The Political Determinants of Migration Control: A Quantitative Analysis

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Although most analysts agree that the fundamental causes of international migration are overwhelmingly economic and demographic—pushes, pulls, and social networks—the migration policies of host states are filters through which these factors operate. At a minimum, lower migration quotas, more emphasis on enforcement, and barriers to migrant integration reduce the expected benefits of migration and raise the expected costs, which deters some migrants and causes others to choose alternate destinations. Thus, despite dramatically falling transportation costs and rising international inequality, post-World War II migration flows have increased far more slowly than trade and financial flows; and most of the world's poor still choose not to migrate.

Not only do migration-control policies "matter," but they vary widely and often in unexpected ways. Although "settler states," like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, admit more migrants than Old World countries, the differences are smaller than one might expect.[1] Other migration statistics belie national images and conventional wisdom, with "non-immigrant" Germany and "effectively restrictionist" England ranking first and third, respectively, in terms of relative migrant admissions (defined as the natural log of admissions divided by the natural log of host-state population). It is perhaps also surprising that the progressive Scandinavian democracies (Finland, Norway, Sweden) admit relatively fewer migrants than do their neighbors (France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands).

In accounting for variations in migration policy, political scientists have developed hypotheses focused on three areas: interest groups, political institutions, and international factors. The most common of these hypotheses is based on the

[1] Between 1962 and 1998, settler states admitted an annual average of 6.8 migrants per 1000 residents, compared to 5.0 per 1000 residents in non-settler states; but by 1998, the figures had converged to 5.1 for the former and 4.7 for the latter.

role of interest groups. Because immigration is characterized by cross-cutting cleavages, migration policy is rarely a clearly partisan issue. Instead, it is argued, client politics tends to influence immigration policy, with owners of land and capital enjoying privileged-group status and seeking the concentrated benefits of lower wages that a more open policy would bring (Freeman, 1995; Joppke 1998). Immigrants also support a more open policy but tend to be less well organized (Hanson *et al.,* 2001). This leaves unions and nationalists as the only significant groups opposing labor inflows. The former are often divided between the desire to block migration and the desire to organize new constituents (Haus, 1995; Watts, 2000), and the latter have generally been only a latent political force (Hainsworth, 2000). Interest-group theories thus attribute the "gap" observed between popular demands for migration control and generous admissions policies to the existence of well-organized supporters and a latent or divided opposition (Cornelius, Martin, and Hollifield, 1995).

A second set of arguments focuses on political institutions. Jeannette Money (1999) argues that demands for migration-policy changes are transmitted from gateway communities to national policy-makers only as a result of closely contested elections. Keith Fitzgerald (1996) emphasizes the path-dependent nature of migration-enforcement institutions. More generally, several analysts emphasize the vulnerability of courts and other liberal institutions to exploitation by pro-immigration actors, with the expectation that more "efficient" institutional systems (that is, those with fewer access points) are more capable of enforcing effective migration controls (Hollifield, 1992; Joppke, 1998; Jacobson, 1996).

Finally, at least two migration-policy arguments exist that are international in nature. Arguing from a variety of disciplinary approaches, Wayne Cornelius, Philip Martin, and James Hollifield (1995), Douglas Massey *et al.* (1998), and Saskia Sassen (1998) emphasize economic integration as both a migration push factor and a limitation on the willingness or ability of host states to control inflows. This "economic globalization" argument is often complemented by a "liberal globalization" argument, which holds that states' integration within the international system acts as a normative or an institutional constraint on their ability to restrict inflows (Jacobson, 1996; Soysal, 1994).

Each of these arguments has received extensive attention in recent years; however, these competing hypotheses about immigration policy have rarely been tested comparatively or using quantitative analysis (with the exceptions of Money, 1999, and O'Rourke and Williamson, 1999). Thus, this research note proposes a research design to fill this gap, and it presents initial results of my analysis of the three hypotheses outlined above.

Research Design

I propose to test these competing models of immigration policy-making using a time-series, cross-sectional analysis of immigration to 15 OECD states from 1962 through 1998.[2] The inclusion of host states ranging from low-flow cases, like Japan and Finland, to high-flow cases, like the United States and Germany, and of periods before, during, and after the economic shocks of the 1970s insures a wide variation in immigration outcomes. This research design must resolve at least four sets of methodological issues.

First, analysis of immigration policy confronts a fundamental problem in that no reliable comparative *policy* data exist: Each country has unique visa categories, enforcement mechanisms, integration rules, and citizenship procedures, among other policy dimensions.[3] In the United States, for example, at least 59 types of non-immigrant visas and 100 types of permanent visas exist. Illicit undocumented flows further compound measurement problems.

Thus, my analysis follows Money's example by focusing on total legal immigration.[4] Legal immigration has the methodological advantage of being the one figure for which cross-national time-series data are readily available and comparable: All states define legal permanent immigrants in similar ways, and legal immigrants are easy to count. "Front-door" migration is also attractive theoretically because it is the largest category of inflows to developed states, and legal permanent migrants promote chain migration. Both proponents and opponents of migration therefore recognize these flows as having high stakes, making this category a critical test of interest-group hypotheses in particular.

A second set of methodological issues relates to the analysis of time-series, cross-sectional data, which is likely to be characterized by contemporaneous and panel-specific correlation of errors and complex dynamic effects. I minimize the former problem by including country-specific dummy variables (fixed effects) and time-period variables (a dummy coded 1 during the relatively high flow period prior to 1974, and a second dummy coded

[2] My sample includes Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. I thank Jeannette Money for making her (1999) immigration data available. I have supplemented her sample by adding an additional country (Switzerland), as well as nine additional years (1990-1998).

[3] Kevin O'Rourke and Jeffrey Williamson (1999) seek to resolve this issue by creating an index of policy shifts from 1870 to 1920, but no such data exist for the current period.

[4] Because both migration and population data are highly skewed in my sample, I transform these data by analyzing a ratio of immigration (logged) to host-state population (logged). My 555 possible country-years included 54 missing observations. I employed multiple imputation software to fill in these observations rather than risk model inefficiency and bias associated with list-wise deletion (King et al. 2001). Reported results employed Clarify software and Monte Carlo simulations to account for the uncertainty associated with these imputations. Tests indicate that these methodological choices did not substantially affect results.

1 for the 1974-1986 period of reduced migration flows). I also control for heteroscedasticity by employing panel-corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz, 1995).

I address time-series dynamics of my data, some of which are nonstationary, by employing an "error correction" model that regresses the first difference of the dependent variable on the lagged dependent variable as well as on lags and first differences of the independent variables (Davidson *et al.,* 1978). Although the resulting model has minor collinearity problems, this approach effectively models short-term and long-term dynamic effects and controls serial correlation of errors, as confirmed by reported Lagrange multiplier statistics (see tables below).

Fourth, in order to focus on the political determinants of migration control, I control for underlying economic and demographic motivations. Country fixed effects and lagged migration data capture effects of previous migration, and as economic controls, I include receiving-state data on unemployment and GNP. Due to data limitations, I do not control for emigration pushes. This omission should not be problematic, however, because the economic and demographic pushes in the developing world are so extreme in the period under consideration that it is reasonable to assume, as Money does, that "variation in flows is determined almost exclusively by government policy in the host state rather than by the supply of migrants" (1999, 23).

Finally, I developed 10 operational measures for the hypotheses identified above, and I predicted their relationships to immigration inflows (see Table 1). The following section discusses these variables and the preliminary results of my analysis.

Table 1. Independent Variables and Predicted Relationships.

Hypothesis	*Variable*	*Definition*	*Source*	*Prediction*
Interest groups	Union density	Percent of workers with union representation	Golden *et al.,* 1997; ILO	-
	Migrant employers	Manufacturing as share of total exports	World Bank, 2001	+
	Left-right partisanship	0: Left government 1: Center government 2: Right government	Beck *et al.,* 2001	+
	Ethnic homogeneity	Effective number of ethnic groups	US CIA, 2002	-
	Settler state	Coded 1 for Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United States		+
Institutions	Partisan unity	-1 * Rae index of fractionalization	Banks, 2002	-
	Institutional unity	-1 * Federal-Unitary Index	Lijphart, 1999	-
	Partisan-institutional unity	Polconv variable (probability of policy change based on veto player analysis)	Henisz, 2002	-
International	Trade	Trade as proportion of GNP	World Bank, 2001	+
	Regime membership	Proportion of existing UN human rights treaties ratified	UNHCR, 2002	+

Table 2. Political Determinants of Migration Flows, 15 OECD States.[a]

	Variable	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Lags	Dependent variable	-.230*** (.035)	-.242*** (.036)	-.232*** (.035)	-.237*** (.034)	-.230*** (.035)	-.230*** (.035)
	Unemp.	-.185*** (.054)	-.195*** (.053)	-.184*** (.053)	-.198*** (.054)	-.185*** (.054)	-.185*** (.054)
	GDP	1.26*** (.466)	1.40*** (.460)	1.33*** (.462)	1.36*** (.461)	1.26*** (.466)	1.26*** (.466)
	Union density	--	-0.33** (.014)	--	--	--	--
	Migrant employers	--	--	-0.31* (.016)	--	--	--
	Left-right partisanship	--	--	--	-.273** (.121)	--	--
Differences	Unemp.	-.511*** (.116)	-.512*** (.114)	-.518*** (.115)	-.512*** (.115)	-.511*** (.116)	-.511*** (.116)
	GDP	.686 (.977)	.699 (.950)	.842 (.979)	.759 (.952)	.686 (.977)	.686 (.977)
	Union density	--	-.074*** (.026)	--	--	--	--
	Migrant employers	--	--	-.018 (.041)	--	--	--
	Left-right partisanship	--	--	--	.039 (.155)	--	--
Fixed effects	Ethnic homogeneity	--	--	--	--	-.090*** (.025)	--
	Settler state	--	--	--	--	--	1.25* (.770)
	Adjusted R^2	.138	.156	.144	.145	.141	.141
	LM1[b]	.087 (.106)	.073 (.107)	.089 (.106)	.034 (.101)	.088 (.106)	.088 (.106)
	LM2[b]	-.077 (.097)	-.091 (.099)	-.078 (.097)	-.119 (.091)	-.077 (.097)	-.077 (.097)

[a]Ordinary least squares coefficients with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses. Constants and country fixed effects omitted from table.

[b]Lagrange Multiplier coefficients on first and second lagged residuals, regressed on residuals. Insignificant results indicate no significant serial correlation of errors.

*** P<.01; **P<.05; *P<.10, in two-tailed t-tests.

Analysis of Results

Table 2 presents the results of my control model (excluding country and time-period coefficients) and of five tests of the interest-group hypothesis.[5] Four of these variables are significantly related to immigration inflows in the expected direction: unionization rates are associated with less immigration (short-term and long-term); right-wing governments are associated with more migration and left-wing governments with less (long-term only); ethnic homogeneity is asso-

[5] Lagged independent variables in the error-correction model measure the long-term equilibrium relationship between independent and dependent variables and should be multiplied by -1 times the coefficient on the lagged *dependent* variable prior to substantive interpretation. First-differenced variables measure the short-term relationship between a change in independent variables and the dependent variable. Fixed effects also measure long-term relations but are interpreted directly (see Davidson *et al.,* 1978).

ciated with less migration (as a fixed effect); and settler states are associated with more migration (fixed effect). The importance of migrant employers was also related to immigration in the short-term, but the sign was negative, the opposite from what the interest-group hypothesis predicts.

Tests of five institutional and international hypotheses had mixed results (see Table 3). The significant and positive sign associated with Arend Lijphart's (1999) index of institutional unity suggests that more federalized states (Switzerland, Germany) admit more migrants than more unitary states (England,

Table 3. Institutional and International Determinants of Migration Flows, 15 OECD states.[a]

	Variable	*Model 7*	*Model 8*	*Model 9*	*Model 10*	*Model 11*
Lags	Dependent variable	-.230*** (.035)	-.253*** (.037)	-.239*** (.035)	-.232*** (.035)	-.232*** (.035)
	Unemp.	-.185*** (.054)	-.191*** (.054)	-.181*** (.053)	-.166*** (.056)	-.171*** (.055)
	GDP	1.26*** (.466)	1.60*** (.486)	1.34*** (.463)	1.32*** (.472)	1.44*** (.478)
	Partisan density	--	5.27*** (2.06)	--	--	--
	Partisan-institutional unity	--	--	-2.96 (2.67)	--	--
	Trade	--	--	--	-.012 (.015)	--
	Regime membership	--	--	--	--	-.501 (.550)
Differences	Unemp.	-.511*** (.116)	-.484*** (.114)	-.490*** (.115)	-.533*** (.118)	-.498*** (.115)
	GDP	.686 (.977)	.927 (.964)	.820 (.974)	.336 (1.03)	.911 (.969)
	Partisan unity	--	5.13* (2.85)	--	--	--
	Institutional unity	--	--	9.62 (6.04)	--	--
	Trade	--	--	--	-.029 (.024)	--
	Regime membership	--	--	--	--	-1.45* (.834)
Fixed effects	Institutional unity	1.24* (.723)	--	--	--	--
	Adjusted R^2	.141	.153	.147	.141	.144
	LM1[b]	.088 (.106)	.116 (.102)	.055 (.102)	.075 (.105)	.071 (.105)
	LM2[b]	-.077 (.097)	-.056 (.092)	-.106 (.094)	-.093 (.098)	-.080 (.098)

[a]Ordinary least squares coefficients with panel-corrected standard errors in parentheses. Constants and country fixed effects omitted from table.

[b]Lagrange Multiplier coefficients on first and second lagged residuals, regressed on residuals. Insignificant results indicate no significant serial correlation of errors.

*** P<.01; **P<.05; *P<.10, in two-tailed t-tests.

New Zealand). Similarly, the existence of fewer parties in parliament positively correlates with inflows (short- and long-term). Additionally, overall institutional unity, which combines the number and ideological dispersal of veto players into a single index, is positively correlated with admissions (only in the short-term, and only with a P-value of .11). Finally, with regard to international factors, only the first difference of regime membership is statistically significant, but the sign is negative, suggesting that as countries join human-rights regimes, their migrant admissions decline.

Although space prevents further discussion of these findings, the results reported as significant here are highly robust to alternative specifications. Three points therefore bear emphasis. First, my findings clearly suggest that interest groups matter, though not always in the expected ways. On one hand, my evidence that unions, ethnic groups, and partisanship influence migration admissions in predictable ways strongly supports the overall validity of my approach. My counterintuitive findings about employer strength are somewhat troubling but probably reflect operational problems with this variable (manufacturing as a share of exports to measure migrant-employer strength is certainly the least valid of my indicators). Second, my finding that more pluralized institutional and partisan structures are consistently associated with *less* migration directly conflicts with the predictions of the "liberal" hypothesis. My interpretation is that in the pursuit of economic growth without inflation, all states prefer higher migration inflows; and institutional isolation enhances the ability of states to pursue this goal despite popular opposition. That is, contrary to existing domestic institutional arguments, more veto players imply more access points for immigration opponents, who are less well organized than supporters of migration. Third, controlling for other factors, I find no evidence that international integration or international institutional membership significantly affects states' migration policies. Although null findings are hardest to verify, the absence of expected international effects was robust to all model specifications. Of course, the findings reported here are the first step in what appears to be a promising research agenda; and additional analysis of partisan and institutional interactive effects, change over time, and other issues is clearly in order.

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