

Wanted and unwanted travellers: explaining similarities and differences in European visa practices

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Abstract

Security theory plays a central role in contemporary analyses of European migration control. Its explanatory purchase has, however, recently been put into question by authors pin-pointing events seemingly at odds with theoretical expectations. Both opponents and proponents of a security approach have mainly relied on single or small-N country case studies or explorative analyses, while large-scale comparative studies are absent. This paper seeks to move the debate forward by addressing the methodological gap in literature. It sets out a new migration control database enabling comprehensive assessments of variation in Schengen visa-issuing practices. This dataset is then used to conduct a quantitative analysis of the security explanation contrasted with a rival interest group perspective. I show that business interests have a liberalizing impact on the European visa regime. Yet visa practices remain first and foremost explainable by a fear of immigration. Against recent critics this paper thus argues that security theory continues to provide a convincing account of migration control practices in Europe.

Key words

Migration control, Europe, Security theory, Interest group politics, Schengen, Visa

Introduction

From the 1980s and onwards European cooperation in the field of immigration policy has expanded considerably (Geddes 2003: 126).¹ The move towards common European rules and norms has attracted substantial academic attention (Thielemann & Sasse 2005: 663f). In this paper I seek to contribute to the current debate through a study of EU integration in the area of short-stay visas.² Regulating access to the European Union, visas are a central migration control instrument (Bigo & Guild 2005; cf. Brochmann 1999a: 307). For the majority of the world's population the borders of Europe are first encountered at consulates abroad during the visa application process (Guild 2001). Indeed, in this pre-screening significantly more people are refused entry to the EU compared to the number of people turned away once they reach the territorial border (Eurostat 2010a; Council 2009).

The existing literature argues that EU's borders and immigration policy is biased towards the restriction of movement and mobility (See for example Melis 2001; Guiraudon 2003; Apap & Carrera 2004; Bigo & Guild 2005; Munster 2005; Huysmans 2006; Lavenex 2007). Barbara Melis, for example, states that there is a clear policy trend towards “a Fortress Europe, a *White* Fortress. The [...] new measures [are] by and large very restrictive.” (Melis 2001: 216, italics in original). This policy direction has mainly been explained via constructivist security theory. European initiatives and instruments focus on control and restriction because migration has been successfully established as a security problem – a threat to European states and nations requiring exceptional responses not otherwise deemed legitimate (Huysmans 2000; cf. Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998).

Recently, however, Andrew Neal and Christina Boswell have questioned this overall argument. Analysing the establishment of the EU's border agency – Frontex – Neal (2009: 333) shows that its mandate was very limited testifying to a “failure” to securitize migration in Europe. In a similar vein, Boswell (2007a: 589) points out that, contrary to what one might expect, migration

¹ Unless otherwise stated the terms European, Europe, European Union, EU and member states refers to the 22 EU-states fully participating in the Schengen cooperation, the 3 EU-states (Cyprus, Romania and Bulgaria) in the process of joining Schengen and the 3 non-EU states also participating (Norway, Iceland and Switzerland). The EU-states United Kingdom and Ireland are thus not included in the concepts unless otherwise stated. The terms European Union and European Community are also used interchangeably.

² Thielemann and Sasse (2005: 665-7) suggests that research can be grouped into four debates: interaction between migrants and minorities, security- versus rights-based approaches, public and elite perceptions and the impact of supranational policy-making. I thus engage with two of these debates (security versus rights and the national impact).

control has “remained surprisingly unaffected” by the fight against terror. This too raises doubt about the explanatory potential of security approaches to European migration policy.³

Common to both camps in the debate is a set of methodological limitations. Existing research on European migration control primarily consists of single or small-N country case studies (Ette & Faist 2007; Brochmann & Hammar 1999; Karyotis & Patrikios 2010; Guiraudon 2003) and explorative analyses of different policy initiatives and wider developments without an explicit methodological basis (Boswell 2007a; Bigo & Guild 2005; Neal 2009; Wolff 2008). Both approaches have generated considerable empirical and theoretical insights but also have their drawbacks. The former does not address the wider applicability of the findings. The latter makes it somewhat difficult for other researchers to identify the grounds for and limits of the conclusions.

The aim of this article is to bring forward the explanatory debate by addressing the methodological gap in the current literature. I do so by constructing a comprehensive database covering the visa-issuing practice of all European states taking part in the common visa policy. It encompasses all third countries on EU’s visa-list where the member states have diplomatic representation, and includes data from the period 2005 to 2009, the only period in which systematic information is publicly available. This dataset allows us to conduct new and broader comparisons of the restrictiveness of European migration control policies, test the relative weight of different explanatory theories, and set out clearly the scope conditions of the results.

Using this dataset I conduct a large-N empirical test of the security explanation contrasted with a rival interest group account. I employ descriptive and inferential statistics as well as overview maps. On this basis I argue that though trade and business interests do have a significant liberalizing effect, fear of immigration is the most important dynamic within the visa regime. The analysis thus clearly supports a continued focus on security mechanisms when studying European migration control.

There are three main limits to this argument. Firstly, the dataset only covers the visa-issuing practice of the Schengen member states. This means that the analysis does not address the issue

³ A similar debate has been raised concerning the precise role of EU-integration in the securitization process. Compare especially the arguments by Guiraudon (2003) and Bigo (2000) with Thielemann and El-Enany (2009).

of which third countries are included on the visa-list. A visa requirement is likely in itself to have a restrictive impact by, for example, discouraging people from applying at all (Brochmann 1999a: 307). This dynamic is not captured using the dataset. Secondly, the original data source is official government overviews. These might suffer from reporting errors. To the extent the data is used by the European Union to promote oversight and expose misuse, there might also be an incentive for a member state to misreport to prevent problematic visa-issuing practices from coming to light. Thirdly, the area of visas is only one, albeit important, aspect of migration control. Thus, other elements such as employer sanctions, territorial border control and cooperation with third countries are not covered by the analysis. Nor are broader policy instruments such as regulation of work permits and family unification. The conclusions arrived at by studying visas might hold for these policies as well, yet it would require further study to probe the extent to which this is the case.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next and second section I introduce EU's visa policy cooperation. The third section sets out the theories and derives a set of hypotheses. In the fourth and fifth sections I present the database and research design. The following sections contain the empirical analysis. Finally, I conclude.

The European visa policy

A visa can be defined as a “document issued in the country of origin (or residence) of the individual by the authorities of the state to which he or she wishes to go.” (Guild 2009: 118; see also Martenczuk 2009: 22). If a state has imposed a visa requirement citizens of the country in question have to apply for a visa to enter legally.⁴ Freeman makes a distinction between permanent residence visas, temporary work visas and non-immigrant visas for purposes other than work (Freeman 2007: 30). EU cooperation solely concerns short-term (maximum 3 months) non-immigrant visas for mainly family visits, tourism and business trips (Peers & Rogers 2006: 201). Short-stay visas are usually conceptualized as an instrument of migration control, defined as the rules and norms regulating the entry and stay of foreigners (Brochmann 1999b: 9; Lahav & Guiraudon 2007: 3). Specifically, visa policy allows states to screen persons before they arrive at the territorial border (Bigo & Guild 2005: 234; cf. Brochmann 1999a: 307).⁵

⁴ The possession of a valid travel visa does not necessarily guarantee access to the state's territory (Guild 2009: 184). A person might still be turned away at the border for failure to comply with other entry criteria.

⁵ For a definition and discussion of visa policy in relation to diplomacy see Stringer (2004).

European integration in the area of visa policy started in two different arenas. In the period from 1985 to 1999 some member states worked towards a harmonization of visa matters in the context of the Schengen cooperation (Melis 2001: 139; Peers and Rogers 2006: 191, 201). In parallel, the 1993 Maastricht Treaty established an EU-wide supranational legal basis for integration on some visa matters. The two different routes were joined with the 1999 Amsterdam Treaty whereby Schengen was incorporated into the European Union (Gortazar 2001: 127). The key justification for the establishment of a common visa policy was the planned dismantling of the internal borders amongst the member states (Melis 2001: 133). Once admitted, a person would be able to freely travel across the EU. The member states could thus not, in principle, uphold different visa regimes because the control at the internal borders would disappear.

The two main elements of the current visa cooperation is the list of countries with and without a visa requirement and the common rules on the issuing of visas (Peers and Rogers 2006: 185-218).

Amongst the Schengen states as well as within the EU three visa lists were in operation until March 2001: a 'black' list of third countries with a visa requirement to enter the EU, a 'white' list containing countries without and, finally, a 'grey' list with countries where some states requested a visa and others did not (Gortazar 2001: 126; Melis 2001: 136; Jileva 2002: 77; Ucarer 2002: 23; Martenczuk 2009: 25).⁶ In 2001 the grey list was abolished and two exhaustive black and white lists agreed upon (OJEU 2001; Peers & Rogers 2006: 185). 134 third countries were put on the black list.⁷ For the remainder of the paper I refer to the black list as EU's visa list. The visa-list has subsequently been revised several times (OJEU 2003, 2006, 2009a, 2010a, 2010b). Ecuador was added in 2003 and Bolivia in 2006. Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Bahamas, Barbados, Mauritius and Seychelles were removed in 2006. Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia were taken off in 2009. In 2010 Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina followed as well as Northern Marianas and Taiwan. A total of two countries have thus been added to the list and 13 removed from 2001 to 2010. The map below gives an overview of the countries which have figured on the visa list:

⁶ The first visa-list was adopted in 1995 but later annulled by the Court of Justice as Parliament filed suit against the Council for failing to consult Parliament. The act was then properly forwarded and replaced by a new but "essentially the same" regulation in 1999 (Peers & Rogers 2006: 191; Stetter 2007: 170-2). Please note the racialized connotations of the naming of the lists.

⁷ The regulation makes a distinction between "states" and "Entities and territorial authorities that are not recognised as states by at least one member state" (OJEU 2001). In the paper I use the term third country to cover both groups.



Map 1: World map depicting the EU visa-list. Nationals of the countries coloured red required a visa to enter the European Union in one or more years in the period from 2001 to 2010 (own rendering, similar to Bigo and Guild 2005: viii).

Map 1 show that almost all African, Central Asian, South Asian and Middle Eastern countries have figured on the list. About half of the countries in East and Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania, Central America and South America have been listed. A majority of the non-EU European countries have as well. No North American country has been on the list.

The rules for receiving a visa are as of 2010 specified in a community code on visas and an accompanying visa-issuing handbook for consular officials (Meloni 2009; OJEU 2009b). These acts update the original framework set out in the Schengen Convention and in more detail in the Common Consular Instructions (Peers and Rogers 2006: 201f). The main difference between the old and new setup is a new EU-enshrined right of appeal in case of refusal (Peers 2010).

The rules set out that applicants must possess valid travel documents and might be required to document the purpose of their visit as well as means of subsistence and can be called to an interview. They must not be registered in the Schengen Information System (SIS) or be deemed

to be a threat to the member states (Jileva 2002: 78; Peers and Rogers 2006: 202). Finally, applicants must in general pay a fee of €60 (Com 2010). According to the Common Consular Instructions the main criteria for granting a visa is whether or not an applicant is a security or 'immigration' risk. In relation to the latter the guidelines state that "it is necessary to be particularly vigilant when dealing with risk categories, in other words unemployed persons, and those with no regular income etc." (OJEU 2002: 11; Munster 2005: 206f).

Theorizing visa policy

The existing literature contains two main explanations of visa policy. The *first* is based on interest group theory (Freeman 2006, 1995; Facchini, Mayda & Mishra 2010; Somerville & Goodman 2010; cf. Wilson 1980).⁸ It is broadly rational choice in orientation and predicts a liberal policy line. This is because pro-mobility firms and organizations are found to be more likely to lobby and influence the policy-making process compared to their opponents. The *second* and more widespread draws on international relations security theory (Bigo & Guild 2005; Huysmans 2006; Munster 2009; cf. Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998). Building on a constructivist line of reasoning the main expectation is a restrictive policy. The key reason is the substantial impact on the decision-making process of widespread societal discourses casting mobility in terms of threat, fear, uncertainty and risk.

Interest group theory

The primary advocate of an interest-group focused approach to migration studies is Gary Freeman (1992, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2006). He argues, following Wilson (1980: 366-372), that we can explain state policy by investigating what distribution of costs and benefits it entails. If a policy has both concentrated costs and benefits it is likely to be structured by proper *interest group politics*.⁹ Because both proponents and opponents of the policy are clearly defined they will organize and struggle over the direction of policy. In situations where costs as well as benefits are diffuse *majoritarian politics* will take place. Policy will in this case be settled by the initiative which can command the most substantial popular support. If society at large gains yet costs are borne by well-defined groups *entrepreneurial politics* should explain outcomes. Because opposition is likely

⁸ Freeman originally presented his approach as a "political economy model" (1995: 883; cf. Boswell 2007b: 75). I follow Cornelius and Rosenblum (2005: 106) in referring to it as an interest group perspective because this label somewhat better captures the analytical focus and liberal-expansionist orientation of the theory.

⁹ Please note that I refer to the whole approach as interest group politics though this is also a specific sub-type in the original model.

to be highly organized changes will only come about if persons in key positions become preoccupied with the case and tries to push an agenda of change. *Client politics*, finally, should take place if a policy has concentrated benefits for a set of clearly defined groups and diffuse costs. The majority bearing the costs is unlikely to organize in opposition and the benefiting groups will therefore drive and set policy.

Drawing on this model Freeman (1995: 886) argues that migration policy in general is a case of client politics. A few well-organized interest groups set policy in a closed setting cooperating with the responsible officials. The concentrated benefits of a liberal policy fall upon employers and diaspora groups whereas the costs are born by the population at large (1995: 885).¹⁰ There is no well-defined constituency which have an incentive to form and lobby for restrictive counter-measures. Labour-intensive firms, for example, have a considerable incentive to lobby for low-skill migrant access to fill vacant positions and keep wages down. Any downward pressure on salaries and potential capacity pressure on public services such as health care and education are, by contrast, borne by a diffuse wider majority.

Freeman does not consider what shape policy will take in the situation where proponent groups are absent. Employers in the United States, for example, might take an active interest in Mexican migration and be less focused on movement from Brazil. In this situation the model would predict a liberal policy and practice towards Mexico. But what will be the policy towards Brazilians? The starting-point for Freeman's explanation is the considerable scepticism towards migration in liberal countries. In this political climate openness is then explained by the existence of client politics. Thus, where no organized interests are present we would, arguably, expect the policy and practice to be restrictive.

As with migration policy in general travel visas can also be seen as a case of client politics (Freeman 2006: 235).¹¹ The constituency is similar but somewhat wider. One of the key actors benefitting from a liberal travel visa practice is the tourism industry. From their perspective visitors from abroad are a source of potential income. They thus have an interest in lobbying authorities in order to ensure easy passage for international travellers. Their motivation to do so

¹⁰ Conceptualizing migration using the language of cost-benefit is not unproblematic. It might reinforce a presentation of migration as a negative 'problem' (a cost).

¹¹ Freeman (2006: 235f) discusses in some detail how travel visas can also be seen as a case of majoritarian and entrepreneurial politics.

is likely to be considerably higher for third countries which are major suppliers of tourists. This yields hypotheses 1:

H₁: The lower the tourism expenditure of a sending state, the more likely that a visa application from a national of this state will be refused by the receiving country

Firms trading across borders are likewise highly interested in securing easy arrivals. Their business is disrupted by cumbersome entry formalities making travel more difficult for customers, partners and employees abroad. The more trade there is with a third country the more companies would seem likely to organize and work for an open access policy. From this I derive hypotheses 2:

H₂: The lower the level of trade between a sending state and the receiving country, the more likely that a visa application from a national of a sending state will be refused by the receiving country

In addition to the tourism industry and businesses, migrant communities would also seem likely to lobby for access for friends, contacts and relatives from home (Wong 2006; cf. Bermeo & Leblang 2009). Ethnic minority groups not only lobby on issues such as non-discrimination and better work-place conditions in their new country of residence but also advocate easier entry for nationals from their former home state.¹² Hypothesis 3 is thus:

H₃: The lower the number of migrants from a sending state residing in the receiving country, the more likely that a visa application from a national of a sending state will be refused by the receiving country

Summing up, we would expect from an interest group perspective that travellers would have a harder time obtaining a visa if they are from a country which is not a sender of tourists, a trade partner or without diasporic ties. In the analysis I test these hypotheses to assess the extent to which interest group theory can fully or partly explain European visa practices.

¹² Wong (2006), however, argues out that if gaining rights for those already present should conflict with providing access for newcomers the former is likely to be prioritized by the diaspora.

Security theory

A range of authors argue for the use of security theory to analyse European migration policy (Huysmans 2000; Bigo 2000; Karyotis & Patrikios 2010). The overall theoretical starting-point is the constructivist inspired securitization approach (Wæver 1997; Buzan, Wæver & Wilde 1998).¹³ From this perspective security threats are not objectively given but constructed by political actors. A person, group or event becomes securitized by being articulated and accepted as an existential threat.¹⁴ In this way an issue is lifted above 'normal politics' and escalated to the status of a security problem requiring urgent response. By doing this it becomes possible to enact and pursue policies, such as emergency laws, which would otherwise be unacceptable in liberal states.

Contemporary restrictive migration policy and practice is thus explained as the outcome of a successful securitization of foreigners and mobility as a threat to the survival of Western states and nations (Huysmans 2000; Karyotis 2007).¹⁵ In this way restrictive policies, such as mass surveillance and detention without trial, have been adopted. Similarly, visa restrictions override liberal rights. Denying some or all the ability to travel and visit is, on this view, a significant infringement of universal liberal ideals of equality and freedom.

This security perspective has mainly been used to analyse the case of travel visas by Didier Bigo and Elspeth Guild (2005). Inspired by Zolberg (2003) they argue that visa policy is a form of remote policing. It divides the world into two categories. The first consists of legitimate, trustworthy individuals who are allowed to travel freely to the Union. The second is composed of suspicious and dangerous persons. Their mobility has to be monitored and controlled even before they leave in order to prevent their unwarranted access to Europe. In this way, they suggest, visas are about the construction of common European identities where some groups and persons are crafted as insiders and others cast as outsiders and threats (Bigo & Guild 2005: 237).

The security approach thus argues that threat constructions explain visa practices.¹⁶ But it is only a segment of third country nationals who are articulated as threats. The borders are not closed to

¹³ See Rudolph (2003) for a traditional realist perspective.

¹⁴ Within constructivist security theory this definition of security is debated. Critics argue that in contemporary societies security should be understood in terms of risk management (Munster 2009; Neal 2009).

¹⁵ The reasons behind this development are argued to be manifold with both public discursive battles and bureaucratic administrative cooperation important factors (Huysmans 2000: 758f; see Bigo 2000).

¹⁶ Within constructivist security studies visas are mainly analysed from a strand of research which emphasises the independent importance of bureaucratic practices and technologies (Huysmans 2006; Bigo 2000).

all – only some. The refusal rates for third country nationals should therefore vary with the extent to which they are cast as dangerous and suspicious in European public discourse.

Bigo and Guild (2005) does not present a single and systematic list of who is considered a threat but make reference to a wide range of determining factors. The same is the case in Huysmans analysis (2000: 763f).

Throughout their analysis Bigo and Guild repeatedly refer to poverty (2005: 234, 236, 241-footnote 20, 245, 254, 258). The fear of the outsider is to a wide extent a fear of the poor. Impoverished third country nationals might be perceived to endanger the upkeep of welfare states by increasing demand for social services. From this follows that citizens of affluent countries should have easier access to Europe than nationals of poor states. Hypothesis 4 is thus:

H₄: The lower the income level of a sending state, the more likely that a visa application from a national of this state will be refused by the receiving country

Alongside poverty Bigo and Guild also state that war-ridden, instable and refugee-producing countries in conflict are constructed as risks (2005: 236, 241-footnote 20). Several authors link the fear of asylum seekers with visa policy (Huysmans 2000: 763; Brochmann 1999a: 307f; Bø 1998: 201f; Ucarer 2001: 295f). Grete Brochmann, for example, mention the Bosnian war as a case where “a fear of being the preferred target for war refugees turned into a ‘domino effect’ of visa conditions in the receiving countries throughout Europe” (1999a: 307). This construction of asylum seekers as a threat yields hypothesis 5:

H₅: The higher the number of asylum applications from nationals of a sending state submitted in the receiving country, the more likely that a visa application from a national of a sending state will be refused by the receiving country

Guild (2009: 184) further identifies religion and ethnicity as important. The reference to religiosity would seem to parallel the wider intense and frequently hostile Western debate about Islam (cf. Salehyan 2009). Neither East-Asians nor persons from South America are cast as threats. It is foremost a question of a European fear of Muslims. Hypothesis 6 is thus:

H₆: If the majority of the population in a sending state is Muslim, the more likely that a visa application from a national of this state will be refused by the receiving country

Huysmans (2000: 763f), finally, suggests that former colonies are presented as outsiders as part of wider racist and xenophobic discourses (cf. Bigo & Guild 2005: 254). This argument stands in contrast to the literature suggesting that former colonies are treated preferentially (see for example Hix & Noury 2007: 186; Geddes 2003: 77f). Instead, citizens of prior colonies are constructed negatively and in terms of threats. From this follows hypothesis 7:

H₇: If a sending state is a former colony of the receiving country, the more likely that a visa application from a national of the sending state will be refused by the receiving country

This diverse set of excluded groups finds some support in Neumayer's (2006: 80f) global quantitative analysis of visa requirements. He concludes that GDP per capita, civilizational grouping, level of democracy and armed conflict are important predictors of the world-wide pattern of travel restrictions.

Taken together we would thus expect travellers from third countries, which are poor, Muslim, a source of refugees, or former colonies, to be constructed as security risks and hence denied access. To the extent these four hypotheses find support in the data security theory would seem to provide a convincing explanation of European visa practices.

In sum, the interest group and security theories provide contrasting explanations and predictions of the pattern of European visa restrictiveness. They put emphasis on different factors as the key drivers of policy. In the next sections I present the data and research design I use to test the hypotheses.

The Schengen Visa Database

To assess the competing explanations of European visa policy comprehensive cross-country information is needed. There are few datasets in the area of migration control which could serve this purpose. The main existing option is to use Eric Neumayer's (2006) global dataset covering all bi-lateral visa requirements in force in 2005. This data, however, only consists of a single,

binary measure of whether a visa is required or not. It therefore cannot throw light on the potential variation in migration control practice towards the large group of visa list countries.

The Schengen Visa Database developed for this article seeks to address this empirical limitation in the literature. It contains comprehensive statistics on the visa-issuing by the consulates of all Schengen members. The database in total contains 12.264 observations.

The raw data

The original data source is the Council General Secretariat's annual overviews of the member states' visa practice. These contain information, submitted by the member states, on the amount of visa applications handled by consulates abroad. The raw data thus lists the visas applied for, issued and refused from 2005 to 2009 (Council 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2008, 2009, 2010). Some official material is available for 2002 to 2004, but it is excluded because it is much less standardised and comprehensive compared to the data from 2005 and onward (Council 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005).

Schengen countries covered

The database contains information from the consulates of the Schengen states which participated fully or partially in the visa policy in the covered period. The bulk of the database thus tracks the issuing of regular Schengen visas, but there is also a subset of entries on the visas issued by, for example, Poland before it became full member of Schengen late 2007. These visas were of the same format but only valid for the national territory, and the Schengen guidelines for issuing visas did not therefore need to be followed.

Third countries covered

There is information for 112 sending states in the database.¹⁷ The visa-list countries not included are mainly small island states but also Somalia, Sierra Leone and Liberia.¹⁸ In these states none of the Schengen members had diplomatic representations which issued visas in the period covered. Moreover, though France, Germany and Italy are represented in almost all of the 112 sending

¹⁷ Additionally, consulates in third countries not on the visa-list also figure in the database. There is thus data on, for example, permits issued to visa-list nationals residing in the United States which should wish to visit the EU.

¹⁸ The countries not included are: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Gambia, Grenada, Guyana, Kiribati, Lesotho, Liberia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Northern Marianas, Palestinian Authority, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Swaziland, Tonga, Tuvalu and Western Samoa.

states covered, most of the EU member-states are only represented in about half of the countries. In the remainder some have chosen either not to be represented at all, while others depend on the consular services of another Schengen state. Denmark, for example, is represented by France in certain locations. Consular representation agreements are included in the database and it is thus possible to investigate this aspect as well as control for whether or not a consulate represents another state.

Types of visas covered

The database contains information on transit visas (“A” and “B”), short-stay (“C”), long-stay (“D”), long-stay also valid for short-stay (“D+C”), Chinese tourist group permits (“ADS”) and visas with limited territorial validity (“VTL”). For all types there is annual data on the number issued by a Schengen state consulate in a given sending country. For short-stay visas there is also information on the number of applications. Finally, there is a count of the total number of transit and short-stay (A, B and C) permits issued, refused and applied for.

I use the latter combined information on transit and short-stay visas to calculate the refusal rate by dividing the number of refusals with the number of applications. Transit visas are only a very small proportion of the sum, so this strategy does not skew the measure significantly. Another possibility would be to use the information on short-stay visas applied for and issued. The refusal rate could then be calculated by assuming that the difference between visas applied for and issued equals the applications refused. This, however, is a more risky approach. Visa applications could have gone missing, be delayed or categorised differently rather than being denied. It would therefore seem better to rely on the explicitly stated number of refusals.

The refusal rate variable is at the centre of the database because it measures the restrictiveness of migration control practices. On other visa-types the Schengen states do not cooperate thus making the data insufficiently comparable and there is no information on refusals.

Errors and inconsistencies

In several cases the data from the member states is incomplete and there are apparent minor and major inconsistencies in the data. This is the case when the reported number of issued and refused visas is different from the stated total number of applications. The differences point to a validity problem with the data. The member states might code visa applications differently. For

example, one member state might remove a withdrawn application entirely from the supplied data whereas others might include it as an application without a corresponding denial or acceptance. As mentioned, states might also in certain situations have an incentive to misreport their visa-issuing practice.

For a set of cases the raw data gives a clear indication of the reason behind the inconsistency in the sum totals. Denmark in 2008 and 2009, and France in 2005, counted the total number of visa applications (A, B and C) differently from the other member states. They included visas with limited territorial validity (VTL) in the count. These can be issued by a member state if it deems that the criteria for granting a full Schengen visa are not met. This was also the case for a minor number of other observations. For these I manually corrected the total number of applications. I handled the remaining inconsistencies by including a measure of the error-margin calculated as the difference (in percentage) between the issued and refused visas compared to the total. This variable can be used to exclude observations where the numbers appear erroneous.

Limitations of the visa-data

The main limitation of the dataset is that it does not contain information on the socio-economic characteristics of applicants or on what specific grounds visas were requested. This means that it is not possible to analyse the extent to which the profile of applicants differ between consulates. For example, visa applications might in general be submitted by persons from most social groups except in Saudi Arabia where only highly-skilled persons apply. Saudi Arabian nationals could then appear to enjoy a lower than average refusal rate as such, but this is only because the pool of applicants is much more skewed towards the upper-segments of society compared to other countries.

It would not, however, seem probable that there is such a widespread systematic bias in the applications. Although the visa regime is likely to discourage persons from applying this self-selection bias should be uniform from sending state to sending state. However, as the database does not as such provide a way to control for this it remains a key limit. Further studies could probe this dimension by, for example, compiling new data comparing in detail the profile of the applications to a selected set of consulates.

In the next section I set out how I have used the new database for the purposes of this paper.

Research design

I investigate the hypotheses via a cross-sectional quantitative analysis. I do not investigate trends over time because of the limited time-scale covered by the visa database. The analytical methods are descriptive statistics, overview maps and multivariate linear regression modelling (Agresti & Finlay 1997: 382-437). PASW Statistics 18 (SPSS) was used to compute the statistics.

The unit of analysis is pairs of receiving (Schengen) and sending (third country) states.¹⁹ The Schengen cooperation was enlarged in 2007 with most of the new Central and Eastern European member states. In 2008, additionally, Switzerland joined the cooperation. I include these states despite the briefer period they have participated in the common visa policy. I thus analyse all the current 25 members of Schengen as receiving countries.

I include a sending state in the dataset if it, for the analysed time-period, figured in one or more years on the visa-list. Bolivia, for example, was not included on the list before 2007 but is included in the dataset. Likewise, Mauritius is included even though the visa requirement was lifted in 2007. In the analysed time-period Serbia and Montenegro split into two separate states and Kosovo seceded from Serbia. I include these states with a separate entry for each. Thus, I have an entry for “Serbia and Montenegro”, “Serbia”, “Montenegro” and “Kosovo”.²⁰ In total the number of country-dyadic observations in the analysis is 979.²¹

In general, the dependent and independent variables are measured as a mean value based on data from the 5-year period from 2005 to 2009. For methodological reasons the variables are transformed using a 10-base log. This is necessary because they are skewed to the right, and a log

¹⁹ The aggregation of the data to state-level means a loss of within-country regional variation. In some countries, India for example, the visa-issuing practice can vary considerable depending on precisely where in the country the consulate is located. In order to study this variation it would be necessary to account for differences in, for example, income-level within countries by using variables measured at the regional level.

²⁰ The European Union has entered into visa facilitated agreements with most neighbouring countries. These agreements mainly ease the documentary requirements and reduce the visa fee. In 2007 an agreement entered into force with Russia. In 2008 similar agreements came into force in the case of Ukraine, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia. Denmark, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland are not bound by these but have in some cases made parallel agreements. I treat these cases as similar to the other countries on the visa list.

²¹ Please note that if all the Schengen members had consular visa-issuing representations in all sending states covered in the dataset the number of cases would be 2.800 (112 sending times 25 receiving countries). As the data used here follows the structure of representation in the EU's visa regime major sending countries are given more weight in the analysis. The model should thus provide a good estimate of the logic of the regime, although this also entails that countries where the member states are not widely represented might be downplayed somewhat in the estimation.

transformation is thus a good option for ‘pulling in’ outliers and ensuring that the variable complies with the requirement of a normal distribution (Agresti & Finlay 1997: 561). This recoding, however, also makes theoretical sense. It accounts for the very likely difference in relative effects. If, for example, a poor country becomes 10% more affluent this is likely to make a very substantial difference on living conditions. A rich country increasing its wealth by a similar factor is unlikely to experience the same degree of change.

Dependent variable

The dependent variable is short-stay visa refusal rates. This is calculated using the visa database as the sum for all years of all visa refusals divided by the total number of applications. The number of applications and refusals for the individual consulates in a sending state is thus aggregated for the entire time period and then used to calculate the refusal rate. The number of applications to each consulate can differ widely. I include all cases in the analysis and do not weigh them.

The member states’ representation abroad is in general relatively stable. However, in the analysed time-period there were changes in the list of embassies which handled visas. Thus, in most cases the sum total visa statistics for a country are based on a data-series for the same consulates for the entire time-period. But in some situations the sum is based on a more limited time-period and/or includes visas granted at different consulates. In several countries the consulate of one EU-state might also issue visas on behalf of other Schengen members. In this analysis I treat all consulates as solely representing their own member state.

I assume that applications made in one state are made of nationals of the third country in question. This need not necessarily be the case. The application could be lodged by persons from another state temporarily or permanently residing abroad. However, the assumption is reasonable because the average global number of migrants is estimated to only 214 million (3%) out of the world’s total population of 6.9 billion (United Nations 2009; cf. Thielemann & Sasse 2005: 656f).

Finally, as described in the previous section the raw data contains a set of cases where the sum of visas issued, refused and applied for does not add up. I have excluded the observations where the difference between the sum of applications and the sum issued and refused is above 5%. This entails that the descriptive statistics are likely to present a slight underestimation of the total amount of visas applications.

Independent variables

Tourism: I measure tourism using World Bank statistics on the total tourism expenditure of a country (World Bank 2010). The data is collected as part of the “World Development Indicators” series. This variable captures how many resources the citizens of a country use abroad on accommodation, transport, leisure etc. This would seem potentially somewhat difficult to measure, but the variable should at least get the relative ranking of the countries right. It should thus give a fairly robust indication of how attractive a state is relative to others as a potential source of income for the domestic tourism industry.

Bilateral trade: I code the amount of trade between the Schengen states and third countries using Eurostat statistics (Eurostat 2010b). The data was downloaded per year and country for all products and services and covers both import and export. These measures are used in international trade negotiations. This warrants for their accuracy, though they might also therefore be partially construed to reflect the trading interest of the EU.

The number of citizens of a visa-list country residing in a member state: I measure this variable using information from Eurostat on the member states’ population grouped by citizenship (Eurostat 2010c). I collected data on the analysed period but in some cases had to rely on earlier information because of a lack of current yearly data. A key potential weakness of this measure is that it only captures persons who hold citizenship in a visa-list country. It does not include persons who have acquired a new citizenship, nor does it include irregular migration.

Income: I quantify income using annual World Bank statistics on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita adjusted for differences in purchasing power (PPP) measured in constant 2005 international dollars (World Bank 2010). This measure should thus allow for cross-country comparison because differences in country size (per capita), exchange rates (constant international dollars) and purchasing power (PPP) has been accounted for. The data was downloaded from the World Bank’s statistical database (the “World Development Indicators” series).

The number of asylum applications: I measured the size of asylum flows using UNHCR statistics on the number and nationality of first instance asylum applications in the Schengen member

states (UNHCR 2010). Because of the considerable controversy surrounding the question of refugees and asylum these data might contain several problems caused by, for example, differences in reporting by the states. It is, however, the best global source available. In the analysis I use the absolute amount of applicants and thus assume that security fears are likely to be triggered even if the number of persons is small relative to the size of the country. This would seem reasonable given the highly politicised character of the contemporary asylum debate in Europe.²²

Muslim and non-Muslim countries: To what extent a country is Muslim is coded using data from the CIA's World Factbook and the US Department of State's 2009 report on International Religious Freedom (CIA 2010; USDS 2010). The latter was used to cross-check and fill-in the data from the factbook. In general, the variable is thus measured using official census data. For several countries the reliability of census data is questionable, particularly when it comes to sensitive issues such as religion. There are also likely to be cross-national variation in the ways religious beliefs are surveyed. I first coded the percentage of the country's total population which is Muslim (0-100). I subsequently recoded this into a dichotomous variable (51-100 Muslim majority, 0-50 not Muslim majority). There is a small group of countries (Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Kazakhstan and Bosnia and Herzegovina) slightly below the cut-off mark. Of these particularly Nigeria and Bosnia and Herzegovina are interesting since they are often associated with Muslims in European public debate. To ensure consistency of the analysis these are, however, not coded as Muslim. Chad, by contrast, is the only country slightly above the cut-off mark.

Colonial ties: I coded whether or not a given country on the visa list was a colony of one or more of the different member states using information from Oxford's Dictionary of World History and its Dictionary of Contemporary World History (Oxford 2010a, 2010b). I initially coded the duration in years of the colonial period and subsequently recoded this variable into a binary measure (colony of member state yes/no).

²² In the context of burden-sharing arrangements the number of asylum applicants is, in contrast, most often viewed relative to population size or GDP as this should give a more adequate picture of the extent to which some receiving countries take on a larger or smaller responsibility (Thielemann 2005: 811).

The following two sections contain the main results of the empirical analysis. The first is a descriptive overview of the data. The second presents the explanatory model.

EU visas applied for, issued and refused: an overview of the data

Table 1 below gives an overview of the annual number of visa applications received by the member states in the period from 2005 to 2009:

Table 1
Visa applications grouped by receiving country

Country	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Annual average	Average of total (%)	Per 1000 inhabitants
Europe	6.422.552	7.603.114	7.861.623	10.070.284	9.732.417	10.084.529	100%	24
Austria	341.093	328.151	M	M	291.006	320.083	3%	39
Belgium	138.433	168.530	198.651	195.640	181.584	176.568	2%	17
Czech Republic	-	-	-	548.720	448.800	498.760	5%	48
Denmark	63.941	64.083	75.033	76.396	75.166	70.924	1%	13
Estonia	-	-	-	99.198	94.965	97.082	1%	72
Finland	421.789	569.283	707.708	800.986	790.563	658.066	7%	125
France	1.971.648	1.953.489	1.934.723	1.763.628	1.493.351	1.823.368	18%	29
Germany	1.749.239	1.825.289	1.843.719	1.837.744	1.572.777	1.765.754	18%	21
Greece	M	519.208	560.275	660.299	612.658	588.110	6%	53
Hungary	-	-	-	241.752	268.830	255.291	3%	25
Iceland	-	-	366	460	448	425	0%	1
Italy	748.243	899.213	1.106.161	1.192.336	1.053.152	999.821	10%	17
Latvia	-	-	-	137.150	121.938	129.544	1%	57
Lithuania	-	-	-	245.077	238.580	241.829	2%	71
Luxembourg	2.751	3.618	4.919	4.734	4.684	4.141	0%	9
Malta	-	-	-	31.181	30.529	30.855	0%	76
Netherlands	223.282	354.388	379.589	326.358	300.387	316.801	3%	19
Norway	M	M	58.038	112.152	96.949	89.046	1%	19
Poland	-	-	-	508.814	585.839	547.327	5%	14
Portugal	55.914	88.068	58.424	103.938	99.736	81.216	1%	8
Slovakia	-	-	-	77.227	52.473	64.850	1%	12
Slovenia	-	-	-	101.970	100.712	101.341	1%	50
Spain	541.109	653.159	752.855	815.247	708.426	694.159	7%	16
Sweden	165.110	176.635	181.162	189.277	152.663	172.969	2%	19
Switzerland	-	-	-	-	356.201	356.201	4%	47

NOTES: Visa applications 2005-2009 per receiving country. "M" means that data are missing for this year.

SOURCE: Own calculations using the Schengen Visa Database and Eurostat statistics on population size.

Table 1 show that France, Germany and Italy receive by far the most applications. Their combined share of the total is approximately 46%. Viewed relative to population size, however, the picture is substantially different. Finland tops the list with an average of 125 applications per 1.000 inhabitants. This is mainly due to a very large number of requests from Russia.

The Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia and Switzerland are all substantially above the average (48 – 76). Considerably below average we find Iceland, Luxembourg and Portugal which only receive between 1 and 9 applications per 1.000 inhabitants.

In the analysed time-period the total number of visa applications changed significantly. There was a substantial increase in 2008 because of the enlargement of the Schengen area with most of the new member states. From 2008 to 2009 the number of applications dropped markedly in all member states but Poland. If Switzerland had not joined the Schengen area in 2009 the total number of visa applications would have been about 700.000 (7%) lower than the year before. This considerable shift might be a result of the financial crisis causing a drop in global tourism and trade.

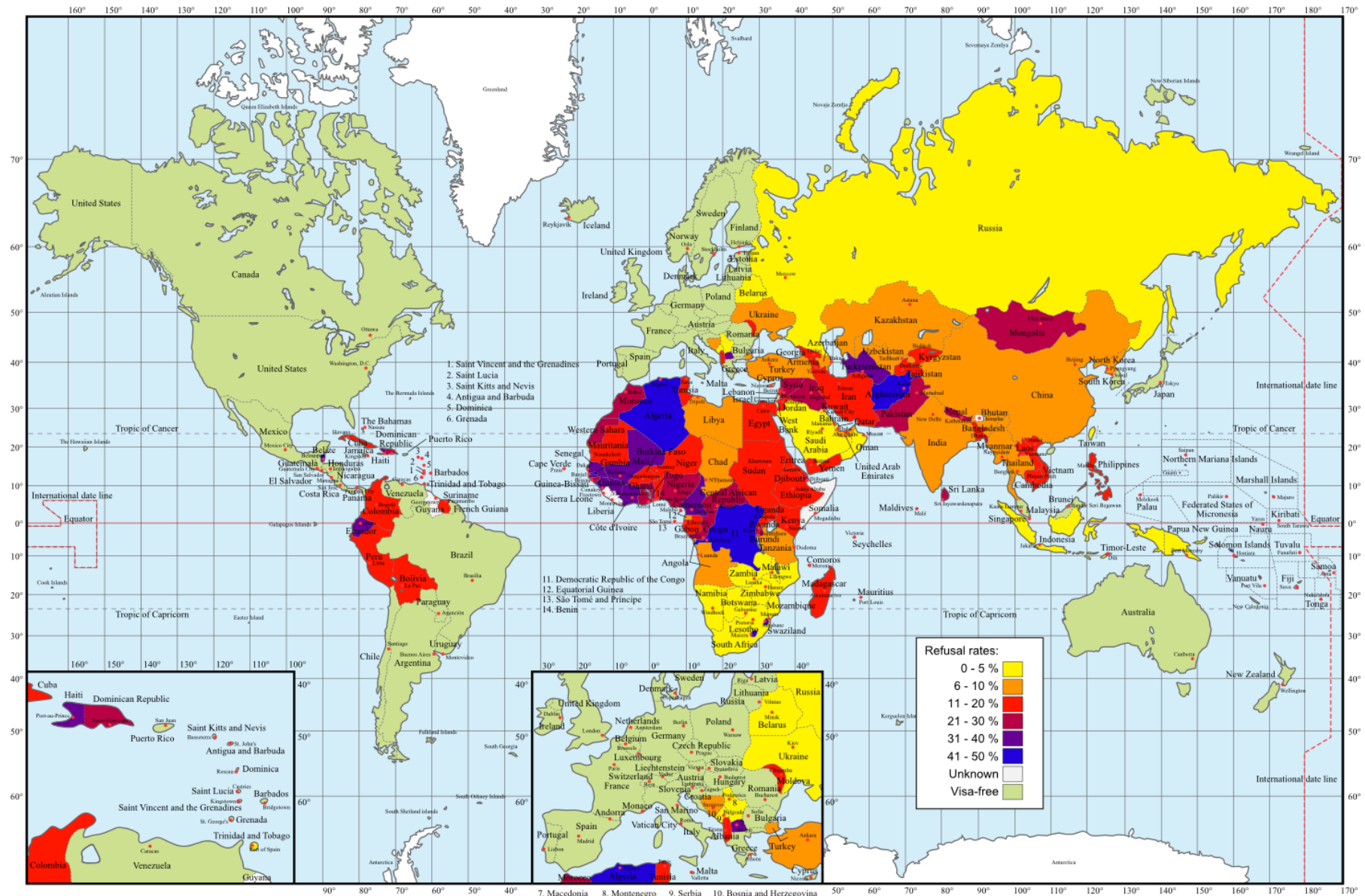
Table 2 and map 2 on the next pages gives an overview of the variation in the number of visa applications and refusal rates for the sending countries included in the dataset.

Table 2
Visa applications and refusal rates grouped by sending country

2005-2009			2005-2009 (continued...)			2005-2009 (continued...)			2005-2009 (continued...)		
Country	Applications	Refusal rate	Country	Applications	Refusal rate	Country	Applications	Refusal rate	Country	Applications	Refusal rate
Afghanistan	21.123	43,6%	Djibouti	10.566	21,5%	Lebanon	278.671	9,9%	Senegal	206.247	31,2%
Albania	447.159	19,3%	Dominican Republic	134.738	28,8%	Libya	156.359	9,4%	Serbia	1.395.749	6,3%
Algeria	1.183.283	40,9%	Ecuador	136.332	29,8%	Madagascar	78.474	20,3%	Serbia and Monten.	203.043	12,2%
Angola	158.912	6,0%	Egypt	434.449	13,3%	Malawi	6.525	3,2%	Seychelles	4.083	0,2%
Armenia	125.872	14,4%	Equatorial Guinea	36.326	6,1%	Mali	93.592	30,7%	South Africa	802.370	1,4%
Azerbaijan	113.014	8,9%	Eritrea	10.871	13,1%	Mauritania	37.066	15,9%	Sri Lanka	76.490	26,0%
Bahrain	62.118	1,8%	Ethiopia	59.399	14,6%	Mauritius	27.163	10,6%	Sudan	37.814	17,9%
Bangladesh	48.246	18,4%	Fiji	6.638	2,8%	Moldova	92.409	15,1%	Suriname	112.715	12,1%
Belarus	1.160.709	3,2%	Macedonia (FYROM)	153.508	35,8%	Mongolia	27.355	19,7%	Syria	153.198	23,0%
Benin	53.357	18,8%	Gabon	50.912	12,7%	Montenegro	71.629	2,4%	Taiwan	964.935	0,2%
Bhutan	2	0,0%	Georgia	238.799	15,4%	Morocco	1.467.995	20,6%	Tajikistan	9.615	10,5%
Bolivia	20.966	17,0%	Ghana	130.420	26,9%	Mozambique	32.828	3,5%	Tanzania	39.309	9,4%
Bosnia and Herzegov.	486.210	9,5%	Guinea	58.902	34,9%	Myanmar	10.647	6,7%	Thailand	661.836	6,9%
Botswana	9.852	5,1%	Guinea-Bissau	5.147	23,2%	Namibia	24.669	2,2%	Timor-Leste	223	19,3%
Burkina Faso	48.050	14,2%	Haiti	30.591	32,0%	Nepal	26.139	23,7%	Togo	30.971	24,2%
Burundi	14.036	22,8%	India	1.643.574	7,0%	Niger	21.427	19,8%	Trinidad and Tobago	30.873	1,3%
Cambodia	19.855	15,5%	Indonesia	317.205	3,9%	Nigeria	362.091	22,9%	Tunisia	521.750	14,2%
Cameroon	136.426	33,7%	Iran	583.451	13,4%	Oman	54.183	3,6%	Turkey	2.343.865	8,8%
Cape Verde	64.896	16,5%	Iraq	19.711	28,8%	Pakistan	196.948	28,8%	Turkmenistan	6.080	34,1%
Central African Rep.	10.305	27,9%	Jamaica	22.500	3,8%	Papua New Guinea	2.062	1,4%	Uganda	32.798	12,7%
Chad	15.638	10,0%	Jordan	117.986	13,7%	Peru	176.929	15,2%	Ukraine	2.738.663	6,4%
China	2.900.568	7,3%	Kazakhstan	385.084	7,3%	Philippines	306.748	13,5%	United Arab Emirates	516.898	6,0%
Colombia	318.558	16,4%	Kenya	89.845	10,9%	Qatar	136.740	3,8%	Uzbekistan	59.709	9,8%
Comoros	23.760	32,2%	Korea (North)	1.255	5,6%	Russia	13.374.593	2,2%	Vanuatu	10.569	7,7%
Congo	52.448	30,4%	Kosovo	40.834	36,4%	Rwanda	18.998	27,8%	Vietnam	163.307	9,8%
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	84.213	41,3%	Kuwait	333.492	2,6%	Saint Lucia	9.842	6,3%	Yemen	31.484	13,8%
Côte d'Ivoire	100.383	33,5%	Kyrgyzstan	40.202	16,8%	Sao Tome and Prin.	7.885	4,5%	Zambia	13.868	4,6%
Cuba	105.783	15,2%	Laos	6.927	12,2%	Saudi Arabia	521.180	3,9%	Zimbabwe	14.975	2,8%

NOTES: Visa applications and refusal rates 2005-2009 per sending country. Note that the Schengen area was enlarged in 2007 and 2008. Additionally, a few third countries were not on the visa-list in the entire time-period.

SOURCE: Own calculations using the Schengen Visa Database.



Map 2: World map illustrating the variation in average European visa refusal rates average 2005 – 2009 (own rendering).

Map 2 and table 2 show considerable differences in both the number of applications and refusal rates per sending country. EU's eastern neighbours, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, for example, enjoy low refusal rates. But applicants from southern neighbour states such as Tunisia, Morocco and Syria are often denied access. Algeria, Congo and Afghanistan stand out with the highest refusal rates. The map further indicates that generally the variation is substantial both within and between regions.

In sum, a first look at the visa refusal rates indicates that there is considerable variation in the restrictiveness of the visa regime. This underlines the importance of investigating not only what countries are on the visa-list but also how the regime is implemented in practice. In the next section I examine what factors might account for the similarities and differences in visa practices.

Explaining variation in visa refusal rates

In this section I attempt to explain the variation in refusal rates. The first part of the analysis tests the two rival theoretical explanations. The second part discusses the robustness of the results.

Testing the theories

Table 3 below presents the main results of the multivariate linear regression model. I have taken into account possible clustering tendencies in the data by including each receiving state as a control variable (e.g. Belgium yes/no). This helps to ensure that the assumption of independent observations can be upheld ("homoscedasticity"). If this was not possible the results would be very uncertain (Agresti & Finlay 1997: 534).

Table 3
Linear regression model

	Unstandardized		Standardized	95% Confidence			95% Confidence	
	Coefficients		Coefficients	Interval for B			Interval for inverse B	
	Sig	Std.		Lower	Upper	Inverse	Lower	Upper
	B .	Error	Beta	Bound	Bound	of B	Bound	Bound
(Constant)	1,800 **	,251		1,31	2,293	63,04	20,22	196,53
Public policy perspective								
Tourism expenditure (log)	,003	,029	,004	-,054	,060	1,00	0,99	1,01
Bilateral trade (log)	-,181 **	,029	-,354	-,237	-,124	0,98	0,98	0,99
Migrant population (log)	,096 **	,020	,228	,056	,135	1,01	1,01	1,01
Security perspective								
GDP/capita PPP (log)	-,288 **	,041	-,272	-,369	-,206	0,97	0,97	0,98
Asylum applications (log)	,089 **	,019	,192	,051	,127	1,01	1,00	1,01
Muslim majority country	,217 **	,028	,250	,162	,271	1,65	1,45	1,87
Former colony	-,050	,059	-,031	-,167	,066	0,89	0,68	1,16
Country control variables								
Belgium	,448 **	,080	,256	,291	,604	2,80	1,95	4,02
Czech Republic	,272 **	,082	,145	,111	,432	1,87	1,29	2,71
Denmark	,093	,080	,053	-,064	,251	1,24	0,86	1,78
Estonia	,197	,164	,040	-,125	,520	1,57	0,75	3,31
Finland	,344 **	,093	,146	,161	,526	2,21	1,45	3,36
France	,286 **	,077	,207	,136	,437	1,93	1,37	2,73
Germany	,257 **	,076	,184	,107	,407	1,81	1,28	2,55
Greece	,154	,084	,077	-,012	,319	1,42	0,97	2,09
Hungary	,192 *	,091	,083	,013	,371	1,55	1,03	2,35
Italy	,029	,078	,019	-,124	,182	1,07	0,75	1,52
Latvia	,345 **	,135	,087	,079	,610	2,21	1,20	4,07
Lithuania	,228 *	,116	,070	,001	,455	1,69	1,00	2,85
Luxembourg	-,006	,346	-,001	-,685	,673	0,99	0,21	4,71
Malta	,250	,132	,067	-,009	,510	1,78	0,98	3,23
Netherlands	,415 **	,077	,266	,264	,566	2,60	1,84	3,68
Poland	,328 **	,084	,168	,163	,493	2,13	1,46	3,11
Portugal	,206 *	,097	,084	,015	,397	1,61	1,03	2,50
Slovakia	,101	,107	,035	-,109	,310	1,26	0,78	2,04
Slovenia	,240 *	,118	,071	,008	,473	1,74	1,02	2,97
Spain	,241 **	,081	,139	,081	,401	1,74	1,20	2,52
Sweden	,158	,084	,080	-,006	,322	1,44	0,99	2,10

NOTES: Dependent Variable: Refusal rate + 1 (logged), * statistically significant at 0.05% level, ** statistically significant at 0.01% level, Austria reference country, $r^2 = 39\%$, $N=683$. Because the refusal rate is logged the beta coefficients cannot be interpreted directly. The columns with the inversed B values, for the logged explanatory variables, is calculated as the expected ratio-effect of a 10% increase in affluence. For the other variables the columns with the inversed B values and their confidence intervals express the ratio difference of the variable. See also main text. Switzerland, Norway and Iceland excluded due to lack of data on independent variables.

Table 3 shows that the majority of the explanatory variables have a statistically significant effect on refusal rates. The model overall explains 39% of the variance in the data.

Beginning with the interest group account we see that the effect of tourism expenditure is not significant (not supporting H_1). Tourism thus does not seem to affect visa refusal rates when controlling for other factors. Bilateral trade has a significant and considerable negative impact on refusal rate (supporting H_2). The more a member state trades with a third country the lower the refusal rate tends to be. For each 10% increase in trade the refusal rate is reduced with a factor 0.98 (2%). The effect reduces as trade picks up. Initially shifts away from lower levels of trade have a much more considerable impact than increases from a high to an even higher amount of trade. The size of the diaspora from a third country is significant but not in the direction expected by interest group theory (not supporting H_3). The larger the diaspora in a member state the higher the refusal rate. Thus, minority communities would not seem able to lobby for a lower refusal rate for visitors from their former home state. This result is puzzling from the interest group perspective. It suggests that the diaspora variable to a wider extent works as a part of a security explanation. A large diaspora could make it easier for visitors with the same nationality to overstay their visa thus triggering a fear of irregular migration.

Moving on to the security explanation, we find that GDP per capita has a statistically significant and important negative impact on refusal rate. The richer the third country the lower the refusal rate (supporting H_4). The effect is slightly larger than for bilateral trade with a 10% increase in GDP resulting in a factor 0.97 (3%) reduction of refusal rates. Muslim majority countries have a refusal rate substantially above average (supporting H_5). The model estimates, for example, that if a non-Muslim country is at 8% a similar state with a Muslim majority is predicted to have a refusal rate of 14% ($1.7 \cdot 8$). The amount of asylum application from a third country also has a statistically significant effect (supporting H_6). Thus, as the flow of refugees increase visa refusal rates rise. Finally, whether or not a third country is a former colony does not have a statistically significant effect (not supporting H_7). However, as the United Kingdom is not included in the analysis the number of dyadic pairs of receiving and sending states with a colonial tie is relatively low. It is also possible that there are countervailing dynamics at play with some member states treating their former colonies preferentially and others treating them as a threat.

A set of the independent variables are correlated with each other. This indicates a potential problem of multicollinearity in the data. Migration population is correlated with the number of asylum seekers (Pearson correlation 0.55, significant at the 0.01 level) and bilateral trade (0.46, 0.01 level). Tourism expenditure is correlated with bilateral trade (0.53, 0.01 level). This cautions

against a highly certain interpretation of the effects of these variables as it is somewhat difficult to disentangle their effects.

To sum up, the model suggests that European visa practices are influenced in a liberal direction by trade interests lobbying for easy access. This, however, appears to be counterbalanced by fear of asylum claims and immigration from poor, Muslim countries exercising a strong restrictive pull. Both the interest group and the security theory have explanatory purchase, but securitization of migration seems to be a more powerful dynamic than business interests.

Robustness checks

I have used a set of alternative models to check the stability of the results. The robustness models mainly address three challenges in the dataset. Firstly, the option of issuing a visa with limited territorial validity introduces a potential bias in the data. A member state might appear highly restrictive when only Schengen visas are taken into account. Yet a closer look could reveal a more liberal practice with VTL-visas issued instead of Schengen permits. To address this issue I check the results against a modified dependent variable where VTL-visas are added to the sum of issued and applied visas.²³

Secondly, inconsistencies between the reported visas applied for, issued and refused might be systematic. The main model could thereby consistently bias the estimate for some countries and member states. For this reason I also run the models with all cases including those with a high error margin. Additionally, I use a rival dependent variable calculated as the number of refused visas per 1000 issued visas. Because this measure is not based on the reported total number of applications it might reveal a part of the potential bias.

Thirdly, the refusal rate might be uncertain and skewed if the total number of applications lodged in a specific country is low. The restrictiveness could in this case be highly influenced by the refusal of relatively few visas without these decisions being representative of a wider trend. A low number of applications might also entail, as discussed, that only specific groups of persons has

²³ Interestingly, although the member states issue a considerable amount of VTL visas it only makes a significant difference (+/-5%) in terms of refusal rates in 23 cases. France, for example, on average refuses 75% of all applications from Iraq for a Schengen visa. When VTL visas are taken into account the refusal rate drops to 31%. Yet because of the limited number of such cases whether or not VTL visas are included in the analysis does not make a difference at the macro-level. However, when looking at controversial individual cases it can be a major factor.

applied, for example official delegations, raising concerns about the comparability of the results with other countries. To address this issue I have run separate models excluding cases with, respectively, below 100 and below 1000 applications.

These robustness checks did not reveal uncertainty about the significance and size of the effect of the variables. The results of the main model thus appear stable.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored similarities and differences in European visa-issuing practices. The analysis was based on a new migration control database covering the short-term visas applied for, issued and refused in the period from 2005 to 2009. Using this data I showed that there is considerable variation in the refusal rates between third countries.

I highlighted that the differences in refusal rate can be explained by both interest group and security theory. Assessing the relative explanatory purchase of these two approaches I argued that although business lobbying is evidenced, the data primarily support a security-centred explanation of European migration control practices. Thus, while there is a business-driven liberalizing logic at play, it is less powerful than the restrictive dynamic of migration fear.

The study thus supports the predominant strand in the existing literature which emphasises the securitization of migration in Europe. While critics of this approach are right to point out countervailing tendencies, fear of migration remains the key policy driver. The new cross-country dataset constructed for this article made possible a robust comparative test of the competing arguments in the literature which had so far been largely absent.

Additional analysis could probe the precise causal mechanisms at work, and explore further the wider applicability of the conclusions. It could be interesting, for example, to examine through qualitative studies if there is in fact no preferential or discriminatory treatment of former colonies. The seeming lack of a lobbying influence on the part of migrant communities is also worth investigating further. Existing research shows a strong impact especially in a US context, and a comparative perspective might help explain why similar dynamics do not appear to be present in European visa policy.

The Schengen visa database also opens up other avenues of research. The visa information could be used to analyse and assess differences in the implementation practice of the member states. It would also be possible to probe the effect of Schengen membership on national practices by analysing how the visa-issuing of the new EU states altered when they became full members of Schengen. Finally, the dataset could be expanded to non-Schengen countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States to provide a wider comparative perspective on migration control in contemporary Europe.

Annex 1: Descriptive statistics

Table 1
Main descriptive statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Deviation
Visa applications (A, B, C)	979	42.584,3	5.766,0	1,0	3.005.152,0	167.494,0
Visa issued (A, B, C)	979	38.808,2	4.629,0	0,0	2.970.499,0	159.600,0
Visa issued (VTL)	979	1.260,4	25,0	0,0	352.151,0	12.052,5
Visa refused (A, B, C)	979	3.674,7	563,0	0,0	428.234,0	16.620,2
Visa refusal rate (log)	979	1,0	1,1	0,0	2,0	0,4
Asylum applications (log)	898	1,3	1,2	0,0	3,8	0,9
Bilateral trade (log)	877	2,3	2,3	0,0	4,9	0,9
GDP/capita PPP (log)	922	3,6	3,7	2,3	4,8	0,5
Migrant population (log)	956	2,9	2,9	0,0	6,3	1,1
Tourism expenditure (log)	857	8,9	8,8	6,2	10,4	0,7
Muslim majority	979	0,4	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,5
Former colony	979	0,1	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,2

SOURCE: The Schengen Visa Database and international datasets. See the description of the dataset and research design in the main text.

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