WITH the signature of President Calvin Coolidge on May 26, 1924, the Lodge-Johnson Immigration Act became law. The new statute limited immigration to the United States upon a strict quota basis, but its most important aspect was the prohibiting of Japanese immigrants from entering the country. The American ambassador to Japan at the time was Cyrus E. Woods, a Western Pennsylvanian. His work in Japan prior to the bill's introduction, and how he reacted to state department and congressional policy, are important to understanding the deterioration of Japanese-American relations in the 1920s. His position as ambassador was inherently limited by the decisions made by the United States government, which effectively removed policy matters from his hands and left him unable to act.

Cyrus Woods had no diplomatic training, but by American standards this was not unusual. He represented the belief common earlier in the century that the best spokesman was someone who had distinguished himself in a public career. For example, except for Elihu Root, none of the members of the special mission President Woodrow Wilson sent to Russia after the March 1917 revolution had any diplomatic experience. Woods had made his reputation in law and politics. He was born in Clearfield, Pennsylvania, on September 3, 1861. A graduate of Lafayette College, he was admitted to the Pennsylvania state bar in 1889. He began his political career in 1900 after moving to Greensburg and winning a seat as a Republican in the Pennsylvania state senate. He did this by defeating Edward B. McCormick, the favorite of the local Republican machine. Serving in the state senate for eight years and working for such causes as civil service reform, Woods helped raise the base salary of Pennsylvania public-school teachers. Ultimately he rose to the position of president pro-tem and was honored by the minority Democratic caucus, which presented a resolution thanking him for his fairness as presiding officer.¹


Files of the Westmoreland County Museum of Art (hereafter cited as FWMA), "Address on the Life of Cyrus E. Woods" given before the Westmoreland County
Woods temporarily retired from politics after the end of his second term in 1908 to work for the Pittsburgh Coal Company as its legal counsel. He had been with Pittsburgh Coal for four years when Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox, another Western Pennsylvanian, nominated him as minister to Portugal. Woods served in this post for more than a year, until Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan replaced him in 1913 with a Democrat. Afterwards, Woods returned to Greensburg to enter a private law practice. But he went into public life again in 1916 when Governor William Cameron Sproul appointed him secretary of the commonwealth, a job that occupied him for three years.2

After the elections of 1920 the Republicans returned to the White House with Warren G. Harding and commanded absolute majorities in both houses of Congress. Back in power under the slogan of a return to normalcy, the Republican leadership decided their own party members best represented this attitude abroad. Once again, Philander Knox acted as Woods’s patron and nominated him as ambassador to Spain.3

Woods’s position in the Pennsylvania Republican party is unclear, but he had a reputation for fairness while in the state senate. Since Philander Knox had twice acted as his patron, he was probably closer to the Boies Penrose or conservative wing of the party than to the Gifford Pinchot side.

Although partisanship played a large part in Woods’s nomination, Knox did have genuine respect for Woods’s ability as a diplomat. After some initial difficulties, the Senate confirmed Woods’s nomination. The delay was not because President Harding had any doubts about Woods, but because the then-incumbent ambassador in Madrid, Joseph Edward Willard, at the time was being transferred to another post. The ambassador wanted to stay longer in Spain so his daughter’s wedding could be held in the embassy there. The government granted his request, which delayed Woods’s confirmation. In late June 1921, Woods

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2 Philadelphia Public Ledger, Jan. 18, 1912, FWMA; Pittsburgh Telegraph, Jan. 19, 1912; William Jennings Bryan to Woods, June 26, 1913, FWMA.
3 Knox to Woods, May 12, 1921, FWMA.
received official notice of his appointment from Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. Enclosed with Hughes’s letter were instructions for Woods and his oath of office.4

As he had in Portugal, Woods served two uneventful years in Spain. He was neither discredited nor distinguished. Woods was mostly to blame for this lack of dynamism; however, neither of his diplomatic positions had been vital to American interests. Any latent talents Woods may have possessed remained untested. Recognizing the lack of stimulation, he requested a transfer to a post that he felt offered more responsibility and a greater opportunity to serve American interests. This was the ambassadorship to Japan, vacated in the spring of 1923 when Ambassador Roland S. Morris resigned.5 Woods received the transfer and arrived in Yokohama on July 14, 1923. Here Woods distinguished himself in the appointment that became the most important of his public career.

Following the First World War, the United States had rejected internationalism in favor of limited responsibility in foreign affairs. But although Congress rejected Wilsonian internationalism and the League of Nations, it continued to favor strong American influence in international affairs. Congress was most concerned that any American diplomatic initiative would be conducted upon its terms. In 1921, armament limitation attracted congressional attention. Led by Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, Congress on June 29, 1921, passed a resolution calling for a conference to reduce naval arms.6 Japan, a major maritime power in the Far East, was an important member of the conference. The delegates resolved questions concerning American cable rights on Yap Island and the right of China to maintain political sovereignty over Shantung Province. They also settled the Anglo-Japanese treaty of alliance to American satisfaction. Finally, Japan accepted naval tonnage inferiority to the United States and Great Britain by agreeing to the 5:5:3 ratio in capital ships and aircraft carriers.7

When Woods arrived in Japan, the American public was euphoric because the Washington Conference had measurably improved the sometimes strained American-Japanese relations. While the United

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4 Knox to Woods, Aug. 10, 1921, FWMA; Hughes to Woods, June 29, 1921, FWMA.
5 The Papers of Calvin Coolidge, microfilm reel 180, Library of Congress Manuscript Division (hereafter LCMD); George Marvin, “Cyrus Woods: All American,” The Outlook, July 9, 1924, 393.
7 Ibid., 262-63.
Official photograph of Cyrus E. Woods at the time of his appointment as ambassador to Japan. (Courtesy: Westmoreland County Museum of Art, Greensburg. Richard A. Stoner, Photographer)
States and Japan seemed friendly, however, a persistent tension lay beneath the surface of the relationship. The conference had not erased the memory of racist actions directed against Japanese immigrants in the west coast states nearly twenty years earlier. Some California school boards had refused to educate Japanese children, while California and Washington state legislatures had passed laws barring Japanese immigrants from owning land. This overt discrimination ended only when President Theodore Roosevelt intervened. At the same time, he and his old Harvard friend, Baron Kogoro Takahira, the Japanese ambassador, arranged in 1907-1908 a "gentlemen's agreement" in which Japan voluntarily restricted immigration to the United States. In return, the state department agreed not to raise legal barriers to immigration. But racist attitudes, encouraged by the Hearst press, persisted on the west coast. Before the First World War, rumors about Japanese activities in Mexico had caused a scare. Some stories claimed the Japanese fleet operated off the Lower California coast. These stories were partially responsible for President William Howard Taft's mobilization of the United States army on the Mexican border in 1911.8

Aside from the racial issues, America and Japan clashed bitterly over foreign policy. The United States blocked the Twenty-one Demands which Japan presented to China in 1915. Had these been allowed to stand, China would have become virtually a Japanese protectorate. This was directly contrary to America's Open Door Policy for China, which stressed maintaining China's territorial integrity and independence and equal commercial opportunities for all foreign nations in China. Secretary of State John Hay enunciated the policy in a series of notes in 1899-1900. At the time China was defenseless, apparently set for division by the great powers. Originally, the Open Door Policy was designed for American businessmen who wanted equal access to the Chinese market. Later it was the basis for American efforts to end the unequal treaty system to which China was subjected. But at no time was the United States willing to back this policy with force.9 During the Harding and Coolidge years, the Open Door was maintained. Since the First World War, this meant frustrating Japanese plans for territorial expansion at China's expense. During the Washington Conference, Japan was pressured into returning the Shantung Province.

which she had captured from Germany during the war, to Chinese administration. This did not mean much practically, because Japan dominated the province's economy.

When the Bolshevik revolution took place, the Japanese eagerly wished to intervene. President Wilson, however, consistently refused to approve their plans. Fearing the Japanese aimed to take over the eastern section of Siberia, he changed his mind about Japanese intervention only when he decided to send American troops with the Japanese contingent. The American troops were sent to keep an eye on the Japanese and to foil any unwholesome designs they may have had. The clash of interests bred mutual resentment and suspicion. Japan viewed the United States as a bigoted nation bent on preventing Japan from exercising her prerogatives as a great power, while America saw Japan as an obnoxious troublemaker. This view hardened American racist attitudes and contempt towards the Japanese.

This was the situation Woods had to confront when he arrived in Japan in 1923. He wanted to leave these problems behind and rebuild American-Japanese relations. How he would have accomplished this is unclear, since he did not have a coherent plan. But the earthquake of September 1, 1923, gave Woods his opportunity. Because he had been in Japan for only two months when the earthquake struck, he had not made any real impression on the Japanese government or people. But the disaster presented a unique opportunity to demonstrate good will. The earthquake devastated Tokyo; in fact, with the destruction of the American embassy a rumor spread that Woods had been killed. After communications between Washington and Tokyo were restored, Woods informed the American government about the extent of the catastrophe. According to him, a half million Japanese people died in the quake, while another seven million were left destitute and homeless. Food supplies were nonexistent, and if mass starvation were to be avoided the American government had to make immediate shipments of surplus food and send relief funds for clothing and housing.11

10 *Foreign Relations, 1918*, 1:32-33; George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin* (New York, 1962), 90-110. This is a simplification of a highly complex story involving the American, Japanese, and Allied governments, the Czechoslovak National Legion, German and Austrian P.O.W.s operating in Siberia, and so on. The desire to frustrate Japanese designs played a larger part in American policy here.

Woods acted as the coordinator for American relief efforts. His decision to keep the American mission in Tokyo during the emergency enabled him to see what needed immediate attention. The most striking aspect of his role was the finesse he brought to it. Because of his early reports, a considerable amount of relief arrived from the United States and the Philippines. Woods decided that the best way to give aid was to deposit it on the docks, rather than assigning it to the American relief workers. He left distribution to the Japanese authorities, because he believed they were better able to judge where the need was the greatest. Woods also believed this would reduce any possible incidents between the Americans and the Japanese. By allowing the Japanese to distribute the aid, he reasoned, their pride would not be hurt. Initially, Secretary of State Hughes doubted the efficacy of Woods's ideas, but he was convinced otherwise when the American Red Cross agreed with Woods's appraisal of the situation and allowed Woods complete freedom of action. Eventually the Japanese used the Woods plan as an example for all nations sending aid.12

Woods soared from obscurity to instant hero among the Japanese. He was lauded by several Japanese leaders, including Prime Minister Gombe Yamamoto, who said: "In the midst of the bewildering devastation, the American Ambassador, Mr. Woods, together with the staff of the embassy and the Americans resident in Japan, are helping the relief workers with a marvelous spirit of self sacrifice . . . ." This hero's position was further enhanced by Woods's much-publicized presentation of an American relief check for one million dollars to Prime Minister Yamamoto on September 15. Moreover, Woods, the only ambassador not to leave Tokyo after the quake, presented an image of sacrificing his own safety in favor of relief.  

Woods succeeded, through his work for the earthquake relief, in improving relations between the United States and Japan. The tensions that marked American-Japanese relations earlier had by no means been erased. But due to Woods's actions, a great deal of American diplomatic capital had been successfully invested in Japan that could place American-Japanese relations on a new footing. He believed American actions had ensured a better future. Praised in all circles for his good work, and satisfied with his success, Woods left Japan in November to confer with President Coolidge. While Woods was on his way across the Pacific, his work was already being undone by developments over which he had no control.

In November the Supreme Court handed down its decisions on Terrance et al. v. Thompson and Porterfield et al. v. Webb. Both of these decisions upheld laws previously passed barring aliens from owning land in California and Washington State. In both cases the word alien meant Japanese immigrants. The Japanese government protested the decision, but like Woods, it was powerless.  

During Woods's visit to the United States, Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge introduced two identical bills on immigration. The bills appeared in both houses of Congress on December 6, 1923. Johnson's measure betrayed its purpose immediately with the title, "A Bill to limit the immigration of aliens into the United States . . . ." It reflected the antiforeign mood of the country, to which Congress was increasingly more sympathetic. This public opinion was the culmination of three convergent forces. Before the First World War, Congressman Johnson had called for a dramatic restriction of foreign immigration to the United States. Con-

gressional leaders, however, were not primarily concerned with immigration restriction early in the Harding-Coolidge years.  

Near the end of the Progressive era, virulent racism in America was becoming more prevalent. The Ku Klux Klan was reborn in 1915, achieving peak membership when Johnson presented his bill. Theorists who tried to prove the innate superiority of Nordic-Anglo-Saxon nationalities were again popular. Racism added to the general anti-foreign sentiment after World War I, as did the negative attitude of the Allies concerning war debt repayment. Finally, Congress believed that it, rather than the president, had ultimate control of American foreign relations. This, too, was a legacy of the war. But the purpose of the bill was still to limit immigration, not to stop it.

Woods, whose ideas became increasingly more progressive during his public career, exhibited none of these nativistic tendencies. He argued strongly against the demands of the exclusionists in Congress, which he concluded would be perceived by the Japanese as an insult. The two recent Supreme Court decisions had stirred old anxieties. Woods was naturally concerned, since the Japanese were highly conscious of anything appearing as a racist slight. In Washington, Woods met with his fellow Pennsylvania Republican, Senator Joseph Reed, and Secretary of State Hughes. They assured Woods that the Japanese would not again be insulted. When Woods returned to Japan, he felt confident the racist problem had been resolved.

Despite Woods’s optimism and the assurance of his superiors and colleagues in Washington, the problem did not end. In its original form the immigration act did not exclude by name any particular nationality. But it said plainly that aliens ineligible for citizenship would be barred entry into the country. The Japanese fell into this category. In 1922, before Woods became ambassador to Japan, the Supreme Court had handed down an obscure decision in the case of Takao Azawa v. the United States. The court ruled that Japanese nationals who had come to the United States could be excluded from holding American citizenship. This was the opening for Congress. The act did not have to ex-

clude any particular group to achieve the desired effect, and Congress could claim that it was not singling out the Japanese for exclusion. But the act did not work this easily, for the Japanese government refused to accept it without clarification on the status of Japanese immigration.

With matters still unsettled, the Yamamoto government tried to convince the United States to preserve the gentlemen's agreement. In April, near the completion of the act, Ambassador Masanao Hanihara spelled out his government's position to Secretary of State Hughes. According to the ambassador, Japan scrupulously followed the letter and spirit of the gentlemen's agreement. Japan had restricted passports of Japanese laborers wishing to go to the United States. Between 1908 and 1923, 8,681 Japanese immigrants entered the United States. This averaged 578 persons per year. Hanihara contended that Japan deserved the same courtesy from the United States as accorded to other nations. He warned that the United States exclusion of Japanese immigrants would hold "grave consequences" for American-Japanese relations. The statement was not a threat in the context of the note. Yet the press heard it out of context and reported Hanihara's statement as an ultimatum to the United States.

Meanwhile, Woods tried to preserve the gains he had made during the earthquake relief effort. He constantly warned the government that it could not maintain good relations with Japan if the immigration act stood. Woods quoted liberally from such Japanese publications as the Jiji that he felt were moderate on foreign affairs. These journals reflected a deeply-rooted anti-Americanism, and none was in the mood to accept this insult from the American government. Woods agreed with the Japanese press, who expected the exclusion clause to be deleted from the act when it was presented to the Senate for consideration. But the Senate failed to remove the clause.

Though the exclusion clause remained in the act, two possible solutions existed. The Senate could vote to continue the gentlemen's agreement. This would allow venting of jingoistic feelings and it would not have damaged American-Japanese relations. If the Senate failed to do this, President Coolidge could veto the entire immigration bill. The first option would have solved Woods's problem, but the Senate showed

18 Foreign Relations, 1924, 2:334.
19 ibid., 369, 371-77; undated newspaper clipping, "An Ambassador Resigns," FWMA.
no interest in it. A resolution in favor of continuing the gentlemen's agreement was defeated on the Senate floor on April 15, with Senator Reed quiet on the issue. The problem concerned Hanihara's comment about "grave consequences." Most senators believed the statement a bald threat to the United States. They also saw it as an affront to their right to regulate immigration. Due to these attitudes, the continuing resolution for the gentlemen's agreement died. The second option remained, requiring considerable political courage and foresight on the part of President Coolidge. The press reports showed the president and secretary of state definitely opposing the exclusion clause. Woods reportedly advised the president to veto the bill if he could not stop the exclusion clause.21 But this executive leadership did not emerge, and no veto was forthcoming.

In his correspondence with Woods, Hughes took a soft line on the exclusion issue. He regretted the unfortunate situation, especially since the Japanese had always kept their part of the gentlemen's agreement. Hughes also told Woods that he never construed Hanihara's statement about "grave consequences" as a threat. Hughes presented himself as an understanding superior to Woods, who was deeply concerned about the effects of American politics on his work in Japan. Hughes did not demonstrate to Hanihara the same concern for Japanese sensibilities. During one of his meetings with the ambassador, Hughes claimed that the new act was far from exclusive because it allowed for tourist travel, the entry of Japanese students to this country, and so forth. The secretary thought the Japanese government was being overly sensitive, because only Japanese immigrants were barred from the United States.22

More important were Hughes's recommendations to the president when Congress asked him to sign the act. The press reported that Hughes advised Coolidge not to authorize it because of the exclusion clause, but this was inaccurate. In his final statement to the president, Hughes equivocated about what to do. He first listed several ways the clause flawed the act. He said Japanese-American relations would be needlessly hurt since the Japanese adhered strictly to the gentlemen's agreement. The secretary also said the act would create an actual rise in Japanese immigration, because it encouraged illegal entry of Japanese nationals here.

But after Hughes made these points, he retreated. Although weakened by the clause, the act was the best under the circumstances, and the government would have to live with it. Hughes used poor reasoning. Even if a new immigration act was badly needed, the country would not have been placed in jeopardy if the administration had refused to accept the act as written. Hughes's recommendations for the act are an example of the policies he followed while he was secretary of state. Though paradoxical, the policies were designed to bridge certain gaps. For example, although the United States was not a member of the League of Nations, through Hughes it cooperated with the League. In this way, the opposing demands of isolationism and internationalism could be met. In the immigration case, however, a neat compromise was impossible because of Congress's attitudes. When confronted with this problem, Hughes voiced his objections for the record, but he did not oppose what he felt was poor legislation.

The secretary's reasoning gave President Coolidge justification for signing the act. When Coolidge explained why he signed it, he quoted Hughes's statement, as if it were his own, word for word. The president added only that if the exclusion clause had been a separate bill, he would have vetoed it. With this statement Coolidge ended the matter. For purely political purposes he had abdicated his responsibility as a national leader. The president did not wish to offend his Republican colleagues in Congress by vetoing their creation during an election year. So both the president and the secretary of state bowed to political pressures while protesting their high intentions.

Woods was in the most difficult position. He represented a government that systematically ruined his work, and other than advising Coolidge to veto the bill, he was powerless to stop it. Even if he had resigned in protest, he could not have left until the government found a replacement for him. Nor could he resign while the act worked its way through Congress, because there remained a chance the administration might follow his advice. Meanwhile, Woods watched the rise of the virulent anti-Americanism in Japan that the act caused. From mid-April to May 26 when the president signed the bill, Woods repeatedly told Washington that the bill would have an ugly and lasting effect on American-Japanese relations. On April 22, the ambassador said that the government should not expect the Japanese to accept the new law. He said bitterness would be deep and long-lasting, because

23 Ibid., 391-93; Adler, Uncertain Giant, 67.
24 Foreign Relations, 1924, 2:396.
the bill offered no "recourse to redress." Shortly after this Woods reported that he was receiving protests about the bill from all over Japan. The protests came from prominent individuals, professional groups, and religious bodies. Although he forwarded them to Washington in hope they would show the administration the wide opposition to the bill in Japan, his reports made no difference.

By the middle of May, Woods accepted his failure to make any impression on the matter. He was usually reserved in his press statements concerning policy decisions and he tried to be gracious when events went against him. When Bryan had him replaced as minister to Portugal in August 1915, Woods had said: "The Democrats are entitled to that post in Lisbon, and every other foreign mission . . . more than that, they should take them." But in a statement on May 16, Woods lost his usual composure. While speaking to a gathering of Japanese political leaders, Woods lauded their record of strict adherence to the gentlemen's agreement. He then went into a near-tirade and denounced the pending immigration legislation.25 Several days later the press announced that Woods requested to be relieved of his post. His excuse was his mother-in-law's health. He said that she had not recovered from some injuries she had sustained in the earthquake, and she wanted to return to Greensburg to convalesce. Clearly Woods was disgusted with the situation and wanted out. According to reports, Woods was angered by the Department of State's stubborn failure to heed his recommendations and with Congress's blindness to the negative diplomatic effects of the immigration measure. Contemporary observers believed Woods's reason for resigning was suspicious, and sixty years later, his statement sounds even more so. He never said publicly that he resigned because of the bill. Yet in his formal letter of resignation to President Coolidge he wrote: "For the reasons which I have given you verbally, I . . . hereby . . . tender my resignation as Ambassador to Japan." There is no record of the conversation; it is probable, however, that it included a strong statement in opposition to the immigration bill.26

Reactions to Woods's resignation were polite. In Washington, Secretary of State Hughes stressed to Ambassador Hanihara that Woods did not resign because of the immigration bill, but because of his mother-in-law's health. Hughes also praised Woods's work. In Japan,

Woods's resignation caused a flood of sentiment. The Japanese press expressed its regrets over the situation and asked Woods to reconsider his decision. One paper, the *Nichi Nichi*, praised Woods for all he had done and practically demanded him to stay. Another paper, the *Chugai Shagyo*, sympathized with Woods about the position in which the American government placed him. All of this showed that Woods had made a positive impression, but he could not remain ambassador. He had wanted to improve Japanese-American relations dramatically. His work for the earthquake relief nearly allowed him to put past suspicions behind, only to have his efforts negated by the immigration act. Overcoming the bitterness it caused would require the talents of a highly imaginative and brilliant diplomat, which Woods was not. Woods tried to salvage some of his work before he left. One of his last acts in Japan was a farewell address he gave during a testimonial dinner. His final statement was desperate and pathetic. He said: "I want you to believe that what I say is true. The real sentiments of the people of the two countries are working in unison. Japan and the United States must be friends. They must cooperate, not only for civilization in the region of the Pacific, but for the civilization of the world. The peace of the world rests with Japan and America. I ask you to join me in bringing about the cordial relations between the two countries; for the accomplishment of this great purpose, I will devote the rest of my life." This was the capping statement of a lost cause.

Two weeks later, on June 5, 1924, Woods left Tokyo for home. Ten thousand cheering people greeted him at the train station. According to the press, no ambassador in Japan's history received as much adulation. That such a large crowd turned out to see Woods off was amazing, considering that the prince regent was getting married on the same day. When Woods boarded his train, the prime minister and foreign secretary said their farewells in person. This was some consolation for Woods as he made his way back to Greensburg.

Woods returned home to Greensburg a frustrated and angry man. He was upset by the stupidity and clumsiness Congress and the rest of the government had shown in the immigration matter. Before he left Tokyo, he had given an interview to George Marvin for *The Outlook*. With the interview scheduled to be published in July, Woods spoke

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29 *New York Times*, June 6, 1924.
freely because he would be home by the time it appeared. Woods’s reserve left him completely, and he vented a considerable spleen at Washington. The United States finally had the opportunity to place its relations with Japan on a new footing, he said, and it “deliberately and wantonly threw it away.” Combined with this, Woods believed the damage for American Far Eastern policy would be more than anyone bargained for. In his view, Japan was the only real nation in the Far East. If the United States hoped to preserve and protect its interests in East Asia, then good relations with Japan were essential. With the passage of the immigration bill, he believed Japan would always remain distant from the United States and from this country’s concerns in Asia. Woods added: “It’s all right about the restraint and wonderful discipline these people are showing. But this thing will never be forgotten. It goes deep. This is a historic moment in our Pacific relations, and its motive force is backwards.”

This sounds unusually farsighted, considering the steady deterioration in United States-Japanese relations after 1924. But to say this was a turning point imparts the gift of clairvoyance to Woods and suggests that the immigration bill was the only source of tension between the United States and Japan. This raises a central question: How much did this issue contribute to the break in relations between the United States and Japan? Charles A. Beard wrote in 1939 that it was the single most important factor. In his scenario Beard says that Japan’s politics by the 1920s had liberalized considerably. But with the closing of the American outlet for excess population, imperial-minded ultranationalists gained the ascendancy. Faced with other minor problems, they redirected Japan’s policies towards the paths of imperialism and aggression in the 1930s. Japan’s behavior continued until it threatened China’s territorial integrity, precipitated American economic sanctions, and provoked direct confrontation. This created a direct line of causality from the immigration act to Pearl Harbor.

Although this argument seems convincing, it is impossible to sustain. Beard’s statement is well argued and cogently written, yet it is flawed because it ignores essential facts. Although the immigration act contributed to the fall of the Japanese liberals during the 1930s, it was only one of many factors present at the time. Most obvious of these was Japan’s desperate economic situation after the stock market crash in 1929. Imperial expansion was not a new aspect of Japanese foreign

30 The Coolidge Papers, reel 180, LCMD; Marvin, “Cyrus Woods,” 394.
31 Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, America in Midpassage, 2 vols. (New York, 1939), 1:349-50; T’sou, America’s Failure in China, 23.
policy in the 1930s, and it was not only in the minds of ultranationalists. Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, imperial expansion in East Asia had been an integral part of Japanese foreign policy. The act did not add significantly to Japan's economic difficulties or exacerbate population pressures, since few people had been granted entry to the United States each year under the gentlemen's agreement.

Woods held opinions common to senior American diplomats in Japan during the interwar years. They thought the United States ignored the essential reality of Japan's position of power in Asia by overemphasizing the Open Door for China. This was, however, the basis of American East Asian policy. When Japan seized Manchuria in 1931, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson followed a moral policy of nonrecognition, which was based upon the Open Door. The policy was meant to marshal world opinion to shame Japan out of Manchuria, but it was not backed by threats of sanctions or military force. To American diplomats in Japan, including Woods, the Stimson Doctrine was frustrating. The United States government maintained a high moral position, an Open Door that antagonized Japan but made no efforts to undergird that policy with action. Woods and others claimed that because Japan was the real power in East Asia, American policy in that region would be better advanced if the United States curried favor with Japan and not China. As late as 1940, American Ambassador to Japan William C. Grew still argued this point.32

Thus, the immigration bill was only one of several causes, chief among which were American insistence on the Open Door and long-held Japanese imperialism, that ultimately led to war. Nevertheless the act did strike directly at Japan's pride, and Woods read this correctly. It was a wound that never healed, causing considerable resentment up to the eve of World War II. Had the act not been passed, American-Japanese relations would have been placed on a new footing. This would have allowed Japan's government to find solutions to the other problems Beard spoke of. Thus, the immigration act was one of the more important factors that led to war.

Woods's interview in *The Outlook* was interesting reading at the time. Among the audience it reached were members of the Coolidge administration. On July 28, Warren F. Martin, a special assistant to the attorney general, sent a copy of it to Bascom Slemp, the president's secretary. In a note he sent to Slemp with the article, Martin said he thought Slemp would be interested in looking at it. Slemp replied that

he had only glanced at it, but he would be interested in reading it "carefully" later. 33 From the tone of the note, Woods’s statements were obviously not appreciated.

After returning to Greensburg, Woods went into a private law practice for five years. In 1929 Governor John S. Fisher appointed him state attorney general. In Harrisburg, Woods helped State Representative Michael A. Musmanno in the passage of his bill that terminated the Coal and Iron Police. Woods resigned his position in 1931 and never held public office again. Because he had lost his influence in Washington, he was never again asked to serve as a diplomat. During Woods’s retirement he read of the events that were to culminate in the Pacific War. By 1927 the Kuomintang had established its authority over most of China, bringing it into conflict with Japan and leading to Japan’s seizure of Manchuria in 1931. War finally broke out between China and Japan in 1937. None of this could have been pleasing to

33 Gordon W. Prange, At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor, in collaboration with, and intro. by Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon (New York, 1981; reprint ed., New York, 1982), 5; Warren F. Martin to Bascom Slemp, July 28, 1924; Slemp to Martin, July 29, 1924, The Coolidge Papers, reel 180, LCMD.
Woods, especially when he believed it could have been averted by more thoughtful actions in 1924. He died in 1938 and was spared the final agony of America and Japan going to war.

During the 1920s, Congress tried to dominate American foreign relations. According to the Constitution, the president directs the nation's foreign relations with the "advice and consent" of the Senate on treaties and ambassadorial appointments. But congressionally-directed policy in American-Japanese relations was a disaster. Congress submitted to the racist pressures of the era and justified itself by maintaining its goal of immigration regulation.

Woods was basically correct about the negative effect the immigration bill would have on American-Japanese relations. He was not predicting a war but was giving insight into the immediate future based on his own experience. He made one point that was true for the entire interwar era: Japan was the only true nation in the Far East, and the United States committed a major error in antagonizing her. The concern shown for China was well intended, but America's Sino-centric policy in East Asia was seriously flawed. This nation wished to protect its interests in China, but it was unwilling to use force to do it. During the Harding-Coolidge years, however, this policy was maintained but not expanded. During World War II, the United States carried the Open Door to the extreme when it gave great power and status to the corrupt regime of Chiang Kai-shek. This country ignored the advice of its career diplomats in China about the Nationalist government and that of its senior commander in China, Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell, on the same subject.34 If these warnings had been heeded, and if Japan had been taken more seriously, the story of America's Pacific relations for the last fifty years would have been much different. This was tragic, but the greater tragedy was that Woods's experience was the rule for senior diplomats in Asia rather than the exception.


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