimilate because the racial differences are too big. Therefore the only solution is exclusion. The author notes, however, that although the Americans have

¹³⁸ "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger I," *Het Vaderland*, August 20, 1924.

¹³⁹ "De Amerikaansche immigratie-beperkingswet," *Het Vaderland*, May 30, 1924.

¹⁴⁰ "De nieuwe immigratie-wet," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, May 19, 1924; "De Amerikaansche immigratie beperkingswet," *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, May 29, 1924.

¹⁴¹ "Het immigrantenvraagstuk en de landbouw in Amerika," *Het Vaderland*, May 28, 1924.

the right to exclude whoever they want, it still is hard for the Japanese, who want to be treated equal.¹⁴²

In the long article "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger" - which is divided in to three parts, split over two newspapers - *Het Vaderland* investigated what it called "one of the most important questions in American life", immigration. In this article *Het Vaderland* defends the immigration restrictions and the fact that they were directed at the southern and eastern European immigrants. It begins with a clear statement that for long the United States had an open door policy until they - just in time - came to the conclusion that the immigrants' quality no longer stood in the right proportion to their quantity. Those low-quality immigrants, according to *Het Vaderland* came from southern and eastern Europe, did not benefited the US and were 'perfect parasites'. While Scandinavians, Germans and Hollanders adjust easily and fast and learn to speak the language, it is characteristic of Poles, Greeks, Russian and Balkans not to do any of those things. The new immigrants 'live from doing nothing or worse' and 'Uncle Sam had the full right to refuse whomever he pleases'.¹⁴³

The article continues to explain the new quota laws and their consequences and concludes that the southern and eastern European countries are hit the hardest. Although some Americans unjustly ignore some successful immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, this percentage is too small to make a difference. The author then continues to make clear the scale of the problem. "The new immigration of dark, non-German or Anglo-Saxon immigrants ... has risen to the proportion of an unstoppable flood", immigrants with which 'decent Americans have nothing in common'. According to *Het Vaderland* the melting pot became a myth and America became the garbage dump of Europe. A much-heard critique, the article continues, is that the new quota laws are unfair for southern and eastern European peoples and favoring the western Europeans. However, this is not the case according to *Het Vaderland*. The opponents of the laws are defending the situation that is seriously unfair for the western Europeans.¹⁴⁴

Besides it being the right decision of the United States to stop the unwanted low quality immigration, *Het Vaderland* praises the new quota plans for the fact that they are also more humane towards the European immigrants who now are selected in their home

¹⁴² "De Japane immigratie in Amerika," *Het Vaderland*, May 31, 1924.

¹⁴³ "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger I," *Het Vaderland*, August 20, 1924.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

country. It prevents fruitless journeys across the ocean and stops the long investigations on Ellis Island which will be a quarantine station again. Part one of the article concludes with the Japanese exclusion. It states that it was the right decision not to listen to the Japanese protest, because then the Japanese are deciding who is immigrating to the United States and then others will follow this example. The conclusion of the first part of the article is that the Johnson-Reed act finally made an end to the false notion that the United States were obliged to accept large amounts of immigrants.¹⁴⁵

The second and third part of the article, both published in the edition of August 26, 1924, deal with the descent of the American people and how the naturalization process works in the United States. The author of the article argues that the American population is way too divers and that the naturalization process is going horribly wrong. For instance, the military naturalization was based on the idea that someone who proved that he was willing to give his life to protect the country in which he resided has the right to be a full citizen of that country. According to *Het Vaderland* this had "of course" a very dark side to it; it led to almost 30,000 naturalized Japanese and 19,000 naturalized Chinese. The main question is who is eligible to become an American, what does one have to know or do for citizenship? What follows is a long description of the history of the naturalization process and why judges and politicians often speeded up this process for their own gain - for instance prior to elections in order to win votes. However, according to the author of the article, there is no doubt that America is finally headed in the right direction when it comes to the Americanization of its inhabitants and the exclusion of the unwanted when it comes to immigration.¹⁴⁶

Overall, the coverage of the immigration restrictions in *Het Vaderland* has in common with *AH* and *NRC* that they are all highly informed compared to the newspapers of other pillars. However where *AH* remains mostly neutral in tone and *NRC* questions the motives behind the laws and mocks the supposed superiority of the Nordic race, *Het Vaderland* agreed with the American restrictionists who wanted to stop the immigration of inferior people and believed southern and eastern Europeans to be of inferior races. This is interesting because it is the only newspaper that did so, so clearly. It must be noted that in the 1930s the rise of Nazi-Germany was met with only a lukewarm attitude by *Het*

¹⁴⁵ "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger I," *Het Vaderland*, August 20, 1924.

¹⁴⁶ "Van immigrant tot Amerikaansch burger II & III," *Het Vaderland*, August 26, 1924.

Vaderland. When the Germans occupied the Netherlands in 1940 the newspaper became even pro-German, for instance one of the pro-German editors was Elisa Willem Kuyper, a grandson of Abraham Kuyper the founder of *De Standaard*. He was so pro-German that after an initial rejection from the Waffen-SS, he started training in his own backyard in order to get accepted. This worked, and he died at the front in contemporary Ukraine.¹⁴⁷

It is striking that *Het Vaderland* already in 1924 was the newspaper with by far the most sympathy for the American immigration restrictions based on racial preferences. This is especially peculiar because until the German occupation of the Netherlands several famous anti-Nazi journalists and writers were working for *Het Vaderland*. Menno ter Braak, for instance, wrote his famous essays on literature and society in *Het Vaderland* until he committed suicide because of the Dutch capitulation in May 1940.¹⁴⁸ Simon Carmiggelt started his career as a writer and journalist in *Het Vaderland*. He also was worried about the emergence of Nazi-Germany and started boxing for that reason.¹⁴⁹ Max Nord started his career as a poet and journalist in *Het Vaderland* as late as 1938. Together with Menno ter Braak he translated *Gespräche mit Hitler* by Hermann Rauschning. For this translation the two were charged for insulting a befriended head of state.¹⁵⁰

These are all men that proved to be worried about Nazi-Germany or highly critical on the National-Socialistic beliefs, but all worked in the 1930s for a newspaper that was not worried or critical about the events in Germany. It is interesting to see that not only in the 1930s, but already in 1924 *Het Vaderland* had a totally different opinion on matters of race and social cohesion than most other newspapers in the Netherlands. The question remains why those earlier mentioned writers and journalists started to work for a newspaper like *Het Vaderland*.

Catholic newspapers *De Maasbode* and *De Tijd*

The catholic newspapers *De Maasbode* and *De Tijd* were not interested in the migration problems in the United States, the Dutch emigration to the United States, or the European

¹⁴⁷ http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Het_Vaderland; Gerard Groeneveld, *Kriegsberichter, Nederlandse SS-oorlogsverslaggevers 1941-1945* (Van Tilt: Nijmegen, 2004).

¹⁴⁸ Léon Hanssen, *Sterven als een polemist: Menno ter Braak 1902-1940; deel 2 1930-1940*, (Uitgeverij Balans: Amsterdam, 2001).

¹⁴⁹ Henk van Gelder, *Carmiggelt: Het levensverhaal*, (Nijgh & Ditmar: Amsterdam, 1999).

¹⁵⁰ G.J. van Bork and P.J. Verkruijsse, edited. *De Nederlandse en Vlaamse auteurs van middeleeuwen tot heden met inbegrip van Friese auteurs* (De Haan: Weesp, 1985).

emigration to the United States, but they were almost only interested in the Japanese exclusion and the problematic growth and desire to expand of the Japan.

The fact that the Dutch immigration to the United States was limited was of no concern to both catholic newspapers. The Dutch quota is mentioned only one time in *De Maasbode* and only in a table of the quota of various European nations. The article explains that the lowered quota are bad news for the Dutch, not because of the fact that there will be less Dutch allowed to emigrate to the United States yearly, but because of the fact that the boat companies who transported the emigrants will have less business.¹⁵¹

When it comes to the consequences for the rest of Europe and especially for those countries that were targeted by the quota laws, *De Maasbode* and *De Tijd* responded not often and if only concise. Once the new quota plans were shortly explained and, as earlier mentioned, on one occasion the consequences for the quota's of various European nations were summed up and it is briefly explained how the quota system works.¹⁵² Nowhere in the articles on European emigration to the United States there is a trace noticeable of any indignation or disagreement. Although in one article the main proponents of the restriction laws in the United States are named, *De Maasbode* and *De Tijd* never mention the motivations for the implementation of the laws, or even the fact that the United States desired to put a limit on immigration.¹⁵³

The only part of the restriction plans that were seen as important to *De Tijd* and especially seemed to interest *De Maasbode* was the Japanese exclusion. *De Tijd* had a favorable opinion of the Japanese, but also one that was not negative about the role of the United States. It mentioned that the reaction in the American popular journals was negative and called the immigration law "anti-Japanese".¹⁵⁴ Furthermore it wondered where the disgust of the Americans towards the Japanese – who they despise as much as the negroes, according to *De Tijd* - is coming from and warns that excluding the Japanese might be dangerous.¹⁵⁵ Earlier signals that the Japanese exclusion might be called off are welcomed with enthusiasm in *De Tijd*, emphasizing the peaceful character of the Japanese protest.¹⁵⁶ In another article *De Tijd* stated that governments must do wrong things

¹⁵¹ "De immigratie-wet: De juiste cijfers," *De Maasbode*, April 29, 1924.

¹⁵² "De immigratiewet: inwerkingtreding 1 juli," *De Maasbode*, May 8, 1924; "De immigratie-wet: De juiste cijfers," *De Maasbode*, April 29, 1924.

¹⁵³ "De immigratie-wet: De senaat tegen uitstel," *De Maasbode*, May 9, 1924.

¹⁵⁴ "De anti-Japansche immigratie-wet van Amerika," *De Tijd*, April 16, 1924.

¹⁵⁵ "Buitenland: Algemeen overzicht," *De Tijd*, April 19, 1924.

¹⁵⁶ "Buitenland: Algemeen overzicht," *De Tijd*, May 1, 1924.

sometimes and have to make horrible concessions, as example President Coolidge and the Japanese exclusion is brought up.¹⁵⁷ *De Tijd* clearly had the most sympathy for the Japanese, but never said something negative about the United States. It only mentioned the American press and President Coolidge, opponents of that part of the Johnson-Reed Act. The proponents of the Japanese exclusion were ignored by *De Tijd*.¹⁵⁸

The opinion of *De Maasbode* on the Japanese-American conflict is somewhat unclear. It did, however, pay a large amount of attention to the Japanese-American problem. It covered the events from day-to-day. An article in the paper of April 17, 1924, suggested that the Japanese exclusion is unnecessary and that the way the Senate handled the issue is a clear example of how to justify action in an international affair by pretending it was done for internal party considerations. The article continues to mention the critique the measure received from the American press. The press thought the quota plans were irresponsible and inconsiderate of the feelings of other countries, according to *De Maasbode*. The plans could also lead to bad international consequences.¹⁵⁹ In following articles *De Maasbode* mentioned critique from the Japanese press, and from in Japan residing Americans.¹⁶⁰

In two long articles on May 2 and May 3, 1924 the sympathy for the Japanese seemed to have diminished. The first article states that after the half-hearted threat that there would be consequences if the Japanese exclusion did go through by the Japanese ambassador Hanihara, the US responded with "the only possible" response; adopting the Japanese exclusion. Then the author implied that the Japanese are trying to colonize neighbouring territory, like Australia and the Dutch East Indies, by emigration to those areas.¹⁶¹ In an article on the following day the possible motives for the dangerous Japanese desire to expand are summed up. Action to prevent or minimize the chances of expansion by other nations is considered totally normal by *De Maasbode*. In the United States most resentment comes from the laborers who are unhappy about the fact that the Japanese are working for low wages, according to *De Maasbode*. The American politicians

¹⁵⁷ "Buitenland: Algemeen overzicht," *De Tijd*, May 17, 1924.

¹⁵⁸ "Buitenland: Algemeen overzicht," *De Tijd*, May 9, 1924; "Onrust in Amerika over de immigratie wet," *De Tijd*, May 15, 1924; "President Coolidge ondertee kent de Amerikaansche immigratiewet," *De Tijd*, May 27, 1924.

¹⁵⁹ "De immigratie-wet," *De Maasbode*, April 17, 1924.

¹⁶⁰ "De immigratie-wet: De houding van Japan," *De Maasbode*, April 20, 1924; "De immigratie-wet: Een tusschen-regeling," *De Maasbode*, April 27, 1924.

¹⁶¹ "Indrukken uit Washington: De A.S. presidentsverkiezingen. De immigratie-kwestie," *De Maasbode*, May 2, 1924.

are more afraid of the Japanese as an inferior race. The conclusion is that the whole situation is dangerous and must be handled carefully in order to prevent the bloodiest of wars.¹⁶²

Although the subject is clearly one of great importance for *De Maasbode*, its position remains ambiguous. Initially the Japanese exclusion is called unnecessary and *De Maasbode* criticized the way the issue was handled by the Senate. There was also attention for the disapproving reactions in the American and Japanese press and the possible bad consequences the whole affair could have for the international order. Later *De Maasbode* chose the American side. It warned for Japanese intentions to colonize neighboring areas, such as the Dutch East Indies, by immigration and stated that the prevention of expansion by other countries was normal. Whereas the reports on the Japanese exclusion differed on who was to blame, the constant factor was the message that the tension between the United States and Japan was dangerous. This was probably an interesting topic for *De Maasbode* for the same reason as it was interesting for the protestant newspaper *De Standaard*.

It is remarkable that neither *De Tijd* nor *De Maasbode* mentioned the quota laws as a means to prevent the immigration of southern and eastern Europeans into the US. One of the things that are deemed problematic by the American public is the fact that southern Europeans are catholic, instead of protestant. One would suspect some kind of protest in the catholic newspapers. The catholic identity of both newspapers is clear and also manifests itself in the coverage of international affairs. For instance, an article in *De Maasbode* about the American presidential elections explained that Catholics are never elected president, despite how splendid the candidate would be. This is not in line with the concept of "freedom" of the freemasonry, the Ku Klux Klan or the powerful protestant churches, according to *De Maasbode*. "America, that is not fair. That is no "freedom"", it states.¹⁶³ This recognition of anti-Catholicism in the American society is never linked to the immigration issue.

To conclude, the newspapers affiliated with the catholic pillar reacted different than one would suspect. The restriction of immigration to the United States was not a topic of much importance in newspapers *De Tijd* and *De Maasbode*. The only exception is the

¹⁶² "Immigratie... politiek," *De Maasbode*, May 3, 1924.

¹⁶³ "Indrukken uit Washington: De A.S. presidentsverkiezingen. De immigratie-kwestie," *De Maasbode*, May 2, 1924.

response towards the Japanese exclusion on which is reported on an almost daily basis. Whereas the catholic identity of both papers is clear and American anti-Catholicism is criticized when it comes to the presidential election it played no role in the coverage of the quota laws. Besides that the overall lack of interest in the Dutch emigration to the US is stunning.

Conclusion

The Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 closed the chapter of relatively free immigration from Europe to the United States, thereby steering the United States towards a new immigration policy phase that would last until the 1960s. The motives behind the laws have been an important topic of scholarly debate. The laws have been criticized for their bias towards immigrants from northern and western Europe. Recently scholars showed in their research that immigration had a negative effect for the native unskilled laborer and that the motivations behind the laws consisted were varied. This thesis researched how the Dutch pillarized newspaper press reacted to the laws and the motives behind them. What did they mean for the image the Dutch had of the US? How did the Dutch react to immigration restrictions based on racial preference and what was their opinion on matters of race and social cohesion?

When analyzing the newspapers of the different Dutch pillars in 1921 and 1924 it is apparent that none of the newspapers has any significant comments on the Dutch quota. Whether this was because the authors of the newspapers thought the quota would be enough for the Dutch needs is unknown. Maybe it was because the Dutch could still go to Canada as many of them later did. But one can only guess. It is clear however that the Dutch quota is not considered unjust and that it did not significantly affect the image the Dutch press had of the United States.

When it comes to the coverage of the quota laws as a whole, there are large differences between the newspapers of four pillars. The newspapers *De Standaard*, *De Tijd* and *De Maasbode* of the protestant and catholic pillar did not write more about the immigration restrictions than that they were adopted. In none of the articles the motivations behind the laws or their goals are discussed. The difference with the liberal newspapers, *AH*, *NRC* and *Het Vaderland* is significant. The liberal newspapers explained the motives behind the quota laws extensively and tried to give the reader a real insight in the minds of the American restrictionists by quoting large parts of their arguments. These articles reveal great knowledge about the restriction movement and American society at the time. Also the goal of quota system and how this goal was achieved was clearly explained in all three newspapers. By the amount of attention given to this part of the

quota system all three newspapers gave a clear signal of what they thought was the most important or newsworthy aspect of the laws.

Between the three liberal newspapers there was however one big difference. Where *AH* remained quite neutral and *NRC* tried to do the same with less success - clearly taking a stand against the idea of Nordic superiority - *Het Vaderland* agreed with the more extreme restrictionists that the immigration of inferior races to the United States had to be stopped. It also agreed with those restrictionists that southern and eastern Europeans were a problem in American society, calling them 'perfect parasites'. Not only was *Het Vaderland* sympathetic to the quota plans, it also defended the racial motives behind them. This places *Het Vaderland* among the more extremist and racial of the proponents of the quota laws in Ly Son Thierry and Patrick Weil's spectrum of proponents. It must be noted that *Het Vaderland* was later known for its pro-Nazi attitude in the 1930s, but also held some fierce anti-Nazi editors. This ambiguity might be interesting for future research.

The most important subject for the catholic and protestant newspapers, when it comes to the immigration restrictions, was the Japanese exclusion. Most articles were written about this topic. Overall there was a clear understanding of the Japanese point of view and the conflict was seen as troublesome for world peace. The special interest in the Japanese exclusion is logical considering the Dutch interests in the region because of their colony the Dutch East Indies. Japan had become a world power and their aspirations frightened the whole pacific and Southeast Asia region, including the Dutch. However, the Dutch had a different attitude towards the Japanese than the Americans did. The status of the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies as honorary whites showed that the Japanese were seen as a respectable people. This was different in the US where they were excluded because of their inassimilable nature. The tension between the Dutch and American approach towards the Japanese is noticeable in the protestant and catholic newspapers. The American motives of the Japanese exclusion were hardly explained and the proponents of the measure never mentioned. Most attention went to the opponents of the Japanese exclusion. This way there was attention for the Japanese indignation and their side of the conflict, whilst the way the United States and its policymakers were presented was still positive. No one was being offended.

The question remains why the catholic and protestant newspapers did not write about the motivations behind the quota laws, or even about what their effects were. It is

highly unlikely that they did not know, because other newspapers in the Netherlands published very detailed articles and were very well-informed. Even a small newspaper like *Het Vaderland* had the resources and space for a detailed analyse of the immigration issues in the US. In the case of the catholic newspapers the absence of any discussion is extra strange. They did mention anti-Catholicism in American society when it comes to who the Americans saw eligible to become President, but not the fact that the quota laws highly favored immigrants from protestant countries and reduced the immigration from the catholic nations to almost nothing. Besides that, other newspapers in the Netherlands did notice it. It seems to have been a conscious choice not to write about this part of the immigration restrictions and not to write about the proponents of the restriction or their motivations. The cause might have been that *De Tijd*, *De Maasbode* and *De Standaard* actually agreed with the desire of the restrictionists to stop immigration from southern Europe, but felt that they could not express that explicitly. Another explanation might be that they did think the motives behind the quota laws were at least questionable, but that their desire to avoid appearing anti-American had a higher priority and they therefore chose to ignore the matter. Or maybe it was a combination of the two.

To give a more definite answer to the question why some newspapers wrote almost nothing about the quota laws and the motives behind them and others did so with surprisingly high-quality in-depth articles more research should be done. Because of the limited scope of this research it is hard to make strong claims about the Dutch reaction to the quota laws of 1921 and 1924, however, hopefully it will give some insight in them and lead to more research. For instance on how the boat company Holland Amerika Lijn responded, or what the reaction was of the ministry of foreign affairs or immigrant organizations. Such a study could complement this one.

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