In his subtitle, Kristofer Allerfeldt posits a relationship between two things not usually linked: American immigration and the Treaty of Versailles. Entire volumes on those disparate topics have failed to see any such connection, but a few scholars, notably Paul Gordon Lauren, have highlighted the importance of the Japanese government's doomed attempt to get a racial equality clause affecting world immigration into the treaty.

The author divides his work into three major sections: "American Immigration and the New World Order", "The Persistence of Enemy Europe", and "The American Race". His account of American immigration and immigration policy is not always accurate. He writes that "[t]here had almost always been restrictions of some kind on immigration", when, in fact, there had been no significant restriction before 1882; and that between 1880 and 1914 the "vast majority" of the foreign born population was "from southern and eastern Europe", but the fact is that an absolute majority of the foreign born in 1910 - 6.75 million of the 13.3 million recorded in the 1910 census - were from other parts of Europe (16).

The author is a better guide to nativist opinions, of which he disapproves, and has interesting things to say about the negotiations at Versailles. But his conclusions about the effect of those negotiations on the course of American immigration policy are, in my view, overblown. Sometimes he tries to create linkages the are chimeras. He writes, after discussing the Ozawa case of 1922 in which the Supreme Court acknowledged that validity of racial distinctions in American immigration law: "It is perhaps one of the saddest indictment of the legacy of the Paris Peace Conference that the failure to resolve this issue [presumably racial equality, but the precise antecedent is unclear] [...] allowed overt racism to be enshrined in American law nearly 58 years after the Fourteenth Amendment had begun to erode such hateful discrimination." (204).

How anything done at the Paris Peace Conference could have affected that particular decision escapes me. As Justice Thurgood Marshall delighted in pointing out, the American Constitution was, after all, very much a slaveholder's document, and remained largely that way until well after era of which the author writes.
Nor can one agree with his persistent linkage of the triumph of immigration restriction in the 1921 and 1924 with the Paris Peace conference. He concludes that: "The rejection of the Treaty and the passage of the Restrictive Immigration Acts of the early 1920s can be seen as two sides of the same coin: a wish to maintain, and then withdraw further into, a truly 'American' nation. As the sponsor of the 1924 Immigration Bill, Washington State Congressman, Albert Johnson, claimed, the sweeping restrictions of the final act represented America's 'Second Declaration of Independence', and it is remarkable how few Americans seemed to disagree, at least strongly enough to halt the measure." (208).

While most scholars of immigration would agree that both wartime and post-war American nationalism facilitated the triumph of restrictionist forces in Congress, the nation had gone a long way on the road to effective immigration restriction before what contemporaries called the Great War began. After all, the blueprint for restriction was drawn up by the so-called Dillingham Commission whose influential 42 volume report was published in 1911. He closes his third section with these words: Shortly after the passage of the 1924 Act, one Japanese commentator claimed that far from ending all war, the disagreements and resentments that the legacy of Paris had allowed to fester on made "a clash between Japan and America on the Pacific inevitable" (204).

Of course, predictions of a Japanese-American had been legion since the Russo-Japanese War - I once wrote about them - but I had never seen one that blamed Versailles. The endnote gave the source as the New York Times for May 27, 1924, and, since I can summon the online pages to my desktop, I searched for and found it. The full quotation is as follows: Shinkishi Uyesugi, noted nationalistic publicist, in an address to the reservists, declared that it no longer was possible to reach a satisfactory compromise with America on immigration. 'If history teaches anything', he concluded, 'an eventual collision between Japan and America is inevitable' (Source: New York Times. "Warlike Talk in Japan." May 27, 1924, 2).

Nowhere in the eight paragraph Associated Press dispatch from Tokyo is there any reference whatsoever to the Paris Peace Conference or to anything else taking place in Europe. Such a discovery, of course, does not inspire one to rely on this work.
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