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Schengen area shaken: the impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on the European security community

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Abstract In light of the recent European refugee crisis, the article uses the concept of security community (SC), in order to explore the destabilising impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on the Schengen area. Theoretically, it is nourished by the will to support efforts by security community researchers to explore the challenges besetting security communities rather than just tracing their evolution. Viewed from a constructivist prism, the article describes how, through a complex social process, immigration-related threat perceptions can trigger a security dilemma dynamic among SC states, undermining the SC's basic trust and common identity, and encouraging states to abandon cooperative norms for unilateral defensive practices. Empirically, we show how immigration-related threat perceptions are working against the Schengen regime by examining well-established evaluation indicators in the SC literature. Finally, two avenues for future research are suggested in considering how to surmount the negative dynamics: the first draws on the existing desecuritisation literature, the second builds on the existing SC literature addressing the rehabilitation of collective identities and trust among an SC's members in times of crisis.
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Introduction

The year 2015 may be remembered as the year Europe had to deal with the greatest movement of people fleeing conflict since the end of the Second World War. This unprecedented migratory pressure on the doorstep of Europe has triggered a fierce public debate around the possible demise of one of the major achievements of European integration, namely the Schengen area. In light of these events, the article

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uses the concept of security community (SC) in order to explore the destabilising impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on the Schengen area. Theoretically, it is nourished by the will to support efforts by security community researchers to explore the challenges besetting security communities rather than just tracing their evolution, using the Schengen area as a case study.

Viewed from a constructivist prism, the article describes a causal mechanism that destabilises SCs following immigration-related threat perceptions. Through a complex social process, immigration-related threat perceptions can trigger a security dilemma dynamic among SC states, undermining the SC's basic trust and common identity, and encouraging states to abandon cooperative norms for unilateral defensive practices. Examination of well-established evaluation indicators in the SC literature reveals how immigration-related threat perceptions undermine SCs. These indicators include not only multilateralism, unfortified borders, community discourse, 'we-feeling' language, but also integration level, policy coordination against 'internal' threats, free movement of SC populations, and internationalisation of authority and rule. The article therefore shows that although immigration-related threat perceptions do not actually affect the absence of preparation for armed conflict as a characteristic of SCs, they do challenge other significant SC features, such as intersubjective understandings as well as overlapping and concentric inter-states practices, and thus deserve our attention.[1]

We illustrate our argument with a case study of an 'uncontested' SC, namely Europe (Adler and Barnett 1998: 16; Booth and Wheeler 2008: 3, 190–91; Bremberg 2015; Weaver 1998). Specifically, we demonstrate how immigration-related threat perceptions have destabilised the Schengen area as a security community. We are well aware of the fact that the Schengen area is embedded within other supranational and inter-governmental frameworks of cooperation between European states in the field of security and other political dimensions. Our decision to focus on Schengen is nourished by both methodological and empirical considerations. Methodologically, we believe that focusing on Schengen serves as a laser-like tool to better illustrate our theoretical insights. Furthermore, Schengen constitutes an ideal illustration of the abstract conceptualisation of a SC because of its materialist characteristics (*i.e.*, clearly defined area of highly integrated sovereign states enjoying free movement and unfortified borders) and ideational features (*i.e.*, attachment to the European idea, sense of common identity, and mutual trust).

The article then contributes to two main bodies of literature: the theoretical literature on security communities and the empirical literature on the Schengen regime. Regarding the first, we note that IR interest in SCs was aroused by the puzzling cooperative behaviour of states and the existence of 'communities' in an anarchical system. Consequently, most research has focused theoretically and empirically on SC *evolution,* as in the North Atlantic area, Europe, Euro-Med area, South East Asia, South America, US-Mexican relations, the Arab Gulf states, and

even NATO–Russia (Acharya 2001; Adler and Barnett 1998; Bellamy 2004; Bremberg 2015; Collins 2007; Deutsch 1957; Pouliot 2007, 2011).

More recently, rather than simply analysing their evolution, SC researchers have investigated SC challenges. Several studies have examined the potential for severe disruption in SC functioning due to 'identity crisis'; uncertainty (Bially-Mattern 2005; Kitchen 2009); perceived incompatible values (Mueler 2006); and violation of one member's habitus by another (Bjola and Kornprobst 2007). Domestic violence has also been pointed out as a factor hampering SC formation, as illustrated by intra-state instability in Africa (Nathan 2006). Finally, Adler and Greve (2009) showed that SCs are complex, multi-perspective security governance systems that can overlap with other security governance systems such as the balance of power that can limit or even challenge the SC.

This article pursues this thinking by focusing on the destabilising impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on SCs. Even though our theoretical framework draws upon a few elements developed in the above literature (in terms of identity crisis and the damage to habitual practices), it clearly departs from previous researches by developing a specific mechanism destabilising the SC, and by focusing on immigration-related threat perceptions as the variable causing the crisis within the SC. Furthermore, while the studies mentioned above reckon with the 'solving' mechanism of the crisis, we leave this aspect to future research and focus on the destabilising mechanism itself.

The destabilising impact of immigration-related threat perceptions has been addressed inadequately, possibly due to the taken-for-granted assumption that a perceived threat from immigration strengthens SCs — either at the common-identity narrative level or at the practical level of increased multilateral and cooperative measures against the perceived threat (Adler and Barnett 1998: 57; Bremberg 2015; Rudolf 2006: 159, 212). This view stems from the conviction that enmity (as a constructed 'other') builds trust among SC members, thus stabilising it by setting insiders apart from outsiders and reinforcing collective identity and internal cohesion (Koschut 2014: 547). On the contrary, we argue that because (illegal) immigration is an unmanageable trans-boundary phenomenon, immigration-related threat perceptions can destabilise SCs, diverting member states from regional integration towards traditional power politics, rather than stimulating regional cooperation and solidarity against an emerging internal 'threat'. In sum, the article examines the causal mechanism of the social construction of a security dilemma among SC member states that subverts central SC constitutive features, such as common identification and mutual trust as well as multilateral and integrationist dynamics.

As to the second area of contribution, *i.e.*, the literature on the Schengen regime, our explanation for the weakness of the regime is based on a socio-psychological mechanism — which clearly constitutes a novelty in this area of research. Indeed, until now, the main explanations accounting for the weaknesses of the Schengen

regime have been very similar to the criticism often voiced against the EU. First, the economic explanation contends that support for the EU (including Schengen) may have declined among the public and decision-makers following the realisation that the EU membership has accelerated the downturn in national economies (Abts *et al.* 2009: 2–3, 15; Lubbers and Scheeper 2010: 791; Quaglia 2011: 45; Webber 2014: 345, 353–57). Another explanation draws on the democratic deficit theory stressing the detrimental impact of the growing de-legitimisation of European institutions following undemocratic decision-making processes within the EU and related regimes (Abbarno and Zapryanova 2013: 584; Abts *et al.* 2009: 17; Hix 2007: 140; Rohrschneider 2002: 472; Schmidt 2013: 2). Thirdly, the neorealist argument focuses on the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, which fundamentally altered the European balance of power and removed the Europeans' incentive to integrate politically, militarily, and economically against an overwhelmingly powerful adversary, and which has since then disappeared (Rosato 2011a: 10, 2011b: 45–86).

So the article contributes to the EU and Schengen crisis literature by proposing a new interpretation of member states' behaviour, which not only examines economic and political factors but also deep socio-psychological processes. It also highlights the impact of immigration-related fears and threat perceptions as a destabilising variable in the internal dynamics of Schengen states, thereby continuing Cornelisse's research on the current Schengen crisis (2014). While she emphasises the institutional and political tension between the abolition of internal border controls on the one hand and the member states' willingness to retain considerable powers over immigration by third country nationals into their territories on the other hand, our research explains this inner tension further by demonstrating the interplay between two contradictory security logics in the Schengen area: the SC and the security dilemma associated with immigration-related threat perceptions. We believe that the socio-psychological component is a matter of great import, considering its capacity to shake and deeply implicate virtually all members of the SC — compared to other crises which do not trigger such extreme reactions at such a wide scale (like the current economic sovereign debt crisis).

The article is structured as follows. First, the theoretical section explains the conceptual framework, especially the causal mechanism through which immigration-related threat perceptions downgrade SCs to the point of eroding well-established SC indicators. The empirical section then explores how this dynamic starts to unfold in the European SC, specifically regarding the relations between Schengen members since 2007.[2] These crucial years mark a period of rising tensions preceding the most recent significant crisis in July and August 2015, which shook the entire migration regime. The analysis of the dynamics between Schengen members helps to clarify how immigration uncertainty and anxiety contribute to undermine experiments in security cooperation, eventually damaging the

established cooperative migration dynamics. Finally, the article describes the negative effect of this mechanism on different SC indicators while suggesting ways of surmounting these obstacles and proposing future research directions.

Before proceeding, a short methodological section is in order. To substantiate our arguments about the destabilising impact of the security dilemma mechanism on Schengen members states,[3] we used both primary and secondary sources and applied different research methods: elite discourse analysis (including individual states' official state documents, parliamentary debates, decision-makers' key speeches, formal documents, dispatches, and press releases of European institutions) and process tracing. Regarding the elite discourse analysis, we collected a massive amount of quotes of different policymakers in various formats (interviews, formal speeches etc.) in order to establish the validity of our arguments about the evolvement of a security dilemma dynamic among SC member states as a result of immigration-related threat perceptions. More specifically, we consider that we reached the point of 'theoretical saturation' (Morse 2004) in terms of relevant articulations conveying a change of perceptions at the elite level *vis-à-vis* fellow member states. We made sure to include quotes reflecting the 'other voices' in favour of Schengen, calling for the preservation of European solidarity and 'we-feeling' — thereby not overlooking the alternative, though less dominant discourse, testament to the persisting SC logic. To establish the change in the nature of interactions between the states, we systematically process-traced practices related to member states' migration policies, signalling a return to unilateral policies and a growing mistrust. We paid special attention to interactions between the traditional leading European states, such as France and Germany, and states bordering Schengen, like Italy and Greece, which are more vulnerable to migration. We also examined 'peripheral' states like Denmark and the Netherlands, which display varying levels and types of migration, to show that the dynamics under study are alive and widespread, and not just limited to a few European states.

Theorising the destabilising impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on security communities

SC characteristics

Fascinated by the existence of 'communities' in an area torn by violence and power politics, the study of SCs developed extensively in the second half of the 20th century and is still flourishing. First introduced by Deutsch *et al.* in the late 1960s, the concept of SC refers to 'a group of people who have become integrated to the point where there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way' (Deutsch in Adler 1997: 255). In the 1990s, Adler and Barnett redefined pluralistic SC stressing its identity component. They described such communities as 'socially

constructed "cognitive regions" or "community regions" whose people imagine that, with respect to their own security and economic well-being, borders run more or less, where shared understandings and common identities end' (Adler 1997: 255). In the past decade, two conceptual supplements were added to SC theory. While Pouliot (2008) developed a theory of SC practice arguing that peace exists in and through practice, Koschut (2014) added an emotional dimension to the study of SC.

Besides distinguishing between SC development phases — nascent, ascendant, and mature –SC researchers have also identified SC indicators. *Institutionalised multilateralism* is one indicator of an emerging SC: member states are more likely to deal with common interests through joint mechanisms such as consensual decision-making procedures and structures which bring together high-level regional representatives who automatically incorporate the interests of all member states and are thus likely to be more consensual than other types of interstate relations (Adler and Barnett 1998: 55; Pouliot 2007: 608). Here, some researchers add that SCs are characterised by *expansion of transgovernmental networks*, where civil servants in government departments and agencies, and military officers, work together in cooperative endeavours to implement SC policy (Bremberg 2015). Another indicator is *unfortified borders*. Although border checks and patrols persist, they are expected to secure states against non-military threats (Adler and Barnett 1998: 55; Pouliot 2007: 608). A third indicator is *changes in military planning*. Such changes occur because members are no longer potential enemies in military scenarios (Adler and Barnett 1998: 56; Pouliot 2007: 608). Next, a *common definition of threat and security* is an important indicator of SC. Indeed, security is interdependent rather than mutually excluding and a threat to the community from an 'other' is agreed. Moving beyond these basic agreements, states reach an intersubjective understanding on *how to deal with the agreed threat*. SCs also share a *community discourse and language*. According to Adler and Barnett, these can express members' strong identification with the SC and/or commonality of values and even the same emotional character, as suggested by Koschut. They may also simply demonstrate a compatibility of values and mutual responsiveness towards the community's norms as opposed to values outside the community (Adler and Barnett 1998: 56; Bremberg 2015; Koschut 2014; Pouliot 2007: 608). Tightly coupled SCs are also characterised by other indicators. First, they adopt policies of *cooperative and collective security* against urgent and exceptional measures (Adler and Barnett 1998: 56; Bremberg 2015). Second, they enjoy *high levels of military integration* by pooling military resources (Adler and Barnett 1998: 56). Third, member states have greater *policy coordination* and low-key and routine security practices (for example, 'patroling') *against 'internal' threats* (Adler and Barnett 1998: 57; Bremberg 2015). Fourth, tightly coupled SCs allow *free movement of individuals* between different member states, which are no longer seen as a potential threat (Adler and Barnett 1998: 57). Finally, mature SCs are characterised

by *shared coordinated public policies and systems of rule to the point of internalising* policies and law (Adler and Barnett 1998: 57).

Immigration-related threat perceptions as an explanatory variable

We will now briefly present the main tenets of securitisation theory, highlighting those elements that are most salient to our research, namely the social construction of migrants as a security threat in SCs focusing on national elites. It is indeed necessary to go to great length explaining how the securitisation of migrants unfolding within the different members of the SC generates immigration-related threat perceptions that have in turn a detrimental impact on their relations. We basically show how a 'securitised object' has the potential to transcend national boundaries and affect the relations among the members of a SC.

Although it is true that immigration-related threat perceptions may be prompted by rapid immigration-related demographic changes, which are in some way unlawful or illegitimate (Rudolf 2006: 26), the question is whether these perceptions are really 'objective' or socially constructed as objective. The present research clearly supports the latter view by stressing that immigration-related threat perceptions are subject to social construction following powerful securitisation processes. Securitisation of migration involves extreme politicisation and the framing of migration as a security threat. This follows discursive activities or routinised practices such as surveillance and border controls (Balzacq 2010; Bigo 1994, 2000, 2008, 2009; Leonard 2010; Neal 2009), which foster the belief that immigrants represent an existential threat to the state and its citizens. This allows the securitising actor to argue the need for emergency measures to deal with migrants and justifies actions outside normal political procedure (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 25). An example is the framing of legal and illegal migrants[4] as an existential threat to the host society justifying restrictive migration policies and the militarisation of immigration-politics. Migration is generally socially constructed as a security threat to the whole socioeconomic and political spectrum: migrants are usually constructed as destabilising internal security by correlating crime/terror with foreigners, as challenging both welfare provision and economic growth because they cheat the system, and by threatening majority identities and values at state and regional levels (Huysmans 2000).[5]

While acknowledging that both the elite and public levels (Huysmans 2006: 46; Bigo 2009: 586) fuel top-down and bottom-up securitisation processes, we embrace the classical securitisation theories' emphasis on the political leaders' role in determining and defining threats. Indeed, national political leaders, as powerful people and defenders of national interests, are considered to be 'the accepted voice of security' (Buzan *et al.* 1998: 31). While working closely with other securitising actors, such as 'transnational security professionals' (Bigo 2002) who possess the know-how and status needed to generate legitimate security discourses (Bigo 1994),

national elites remain the ultimate actor responsible for taking far-reaching decisions affecting SC cohesion. The study also argues that the social construction of migrants as a threat is so deeply entrenched in the social structure that it significantly affects the psyche of the state and its decision-makers — contrasting with the dominant view that states and decision-makers use securitisation processes instrumentally to increase power by legitimising exceptional crackdowns against the perceived security threat (Karyotis 2011). The political behaviour and social psychology literature offers compelling evidence that not only public opinion but also elites' attitudes regarding immigration are largely influenced by immigration-related threat perceptions (Lahav and Courtemanche 2012).

What, then, is the impact of immigration-related securitisation processes developing within a SC on the interactions between its members? In this article, we show how the securitisation of migrants results in immigration-related threat perceptions, transcending the national borders of the SC and eventually translating into fears and suspicion among the SC member states. In other words, in SCs, immigration-related threat perceptions do not necessarily produce increased cooperative measures against the 'new threat' in an environment marked by new uncertainty, following the realisation that immigration cannot be fully managed or blocked at SC's borders. On the contrary, this new uncertainty can trigger a deconstruction of SC's collective identity, sabotage trust-relations among SC members and eventually lead to unilateral self-defence, namely a security dilemma dynamic. The following part describes how immigration-related threat perceptions can generate a security dilemma dynamic that destabilises SCs.

Social construction of a SC's security dilemma dynamic

The traditional view[6] of 'a security dilemma' argues that mutual suspicion and a chronic atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and anxiety embedded in the anarchical system invariably cause states, fearing for their own security (see Booth and Wheeler 2008: 22–28; Jervis 1976: 64–66),[7] to act in self-defence.[8] The security dilemma is linked to two apparently inevitable predicaments in international politics: first, decision-makers in one state can never get fully into the minds of their counterparts in other states and can never be certain of understanding their motives or intentions. Second, policy planners in one state can never fully predict when and how other states may deploy weapons (the so-called 'inherent ambiguity of weapons') (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 4). Security in general creates a vicious circle of mutual tension and unnecessary conflict (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 5).

Whereas realists regard the security dilemma as a permanent feature in international politics, constructivists consider it a social construct of intersubjective understandings based on a social construction of conflictual identities, fear, and perceptions of competitive security. These factors undermine trust between states so much that they assume the worst of each other and start seeing self-help as an

interest (Wendt 1995: 73; see also Alexseev 2006; Hopf 1998: 188, 190; Snyder and Jervis 1999). As for weapons, which are the material expression of the threat underpinning the security dilemma, they do not explain anything in themselves but they gain meaning and influence over human behaviour due to the power of common interpretations and understandings — in our context, fear, mistrust, and defensive behaviour (Wendt 1995: 74).

Although the security dilemma dynamic is difficult to change, especially because of its stability and the *psychological* security it gives to states (Mitzen 2006),[9] constructivists disagree that the very nature of the security dilemma makes negative outcomes unavoidable. Wendt describes a social process, which can transform competitive security systems into cooperative systems where new intersubjective understandings are constructed, identities and practices are changed, and mutual trust can develop slowly (Booth and Wheeler 2008: 94; Hoffman 2002: 370; 2006; Pouliot 2008: 278–79; Wendt 1992: 420–21). Barnett and Adler argue that eliminating feelings of threat and the use of force in cooperative security systems such as SCs can allow other dilemmas and problems associated with collective goods to emerge while not triggering old psychological anxieties linked to classic security dilemmas (the new system has been inoculated against their resurgence) (quoted in Booth and Wheeler 2008: 188). Taking an opposite view, Booth and Wheeler highlight 'new uncertainties' in international relations that can cause 'new security dilemmas'.[10] In what follows, this insight is taken a step further: using a constructivist prism, we consider how immigration introduces new uncertainties into SCs that can lead not only to collective goods' problems and disagreements, but also to a security dilemma between SC members, thereby profoundly destabilising SCs.[11] Our main argument is that a perceived migrant-related threat affects 'fundamental' areas of life and basic interests, causing significant fears, a loss of benchmarks, and deep uncertainties, thus destabilising the basic trust on which the SC is built. In the new atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, SC members' responses to the security dilemma cease being considered predictable and are increasingly perceived as providing unreliable security measures against the immigration threat. This triggers a deconstruction of the SC members' collective identity, and self-defence practices by SC members, that eventually undermine mutual trust. We consider this process more systematically:

Uncertainty and the breakdown of consensus

In this first stage, the demographic, material factors and shared perceptions within elite circles, according to which immigrants threaten national and communal security, serve to heighten uncertainty and the feeling that other SC states are now unpredictable on the subject of immigration. This intensifies especially when immigration cannot be entirely managed or sealed at SC borders and becomes an 'internal' challenge. Taking Wendt's model of transformation from competitive to cooperative structures, we argue that the opposite is true: this stage signals the

breakdown of the SC consensus regarding the ability or even willingness of its members to cooperate and reciprocate. The actual impotence of joint institutions also exacerbates uncertainties regarding states' intention and ability to supply collective goods (security and shared burden).

Deconstruction of collective identity and reconstruction of the identities of Self and Other

In this stage, states critically examine old notions of Self and Other and the structures of interaction that maintained them. They question other states' intentions and abilities and imagine worst-case scenarios. They begin interpreting other members' behaviour as uncooperative and develop negative images of other states and their joint institutions. The key point is that the perceived unwillingness and inability of fellow member states, and of joint institutions to effectively control community borders in a borderless community, is not only suspected, but also assumed and anticipated.

Changes in practices

As uncertainties rise regarding other states' intentions and capabilities, and acute immigration fears and negative images about other members and common institutions grow, some members decide they would rather not take risks. Instead, they turn to transformative self-defence practices; we qualify these as transformative because they run counter to the SC's long-standing normative practices. There are two types of transformative practices: unilateral reinstatement of internal borders (defensive self-help) and issuing temporary visas unilaterally, which other members may consider offensive since immigrants are not only constructed as threats but as weapons as well.

Violation of trust

When one or more SC states take defensive steps, trust is broken. When states that do preserve the *status quo* lose confidence and question their previous positive expectations (based on shared norms and emotions and trust in the stability of the other states' identities), the result is a negative view of the situation and emotional distress generating 'negative emotions' (anger, stigmatisation etc.) (Koschut 2014: 537–38; Lewicki and Tomlinson (2012). Whereas Koschut (2014: 537–38) believes that negative emotions can help rid the SC of sources of discord and often signal emotional attachment to the SC, we argue that negative emotions generated by the recurrent violation of communal norms like multilateralism and free movement can signal a shift in members' mutual perceptions from 'colleague' to 'enemy' or, at least, an ''other'. Instead of stabilising the SC, 'negative emotions' can create new divisions and profound mistrust.

Security paradox
Violation of trust and the ensuing low levels of trust between certain SC members cause others to respond with similar defensive measures, producing further layers of mistrust in a vicious circle.

Evaluating the impact of this process on the SC

This section articulates our last theoretical claim that immigrant-related threat perceptions destabilise SCs through the above mechanisms, namely the social construction of the security dilemma by SC states. We assess this claim by examining new weaknesses that have emerged in several well-established SC indicators:

Multilateralism
When immigration-related threat perceptions produce a security dilemma dynamic that weakens SC members' basic trust, it may prompt states to defect from cooperative norms and adopt unilateral defensive practices. This includes unilateral steps to restore border controls and reject integration/issue-specific membership.

Unfortified borders
We suggest that re-establishing borders and introducing 'smart technology' in response to immigration-related uncertainty regarding other SC states' intentions may lead fortification resembling that against military invasion.

Joint definition and perception of security and threat
Although most SC states have immigration-related threat perceptions, the activation of the security dilemma sabotages the possibility of a common understanding of security and threat. This can even prompt the construction of a perceived threat from SC members that are unwilling or incapable of controlling their borders and shouldering the common burden.

Discourses and language of community expressing a 'we-feeling'
In the context of the immigration-related security dilemma, we argue that problems with understanding other states' intentions and abilities cause some SC members to view fellow states and joint institutions negatively. This arouses scepticism regarding the regional community's discourse.

Cooperative and collective security
We suggest that immigration-related fears and uncertainties weaken cooperative security mechanisms by allowing immediate self-defensive actions by individual states. This includes resurrecting borders under special circumstances or excluding members that fail to meet their commitments from the community. Following security

fears, the increased likelihood of states defecting and states' readiness to resort to worse (offensive) measures (*e.g.* unilateral temporary visa requirement), which bypass cooperative institutions, can further weaken cooperative security mechanisms.

Weaker policy coordination against 'internal' threats
Although there may be increased institutionalised cooperation among SC members aimed at tackling immigration, which is seen as a threat, the fear that other member states cannot or will not confront immigration might increase national controls away from the borders.

Free movement of populations within the SC
Here, we argue that the freedom of cross-border mobility, which is a key principle in a tightly coupled security community, is undermined by a desire to secure borders prompted by the atmosphere of immigration-related uncertainty and mistrust towards fellow SC members.

Internationalisation of authority and rule (supranationalism)
Weak supranationalism is especially apparent in the context of migration controls. In a security-dilemma environment, supranationalism is weakened when member states considered unable or unwilling to tackle the common threats, become increasingly considered security threats.

Schengen area put to the test: impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on SCs

This section reflects on the theoretical arguments developed above and unfolds as follows: first, we present a short history of the Schengen area and characterise it as a SC. Then, we establish the robustness of our explanatory variable, namely the intensification of immigration-related threat perceptions in the European SC at the elite level. Finally, we examine the immigration-related threat perceptions' impact on the social construction of the security dilemma dynamic, as exemplified in recent relations among member states.

Schengen area as a security community

The Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985 as a parallel European initiative to the European Union. It eliminated internal border controls and deepened the common market (Cornelisse 2014: 744–45, 777–78; Zaiotti 2011: 2, 69). In the late 1990s, the Schengen regime was incorporated into the EU (Cornelisse 2014: 747–48). Nowadays, it includes all EU members — with the notable exceptions of Great Britain and Ireland, plus non-EU countries, such as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland (Zaiotti 2011: 5).

The Schengen area is a tightly coupled SC. There are several indicators supporting this claim. First, it is largely considered a common 'imagined community' with a collective identity. As Zaiotti noted, 'It became the symbol of a *sui generis* entity. […] a normative environment functioning as a socializing arena and point of reference around which new ideas are anchored' (Zaiotti 2011: 6, 10, 54, 81). Second, the Schengen regime sought to create a common space where not only goods and capital but also individuals could circulate freely (Zaiotti 2011: 2). More specifically, the Schengen Borders Code (SBC) prohibits internal border checks and permits the temporal reinstatement of such checks only under exceptional circumstances (Cornelisse 2014: 750). Third, as a 'European Space', it is characterised by 'post-national' political, economic, and military integration (Bremberg 2015). Fourth, the Schengen states also transcend a close meaning of 'security' by reconceptualising national security as no longer a matter of territorial defence but one of collective threats and risks (Bremberg 2015). Since its inception, the regime also sought to move border controls to the external perimeter of the Schengen area while establishing other more diffuse forms of control within and beyond the regime (Zaiotti 2011: 2, 72). Fifth, Schengen members developed common 'policies of protection' and mechanisms of coordination[12] within the area of justice and home affairs (JHA), including counter-terrorism, police and judicial cooperation, border, asylum and migration management, and civil protection, to deal with common threats (Bremberg 2015). Sixth, transgovernmental networks and agencies and other coordination mechanisms play a prominent role in 'internal' security (FRONTEX, Eurosur and Schengen Information System (I, II)) (Bremberg 2015; Cornelisse 2014: 750; Zaiotti 2011: 163). Seventh, as Zaiotti shows, border control has become a matter of multilateral negotiation where key decisions are taken by regional institutions composed of both intergovernmental and supranational actors (Schengen Executive Committee, Council of the European Union, European Commission) (Zaiotti 2011: 3). Furthermore, the Schengen area redistributes policy implementation responsibilities among national governments, corresponding to 'intensive transgovernmentalism' (Zaiotti 2011: 4). Finally, these collective arrangements, indicating the partial renouncement of a key statist function, arguably require a significant amount of trust among Schengen members — one of the main constitutive features of the Schengen area as a SC.

Immigration-related threat perceptions among Schengen Area states

In the past twenty years, the Schengen area has witnessed widespread immigration-related fears and threat perceptions. This sub-section presents evidence that many Schengen states show symptoms of growing anti-immigrant attitudes and immigration-related threat perceptions at the national elite level alongside attempts to oppose this trend. We assume that immigration-related threat perceptions are largely due to a complex social construction of meaning, *i.e.* securitisation

processes. We do not present here an in-depth analysis of migration-linked securitisation measures but use the existing literature to support our argument. Indeed, previous studies demonstrate a growing immigration-related threat perception at the elite level in Schengen member states. Particularly telling is that migration, as a multi-dimensional security threat, has gained in importance since the 1990s, and even more so following 9/11, in western European domestic and regional elite discourses (Buonfino 2004; Huysmans 2000, 2006; Karyotis 2011;[13] Matonytė and Morkevičius 2009: 101: Tsoukala 2005: 163).

Relevant articles show the cross-European extent of this phenomenon and the similarity of its discursive components in parliamentary debates in western Europe (the UK, France, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands) (Van Dijk 1993). The elites' discourse has traditionally stressed the adverse impact of immigration on jobs, public order, cultural norms, and national social harmony, often suggesting a threat to the host society's interests, values, and lifestyle (Simon and Alexander 1993). Such argumentation regularly appears in the official discourse of many European countries — Switzerland (Riano and Wastl-Walter 2006), Greece (Karyotis and Patrikios 2010; Tsoukala 2005), Italy (Tsoukala 2005), Malta (Pace 2013), Germany and Austria (Howard 2000), France (Van der Valk 2003) as well as Central and Eastern European countries[14] — albeit not with the same intensity as significant political differences persist regarding the migration debate.

Indeed, this trend has been counter-balanced by non-negligible de-securitisation moves in certain European countries (for example, in Germany during the 2015 refugee crisis), political parties as well as in the EU institutions (Alkopher 2015). Yet, as Zaiotti and Cornelisse rightly argue, immigration-related threat perceptions are specifically inherent to Schengen, which 'has become over the years a security-centred and security-driven initiative' (Zaioti 2011: 17; see also Cornelisse 2014: 748). Immigration has been mainly conceived as an external challenge, surmountable by creating 'Fortress Europe', that is, by strengthening Schengen's external borders. The question occupying decision-makers has thus been the management of collective action issues (see Webber 2014: 345; Cornelisse 2014). The following part shows that, since 2007, through 2011, and even more so after 2015, increased illegal immigration to Europe has proven 'Fortress Europe' to be unsealed. The shift in the perception of the immigration-related threat from an 'external' threat to an 'internal' one has produced new uncertainties. Let us now explore how these powerful uncertainties have the potential to trigger Schengen's mutual security dilemma dynamics.

The social construction of the security dilemma among Schengen member states

To demonstrate the first seeds of the social construction of the security dilemma dynamic, this sub-section provides empirical evidence of four critical events in Schengen's recent history: the 2007 Enlargement[15]; the Schengen Agreement

revision following the diplomatic row between France and Italy in 2011 triggered by waves of North African migrants; the most recent enlargement involving Romania and Bulgaria; and finally, the recent refugee crisis of the summer of 2015. These events illustrate the *multi-stage transformation in Schengen member states' relations caused by immigration-related threat perceptions*: from a decrease in shared understandings, mutual reliance, and cooperative security, towards more suspicion, defensiveness, and competitive security. Because of its complexity, the transformation is not linear. The security dilemma is a spiral dynamic whose stages are not chronological although they undoubtedly fuel one another. A note of caution is necessary here: we do not argue that Schengen member states have become full-fledged enemies along dichotomous lines; we rather emphasise the regression in the mutual understanding and common practices shared until then by Schengen member states — a phenomenon which remains completely reversible.

Stage I — uncertainty and consensus breakdown
First, we argue that immigration-related threat perceptions are currently fairly strong in the Schengen area relations, benchmarks have been lost and an atmosphere of deep uncertainty and anxiety has emerged. An uncertain environment pervades following ambient fears due to an acute sense of threat and the institutional ambiguity of the EU's migration policy (Kostakopoulou 2000: 500).[16] One outstanding feature of this first stage is the security consensus breakdown. The Schengen states are facing a novel and difficult phenomenon, and the elites' discourse shows that decision-makers are beginning to question cooperative collective norms. Basically, they are wondering if the norms of the past twenty years can still tackle the new migration challenges. German Justice Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich expressed in 2012 a concern about the increasing numbers of Middle Eastern migrants entering the EU from Greece, 'the question still remains what happens when a country is not capable of securing its borders' (EurActiv 2012). In an 2011 speech on the future accession of Bulgaria and Romania, Nicolas Sarkozy wondered similarly, 'If a failing state controls other countries' borders, what do we do?' (EurActiv 2011). These statements show clearly that Schengen members feel an unprecedented concern that the SC is not and cannot be sealed, thus transforming 'immigration' (illegal immigration especially) from an 'external' to an 'internal' perceived threat. This is also breaking down the consensus over the ability and reliability of supranational institutions to deliver collective goods, particularly immigration-related security. In his 2012 Villepinte speech, Sarkozy again spoke stingingly, 'France does not intend to leave the management of migration flows in the sole hands of technocrats and tribunals' (quoted in Samuel 2012). Finally, the recent 2015 refugee crisis abounds with declarations by key politicians reflecting the uncertainty and confusion as to the expected behaviour of fellow Schengen member states and the EU's ability to handle this new situation. While there are voices coming from Eastern Europe, from the Czech Republic,

Poland and especially Hungary, emphasising ‘national interests’ to protect citizens’ security *vis-à*-vis the flow of immigrants — as articulated here by the Hungarian government spokesman, ‘The boat is full […] we all wish for a European solution, but we need to protect Hungarian interests and our population’ (AFP 2015a) –, others, such as France and Germany, wish to find a *multilateral* solution to the crisis (Traynor and Harding 2015). Yet, even when a tentative European solution is put on the table, there is consensus neither regarding the desirability of the formula proposed nor on the EU’s capacity to deliver. In fact, Eastern European countries did not agree to the proposal of permanent compulsory quotas for the relocation of refugees across the Schengen area– which they considered dictations (see Traynor and Harding 2015).

Stage II — deconstruction of collective identity and reconstruction of the identities of Self and Other

Bewilderment and helplessness are replaced by *certainty* that other Schengen members can *no longer* be relied upon, at least not for immigration-related security. Our research shows that these fears, suspicions and doubts are being internalised. Old ideas about collective identity have been supplanted by new ideas. These old ideas included assumptions about other members’ willingness to cooperate and the dependability of other members and structures of interaction, such as multilateral and cooperative mechanisms. Negative images of fellow states and the EU institutions have emerged and accusations ranging from weakness, unreliability and betrayal to irresponsibility and inefficiency have multiplied.

Various states have issued such reproaches. Northern European countries and other core European states like France and Germany have traditionally accused their southern counterparts of irresponsible border management. Dutch Immigration Minister Gerd Leers justified his opposition to Romanian and Bulgarian accession in these terms, ‘Imagine you have a door with eight of the best locks in the world. But before that door is standing someone who lets everybody in, then you have a problem’ (quoted in Thomet 2011). The Schengen states’ discourse not only accuses their counterparts of inability to keep the borders shut but also of *reluctance* to do so — thus shifting responsibility for halting the migrant waves to others. The diplomatic row in the spring of 2011 illustrates this perfectly. France accused Italy of recklessly shunting immigrants across its borders without formalising their status (Traynor and Hopper 2011). Displaying similar anger, Germany, Austria, and Belgium directly accused Rome of ‘cheating’ on the Schengen rulebook (Traynor and Hopper 2011). In response, southern Mediterranean countries raised the delicate issue of ‘burden-sharing’ and ‘lack of solidarity’, accusing their northern counterparts of abandoning them to struggle with unprecedented migratory pressure. Unsurprisingly, the conviction that certain states might respond unpredictably to the threat of migration causes others to anticipate uncooperative behaviour, while the difficulty of knowing other states’

intentions and abilities fosters worst-case thinking and 'anticipation of harm'. These articulations multiplied during the 2015 refugee crisis. This time, northern European states, such as Germany, voiced their concern of being left alone to manage refugee flows, due to central and eastern European states' refusal to accept the new common plan of refugee quotas (Traynor and Harding 2015) — a manoeuvre described (together with building fences) by French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, as 'going against the values of the European Union …' signalling a possible reconstruction of eastern and central European states as 'others'.

Stage III — changes in practices
The theoretical section describes how the second stage of the reactivation of security dilemmas in SCs leads to the third stage. Convinced that they are operating in an uncertain environment with unreliable co-members, member states conclude they have to be self-reliant and adopt transformative practices of self-defence. Our analysis shows that when collective self-perceptions change, Schengen states adopt various defensive practices:

- Unilateral resurrection of borders within Schengen

First, the 1990 Schengen Implementing Agreement (SIA) allows the unilateral resurrection of borders within the security community — *but only under certain conditions of an exceptional nature* (Groenendjik 2004: 160). Indeed, Article 2(2) of the SIA allows member states to reinstate checks only if public policy or national security requires so and only for a limited period (Atger 2008). In the past twenty years, Article 2(2) has mainly been applied before sporting or political events when anticipating large-scale internal disorder. More interestingly, however, we also find cases where the clear aim was to restrict immigration of third country nationals (Groenendjik 2004: 160). During the period in question, that is, from 2007 to 2015, we find several examples of a migration threat followed by a reintroduction of internal Schengen area border checks. In April 2011, France re-established border controls to curb North African migrants from entering the country from Italy. Similarly, in March 2012, Germany, France, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden issued a common letter threatening to reinstate 'emergency internal border controls' if Greece did not improve its border security with Turkey (ECRE Weekly Bulletin 2012), and Sweden demanded a reintroduction of border controls equivalent to 'permanent' controls (Wind 2012). The recent refugee crisis in Europe magnified this dynamic, with Hungary and Slovenia erecting borders along the exterior Schengen border, quickly followed by Austria, Germany,[17] Denmark and the Netherlands. This time, these countries re-imposed controls and a military presence along their borders with other member states, acknowledging that they could scarcely cope with thousands of asylum seekers arriving each day to their territory (Traynor and Harding 2015; AFP 2015a, b; Strohecker and Than 2015; Ronel 2015).

- Alternative security controls

To bypass Schengen area restrictions on resurrecting internal borders, some states have developed alternative unilateral security controls to side step restrictions. These involve indirect and discrete measures including smart technologies and frequent national-border patrols, indicating some states' desire to retain some control over their borders due to doubts over the other states' abilities to curb immigration threats and their intentions towards migration. These policing measures have been emplaced to monitor people's movement to and from member states as a form of compensatory security control (Atger 2008: 2). This defensive practice increased particularly after the 2007 Schengen Enlargement. At this time, the Czech authorities complained to Austria and Germany regarding invalid controls on Czech citizens (Atger 2008: 11, 17). The recent refugee crisis amplified this dynamic, as exemplified by the Swedish government's temporary introduction of identity checks for all travellers wanting to cross the Oresund bridge (BBC News 2016). This rationale indicates a strong lack of trust in member states and a desire to protect themselves, being driven by worst-case scenario predictions and the anticipated poor performance from others.

- Exclusion and suspension of Schengen area membership

States can defend themselves by excluding fellow Schengen states if the latter are ineffective in their commitments. This clause, which permits temporary suspension of a state's membership, was introduced after 2011 as part of the revised Schengen Agreement. It established a direct linkage between the unsatisfactory application of the Schengen *acquis* by one member state and the suspension of freedom of movement for nationals of that state and third country nationals holding similar EU rights (EU Commission 2013). Following the 2015 refugee crisis, the EU ministers actually discussed the suspension of Greece and potentially more member states (Barker and Robinson 2015).

Suspicious states can also try to prevent others from 'harming' them by opposing new states' accession to the community.[18] This unambiguous act of rejection not only shows that states doubt the capacities/intentions of new candidates to protect the SC's external borders, but it can also be interpreted as a lack of trust in the EU institutions, such as the European Parliament, which recommends accepting countries.[19] Reluctance to accept new members was particularly striking in the cases of Bulgaria and Romania (Ciobanu 2013; see Romania Insider 2013). Although the justification for the delay in their acceptance is couched in legal jargon, the real reason has been a fear that a 'high level of corruption, and the widespread presence of organized crime will affect the countries' capacity to effectively manage Europe's borders', allowing illegal waves of migrants to cross Europe (Zaiotti 2013; see also Dawar 2013).

Last but not least, a member state can decide unilaterally to protect itself by threatening to suspend its participation in the regime, thus violating the norms of cooperative behaviour and introducing a new practice of self-defence. Nicolas Sarkozy did just this in his 2012 presidential campaign, when he warned that France would pull out of Schengen unless the EU toughened its immigration policy (Samuel 2012). Similarly, following the refugee crisis in 2015, the Swedish government secured a temporary exemption from the European Union's open-border Schengen agreement, in order to impose border controls (BBS News 2016).

- Shuffling migrants from one territory to another (urging them to go)

States implicitly encourage migrants to travel across Europe and leave their specific territory by unilaterally issuing temporary visas to immigrants. Besides the case of Italy and France in 2011, a similar scenario unfolded in May 2013, when Germany literally accused Italy of sending African migrants to northern Europe. The Italian authorities tacitly acknowledged giving them money for this purpose (Vox Europ 2013). A more extreme example was seen only recently when the Greek Defence Minister, Panos Kammenos, threatened to 'flood Europe with migrants' if Europe failed to find a solution to the Greek debt crisis (Pozzebon 2015). In the same vein, during the July 2015 refugee crisis, Hungary followed in the footsteps of its southern neighbours — Greece and Italy — that routinely avoid registering and fingerprinting some of the refugees and illegal migrants arriving, allowing them to head North unchecked, even before Germany's suspension of the Dublin prerogatives.[20] Denmark then imitated Hungary and allowed refugees to move freely through its territory to Sweden (Tange 2015).

Stage IV — loss of trust

The adoption of the above defensive practices signals member states that they can no longer depend on each other regarding these issues. When the confidence once based on common norms and identity perceptions is lost, a profound breakdown in trust occurs among SC members.

Particularly powerful in this regard are statements by the European officials clearly expressing their disappointment and loss of trust in their fellow Schengen members due to the confusion over these transformative practices. Ahead of the 2007 Schengen Enlargement, some candidate countries suspected that certain members wished to delay their accession not on technical grounds but for political concerns. The Hungarian Foreign Minister stated, 'We [Hungary] will be prepared by the given deadline with all preparation for joining the Schengen zone. And we also mention that it goes beyond a question of informatics […] it is much more a *political question* […] much more a *confidence question*' (quoted in Johnson 2006, emphasis added).

The same accusations and resentment resurfaced in Bulgaria and Romania's bid for accession to Schengen. Although the European Commission found the two countries technically ready for Schengen membership in 2010, their accession was deferred by the key EU member states. The reasons cited ranged from poor border control, corruption, lack of progress under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM), to the threat of 'benefit tourism' from the countries' Roma population (EurActiv 2013).

Similarly, deep disappointment was increasingly expressed during the 2011 refugee crisis that resulted in the Schengen Agreement's revision. The so-called 'violation of the Spirit of Schengen' became a recurring motto and signalled that the prevailing earlier cooperative practices and solidarity had been seriously harmed. The EU's response was a fierce defence of Schengen, a project that was portrayed as emblematic for what Europe stood for (Cornelisse 2014: 759). Alluding to the crisis then developing among Schengen members, the European Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said, 'It was clear that the trust which is essential to the sustainability of the system had been severely tested' (Malmström 2012). Trust relations were further damaged during the July 2015 refugee crisis, as exemplified by the tense relations between Sweden and Denmark. Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said, in response to Denmark's decision to allow refugees to move freely through its territory to other Scandinavian countries, that the EU rules under which refugees should be registered in the country where they first arrive must be upheld and that the decision to send refugees on to Sweden was 'unfortunate'.

Stage V — chain reaction and the security dilemma paradox

As we saw in the theoretical section, when SC members lose significant mutual trust, they respond as expected, anticipating harm and reacting defensively to other members' behaviour. The resulting spiral of mistrust has the potential to create a security dilemma paradox as the following empirical examples show.

In the spring of 2011, this domino effect was evident when states responded to each others' decisions by re-establishing a degree of control over migratory movements across their borders. As Cecilia Malmström stressed in a speech

> Shortly thereafter [after the steps taken by Italy and France], steps were taken by the Danish government to intensify what were claimed to be 'customs controls' at their land borders with Germany and Sweden. Again, while those plans have now thankfully been shelved, the development undoubtedly placed further strain on the mutual trust and political credibility of the Schengen system. (Malmström 2012)

However, as it transpired, the chain reaction did not end there: after Denmark's move to impose border checks, it was the Netherlands' turn to push forward a border control project,[21] to 'check the registration of certain vehicles with a view to

curtailing illegal immigration and illegal residence in the Netherlands' (Rettman 2012). This dynamics escalated further in the summer of 2015; many states replicated Hungary's unilateral practices. This domino effect led to the re-imposition of border controls to prevent immigrants from coming in and the shuffling of refugees to other member countries in violation of the Dublin regulations.

Conclusions

Immigration-related threat perceptions have generated a series of security dilemma dynamics, which destabilise the Schengen area as a SC. Even though cooperative counter-moves are also taking place, the security-dilemma logic prevails and succeeds in challenging the Schengen project. To substantiate this argument, we look at several recognised indicators of a SC.

Broadly speaking, the outcomes of the security dilemma mechanism correspond to a growing tendency among Schengen member states to reject *cooperative norms of multilateralism* in favour of unilateral defensive practices. There is no gainsaying that there have also been repeated attempts at arriving at common European solutions embedded in a discourse supporting a multilateral approach to immigration issues, even at the height of the refugee crisis in the summer of 2015. These have, first and foremost, been put forward by the European Commission — the so-called 'guardian of the EU project' — but also by individual member states, such as Germany and France. For example, Jean Asselborn, Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, recently called for a 'Europeanisation of the asylum process' and suggested that the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in Malta should be expanded into a European authority for refugees (EurActiv.de with agencies 2015). Yet, this study offers ample empirical evidence of the importance and heavy consequences that unilateral defensive practices do have on the robustness of SCs. The proliferation of these unilateral defensive practices highlights a lesser degree of multilateralism than expected from a mature, tightly coupled SC. The *cooperative and collective security* indicator has also been weakened by unilateral defensive practices. Not only have security practices become increasingly independent in various states, but states may also deliberately try to exclude weaker SC members, like Greece, from the Schengen area. This does not imply that collective security measures have stopped to exist. On the contrary, there are multiple examples of multilateral joint operations: within the framework of Operation Triton, thousands of immigrants were rescued at sea thanks to the cooperation between the Italian Coast Guard and navy, Frontex as well as vessels from Ireland and Norway. Moreover, a new project is being launched — EUNAVFOR MED — whose aim is to 'dispose of' vessels used for human trafficking in the Mediterranean (Castro 2015). Yet, despite these cooperative

initiatives, once (illegal) immigration becomes an 'internal' issue, the security perceptions of member states change and acute narrow national security perceptions come to the fore, as expressed by the Hungarian Prime Minister for whom the refugee problem is a German problem and national security measures have to take precedence (Feher *et al.* 2015).

Regarding the SC indicator *policy coordination against internal threats*, the empirical section showed that, despite considerable cooperation of a general nature (including recent military and civilian illegal immigration-related humanitarian crisis management and collective borders patrols in the framework of FRONTEX), states have not stopped installing more discrete controls away from their borders, like the checks on the Czech-Austrian border. Furthermore, the fact that internal border control has been reinforced with smart technologies and, above all, soldiers,[22] points to negative changes in the *unfortified borders* indicator. In fact, the mobilisation of military actors against the possibility that other states might allow migrants across the border is most significant and reminds us of the type of fortification used against organised military threats. Borders once considered collectively 'internal' are now increasingly seen as nationally 'external' and inherently risky. It looks as if migrants were constructed and perceived as a kind of weapon that SC members used against each other. Another key indicator of a previously tightly coupled and now weakened SC concerns the *free movement of people* within the SC: the increase in the actual internal border checks, as well as the intention of Schengen member states to do so, are a case in point. During the recent refugee crisis, a growing number of discursive warnings have been expressed by key politicians such as Nicholas Sarkozy, Thereza Mai, the British Interior Minister, and Thomas de Maiziere, Germany's Interior Minister, casting serious doubts over the viability of the free movement regime.[23] There are also signs of erosion in another indicator: the *common definition and perception of security and threat,* which take the form of recurring expressions of mistrust, disappointment, and accusations of other states of weakness. Thus, although immigration-threat related perceptions are widely shared by the Schengen members, the mutual fears and uncertainties that have developed have significantly compromised their common understanding and exacerbated individual fears. The *discourse expressing a 'we-feeling'* also seems less appropriate because of the security dilemma dynamic. It is indeed rare to find any expression of the former 'we-feeling' amongst all the harsh rhetoric used by member states when discussing migration management and border control. As the theoretical section notes, expressing 'negative emotions' does not necessarily imply a destabilisation of the SC and the analysis of the 'emotive' rhetoric affirms this argumentation regarding the European Commission. However, the Schengen states' emotive reactions show a shift in their mutual perceptions — from 'colleague' to 'enemy', or at least to a source of threat. As accurately put by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, in 'the State of the Union' speech in September 2015 right at

the midst of the refugee crisis: 'There is not enough Europe in this Union. And there is not enough Union in this Union' (quoted in Gotev 2015).

Last but not least, *the internationalisation of authority and rule* indicator also shows signs of weakening due to immigration-related threat perceptions and the mechanism they trigger. Indeed, the European Commission keeps pushing for common immigration and refugee policy even in times of crisis. In September 2015, it even suggested a revolutionary permanent relocation mechanism that would allow dealing with future refugee crisis situations more swiftly. Yet, in the period following the Franco-Italian border dispute, as well as during the refugee crisis in 2015, European institutions allowed states considerable national latitude over migration and border control (Cornelisse 2014: 766–67). It is also not sure whether or not the Commission's new refugee plan will be successful. After all, some member states (*i.e.* the 'Visegrad Four' countries — the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland) soundly rejected mandatory refugee quotas (Bednárová 2015).

In sum, this study demonstrates that, at the level of European political elites, immigration-related threat perceptions are not without consequences for the SC's robustness: the security dilemma dynamics prompted by immigration-related threat perceptions have definitively destabilised the Schengen area. At this juncture, sceptics may be asking why these mechanisms do not eventually lead to the collapse of the SC as a whole. It is our contention that this question is mainly an empirical one: only empirical developments will tell if these dynamics have the potential not only to weaken but also to completely dismantle the SC. In this extreme case, we expect other factors — beyond the immigration-related threat perception that was at the heart of this study — such as economic and domestic political factors to play a crucial role in such a destructive process. A possible explanation for the persistence of the SC, though, might be the political and institutional counter-moves belonging to the deep-seated security dynamics proper to the SC. These counter-reactions are interesting to investigate in their own right but this goes beyond the scope of this study. Here, we rather aimed at showing that the recent developments shaking the Schengen area cannot be regarded as mere migration management and border control disagreements eroding Schengen's cooperative dynamics. Instead, they denote complex social processes involving changing identities, norms, practices and trust relations that have the potential to damage severely the interactions among the member states of the Schengen area and possibly beyond. The question of whether or not these dynamics have the potential to affect other European regimes of cooperation and possibly the EU as a whole is left to be examined in future research.

Finally, several avenues for further research are suggested. The first possibility could be to investigate how SCs could surmount an immigration-related crisis of the type described above. Indeed, as the constructivist nature of the security dilemma suggests, the negative dynamics related to immigration-related threat

perceptions are by no means irreversible. Hence, we suggest two mechanisms with the potential to reverse these detrimental processes. The first mechanism could build on the existing SC literature addressing the rehabilitation of collective identities and trust among SC members in times of crisis, either by way of re-building a sense of a common unifying purpose (*i.e.* humanitarian aid for refugees) (*á la* Kitchen 2009), through verbal fighting (*á la* Bially-Mattern 2005) in order to persuade deserting member states into past 'common practices' (*i.e.* the re-enforcement of the Dublin convention) or through the reshaping of common institutional practices in face of the new immigration-related uncertainty, in a manner that would make member states' behaviour more 'expected' (*á la* Pouliot 2011) (*i.e.* common refugees quotas). The second mechanism relates, in our view, to the root causes of the crisis, namely the immigration-related threat perceptions within the SC, and draws on the existing de-securitisation literature. De-securitisation strategies emanate generally from the public and NGO's level, but can also be initiated by SC elites.[24] In any case, the purpose of such strategies is to prevent immigrants from being framed in terms of security. From this perspective, research would explore processes of immigration-related de-securitisation within the SC that could reduce the state of uncertainty caused by immigration-related threat perceptions as well as the related fears, thereby eliminating the motivation for suspicion towards other member states.

Last but not least, another promising direction for further research would explore the extent to which the above insights resonate with other cases of SCs. We have chosen to illustrate our theoretical insights by focusing on the specific case of the Schengen regime. This, by no means, indicates that these insights cannot be applied and developed further in order to learn more about the impact of immigration-related security perceptions on other types of (security) communities. After all, the mechanism for activating a security dilemma dynamic in an SC is, arguably, not limited to Europe (and neither is the development of an SC) and it would be interesting to explore whether or not it is possible to draw any parallels between the European experience and the US-Canadian relations, for instance. An important inquiry in this regard deals with the possible difference in the impact of immigration-related threat perceptions on different degrees of SCs, for example, 'pluralistic' *vs.* 'tightly coupled' SCs. In this respect, one question worth exploring is whether the impact on less developed SCs (without common borders or common immigration policy) would be less devastating and dramatic than the impact on mature SCs.

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Notes

1 We therefore accept the less traditional thinking and study of SCs by Bremberg (2015: 678), according to whom SC is not only about 'hard security', but also involves low-key and routine-based security practices towards non-military perceived threats. Moreover, according to Bremberg, the absence of preparations for armed conflict — as a proxy for dependable expectations of peaceful change — might not be the only, or even the best, means of identifying security communities. Rather, those can be indicated by 'inter-state relations that are organized in overlapping and concentric circles'.

2 We chose 2007 as our starting point as it both marks the climax of the Schengen regime in terms of integration and the onset of a period characterised by economic downturn, the rise of populist parties and more restrictive national policies.

3 We fully realise that transnational entities and security practitioners play a significant role in the construction of Schengen and its maintenance. However, we focus here on member states as our analysis revolves around the concept of security communities, whose main components are states. We also agree with Zaiotti that Schengen is still an elite-centred, top-down regime influenced by those at high political levels and key national decision-makers (Zaiotti 2011: 17).

4 The authors are fully aware of the legal distinction made between legitimate/regular migrants and illegitimate/irregular or undocumented migrants at the national and European levels. Yet, in practice, these boundaries are flexible (as in the case of legal migrants turning into illegal migrants, when they overstay despite the expiration of their visas or work permits because of ignorance or other administrative reasons) (see Düvell 2008). Furthermore, the processes of securitisation related to migration fail to take into account these different legal categories, completely glossing over these differences.

5 See also the writing on societal security, such as Buzan *et al.* (1998: 119); Collective (2006: 452); Wæver *et al.* (1993).

6 For elaboration on the complexity of definitions and interpretations of the security dilemma, see Booth and Wheeler (2008).

7 Groups or individuals living in such constellations are usually concerned about being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. See Herz (1950: 157, cited in Booth and Wheeler 2008: 22).

8 Or worst, by choosing to engage in the struggle for the accumulation of more power in order to gain offensive military potential. See Booth and Wheeler (2008: 23).

9 See also Mitzen (2004).

10 Booth and Wheeler (2008) do not relate to immigration issues, though.

11 In his book, Mikhail Alexseev (2006) describes the development of an interethnic security dilemma between host societies and immigrants. Our research examines the activation of immigration-related security dilemma dynamics between host states rather than between immigrants and host societies.

12 Such as Eurosur and Schengen Information System, both of which serve as a system for the exchange of information between member states. See Cornelisse (2014: 750).

13 See also Lahav *et al.* (2007).

14 See, for example, the Czech President's, Milos Zeman, description of the current wave of refugees to Europe as 'an organised invasion', available at http://news.yahoo.com/czech-leader-calls-migrant-wave-europe-organised-invasion-193015933.htm (last accessed on 7 January, 2016).

15 Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta are the nine EU member states that joined the Schengen area in December 2007.
16. Note that the EU Migration Policy is a very complex area of cooperation replete with ambiguous procedures and rules. See also Kostakopoulou *et al.* (2009).
17 Germany was reintroducing border checks backed by the European Commission. See EurActiv with Reuters (2015b).
18 Allowing new countries into the Schengen area requires the unanimous approval of the EU states part of this zone (non-EU members Norway, Iceland and Switzerland have no voting rights).
19 The European Parliament, whose vote is only consultative, has also called on member states to accept Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area because they meet all technical requirements. For more information on the precise procedure of the Schengen Evaluation Mechanism see European Commission (2007).
20 According to the Dublin Convention signed in 1990, the EU member state that is responsible to examine an application for asylum seekers entering the EU will be the state through which the asylum seeker first entered the EU. See EurActiv with Reuters (2015a).
21 The Dutch government publicised its intention to place video-surveillance equipment at its borders with Belgium and Germany. The exact name of this camera system (which is a pilot scheme) is @MIGO-BORAS. See Rettman (2012).
22 Following the 2007 Enlargement, Austrian border controls deployed 1500 soldiers. See Atger (2008: 11).
23 See BBC (2015) and William (2015).
24 This suggestion corresponds to an earlier research on the strategy of ‘interculturalism’ as an integration project forwarded by the European Commission which aim is, *inter alias*, to desecuritise immigration in the EU. See Alkopher (2015).

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