

Was Max Weber a 'Nationalist'? A Study in the Rhetoric of Conceptual Change

Kari Palonen

Abstract

In this article I question Max Weber's 'nationalistic' reputation from the viewpoint of conceptual change. His commitment to 'economic nationalism' in 1895 is compared to his advocacy of 'anti-nationalistic national policy' in December 1918. Weber's vocabulary and rhetoric is analysed in strictly nominalistic terms, permitting the change in his attitude to nationalism to become intelligible in his work and its context. This change is partly due to a narrower range of reference in Weber's conception of nationalism, which is partly a consequence of a clearer distinction between 'nationalism' and the value concept of 'nation'. The article illustrates the possibilities of a microscopic study of the history of concepts, using a single author, a single concept, and two quotations of different periods as point of departure for an analysis of conceptual change.

Key words Max Weber, rhetoric, conceptual change, 'nationalism'

1. *The Rhetoric of Self-identification*

Max Weber is commonly regarded as having been a German 'nationalist'. In this article I will question this thesis by analysing in rhetorical terms the conceptual changes concerning Weber's 'nationalism'. I discuss the inclusions and exclusions, identifications and dis-identifications, confessions and rejections that can be reconstructed in Weber's work with regard the figure of 'nationalism'. My point of departure is a strict nominalist view, according to which concepts 'are' the way in which agents use them. Thus, I refuse to discuss the essentialist question of whether or not Weber 'really' was a nationalist as well as such related topics as what is meant by 'nationalism' in general. Questions like these tend to assume that 'nationalism' is an 'objective' existing entity with a well-known 'ordinary meaning', which then could be used as a measure for judgment.

The Anglophone political theory still largely operates by constructing and classifying 'isms' or 'ideologies' as if these were independent

of the specific perspectives and problematics of political agents or theorists. For theorists such as Max Weber these types of projections of party lines on the level of intellectual and conceptual history appear especially misleading. Even a more sophisticated attempt, such as Michael Freedén's 'morphological' approach to the political ideologies (Freedén 1996), retains an objectivistic 'core' in each of the 'ideologies', allowing rhetorical and conceptual variation only in their peripheral dimensions. The agent's own rhetoric of self-identification and dis-identification as well as the historical changes due to the nuances in vocabulary, meaning, evaluation and range of the reference of the concepts are regarded as secondary.

Weber's relation to 'nationalism' provides me an occasion for a study of conceptual change within the *œuvre* of a single author. For this purpose I am interested only in Weber's conceptual horizon as expressed in his texts, and I use historical events and so on here purely as a background for the understanding of conceptual change. The 'truth' of Weber's views is bracketed. As Quentin Skinner writes on Machiavelli's beliefs on mercenary armies, asking for the 'truth' of these beliefs 'will be something analogous to asking whether the king of France is bald' (Skinner 1988: 256).

From my conceptual perspective a classification of Weber's writings as 'academic' and 'polemical' does not make sense. Weber's pamphlets on suffrage, democracy, presidential powers, and so on are key sources for our understanding of his theorizing about politics. His nominalist striving for conceptual revision also shapes his interventions in daily politics. He does not simply adapt himself to the vocabulary of the audience, but makes new distinctions and introduces revisions in meaning or vocabulary (see Palonen 2000). Weber's explicit remarks on 'nationalism' become intelligible only when connected to his nominalist style of concept formation.

My starting point is a comparison of the rhetoric of identification in two formulas: the first from Weber's inaugural lecture at Freiburg University, published in 1895, and the second from a speech given in December 1918.

In a well-known statement from the Freiburg lecture Weber makes a kind of confession and declares himself as an 'economic nationalist':

Denn an jenem *politischen* Wertmassstab, der uns ökonomischen Nationalisten der einzig für uns souveräne ist, messen wir auch die Klassen, welche die Leitung der Nation in der Hand haben oder erstreben (Weber 1895: 565).¹

1. 'We economic nationalists measure the classes who lead the nation or

To my knowledge this is the only passage in Weber's published work in which he commits himself to 'nationalism' of any kind. This passage does not justify the use of 'nationalism' as a global label for Weber's *œuvre*. Changes in Weber's political thinking and in his relationships to political practices in Germany should rather be considered as occasions for a conceptual change in this respect.

I was struck to find in Weber's writings in 1918 a formulation that directly contradicts the nationalism thesis. According to a newspaper report on a speech given in Wiesbaden on 5 December 1918, Weber advocates an 'anti-nationalistic' but 'national' policy for the post-war Germany:

Unsere Politik wird ferner antinationalistisch, nicht antinational sein müssen (Weber 1918c: 122).²

My first question is: has Weber changed his self-identity from 'nationalist' to 'national anti-nationalist'? I will briefly present the controversy among the Weberologists regarding this topic (§2). Both Weber's formulas are rhetorically ambivalent, and I shall check them by comparing the passages with other formulations in Weber's work (§3). I remain, however, convinced that the second formulation is significant for Weber's changing relation to the concept of nationalism.

The next question is: why did Weber change his mind? Is this change related to a revised view of the meaning of 'nationalism' or, rather, to a revised attitude toward 'nationalism'? Or, in the technical terms of Quentin Skinner (1974), is Weber's changing relation to the concept of nationalism due to a change in the 'range of reference' of the concept of nationalism (§4) or to a change in the 'attitude' towards it, independently of a change in the concept of 'nationalism' (§5)?

In the final section I shall make some critical remarks on the study of 'isms', such as 'nationalism', as objects of study in a historically oriented political theory, and discuss the chances of a historical and rhetorical study of concepts as an alternative to the more conventional approaches to political thought.

aspire to do so with the one *political criterion* that we regard as sovereign' (Weber 1994: 20).

2. 'Our policy will, furthermore, necessarily be anti-nationalistic, not antinational'. All translations, unless indicated otherwise, are my own.

2. The Controversy over Weber's 'Nationalism'

Weber has always appeared as an author difficult to classify according to the common textbook criteria of 'isms' (cf. Schelting 1934). The initial move in the present Weberologist controversy was undertaken by Wolfgang Mommsen in his book, *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik 1890–1920* (1974 [1959]). His critique was supported by Raymond Aron in his lecture *Max Weber und die Machtpolitik* (1964). Contrary to Weber's liberal and democratic reputation in post-war Germany, both of them insisted that Weber was a nationalist. In the 1980s Mommsen's interpretation of the Freiburg inaugural lecture was criticized by Wilhelm Hennis (1987), and later also by others, such as Lawrence Scaff (1989) and Catherine Colliot-Thélène (1990), although it did also have its supporters (e.g. Anter 1995).

Mommsen first quotes the view of Weber's former fellow member in the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP), Theodor Heuss, who later was the first *Bundespräsident* of the Federal Republic. According to Heuss, Max Weber had been 'nationalist in all his instincts'. Mommsen also claims that this judgment was justified at least by the tone (*Tenor*) of the Freiburg inaugural lecture, in which Weber consciously declared himself to be an 'economic nationalist' (Mommsen 1974: 40).

Although here Mommsen makes use of Weber's own words I think he is too hasty in his judgement, because he does not pay attention to the question of how they are used. To declare himself as an 'economic nationalist' cannot be judged simply as an inclusion into a broader concept of 'nationalist'; rather the qualification already marks a differentiation from unqualified 'nationalist' identification. However, in general Mommsen's tone concerning Weber's nationalism is nuanced insofar as he acknowledges both the specificity of and historical changes in Weber's concept of the nation. Mommsen concludes that Weber did not question the validity of the national idea and, in this respect, says Mommsen, he was a prisoner of his epoch (Mommsen 1974: 68).

However, here Mommsen neither distinguishes between 'national' and 'nationalist', as Weber himself does, nor does he pay attention to passages in which this distinction is explicitly made. In general, among the proponents of the nationalist thesis, Weber's views are judged without problematizing either his conception of nationalism or the rhetoric of its advocacy in his texts. In Mommsen's case this is not surprising, as the programmatic history of concepts was not yet sketched in the late 1950s, nor were there any signs of 'the rhetorical turn' in historiography.

In his *Max Webers Fragestellung* Wilhelm Hennis revised Weber's place in intellectual history, especially his relations to the older historical economics. It is from this perspective that Hennis rereads Weber's early work. By 1893, Weber had declared that the East Elbian agrarian workers' situation should be analysed 'unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Staatsraison' (Weber 1893: 180). Against Mommsen's interpretation of the nation as the supreme value and purpose of the Weberian political theory (Mommsen 1974: 67-68), Hennis saw the role of the nation, rather, as marking for Weber the 'radius' of the *Lebensordnung* without a normative and teleological commitment (Hennis 1987: 87). His specific concern was to reinterpret the famous passage in Weber's lecture on the value criterion of the economic policy:

Die Volkswirtschaftspolitik eines deutschen Staatswesens ebenso wie der Wertmassstab eines deutschen volkswirtschaftlichen Theoretikers können deshalb eines nur deutsche sein (Weber 1895: 560).³

According to Hennis, this sentence had always been misunderstood as 'nationalistic'. He, however, emphasizes the word *deshalb*, which refers to the previous sentence, in which the 'Qualität der Menschen' is seen as the normative purpose of using the *Staatsräson* (Hennis 1987: 139). Although Hennis does not explicitly refer to Weber's 'economic nationalism', he understands the point of Weber's formula, namely the political control of economic judgments in the name of *Staatsräson*. For Hennis, this control is necessary for the higher 'cultural' purpose of improving the *Lebensführung* in each country (see also Scaff 1989: 31). But his interpretation is still insufficient for the understanding of Weber's conceptual and rhetorical point, and Weber's later distance to 'nationalism' remains unanalysed by Hennis.

Catherine Colliot-Thélène, in her introduction to the French translation of Weber's inaugural lecture, first acknowledges that it seems that the principle of his engagement for the national state did not remain unchanged from 1895 to 1920. As opposed to Aron, she denies that the 'nationalism' of the young Weber was an unreflected adoption of the dominant Wilhelmine ideology. It should, rather, be looked at from a Nietzschean perspective: the national power (*puissance*) is not desirable *per se* but as a means in the service of the human greatness (Colliot-Thélène 1990: 104, 107, 110). However, no explicit reference can be found in her article to 'economic nationalism'.

3. 'The economic policy of a German state, and, equally, the criterion of value used by a German economic theorist, can therefore only be a German policy or criterion' (Weber 1994: 15).

To sum up, the revisions of Weber's views do not question his 'nationalism', but rather emphasize the peculiarities and the historical changes in his 'nationalism'. They have provided textual and contextual evidence against the received view, but, in order to better understand the Weberian formulas quoted in the beginning and the historical differences between them, a more detailed conceptual and rhetorical analysis remains to be done. In this paper I present some illustrative examples based on the best available sources—representative anecdotes in the sense of Kenneth Burke (1969)—for such a study.

3. From 'Economic Nationalist' to Proponent of 'Anti-Nationalist National Policy'

It seems worth asking whether Weber's 'economic nationalism' also marks a self-irony by using the title of 'nationalism' in an unconventional context. Economic nationalism does not, in his case, simply signify a protectionist economic policy, but, more generally, a control of economic development by political means. This has several layers, including the Hennisian 'cultural' dimension of the 'quality of human beings'. However, the primacy of the political in economic judgments as used by Weber also means an overcoming of the narrow private economic interests of the Prussian Junkers in favour of a wider and political criterion of the *Machtinteressen der Nation* or *Staatsräson* (Weber 1895: 560-61).

In the Junker practice of hiring cheaper Polish agrarian workers (from Russian areas) to do seasonal work Weber sees a neglect of the *Staatsräson* and a lack of political judgment regarding economic questions (Weber 1895: 550-53). The private interests of the Junkers neglected the political interests of Germany in its relations both to Russia and to the other European powers. The Weberian concept of *Staatsräson* always refers to his view on European politics as a balance of great powers (*Mächte*). In the 1890s, the era of *Weltpolitik*, Weber saw Germany's position as world power threatened by its domestic policy, especially by its subordination to the private interests of the Junkers. In this context, the 'national' character of the German state was for Weber, strictly speaking, not a value criterion but rather a historical condition for playing the role of great power in the late-nineteenth century (Weber 1895: 560-61, for the role of *Staatsräson* as a criterion of political judgment in Weber's early critique of depoliticizing tendencies see Palonen 1998: 60-71).

Had Weber, thus, given up his 'nationalism' (of this special kind),

when a month after the end of the First World War he advocated an anti-nationalist yet national policy? Could someone like Weber have been turned into a 'national anti-nationalist'? Before considering this question, a closer look at Weber's nation-vocabulary in the post-war context is necessary.

In his *Nachwort* to the volume on Weber's contributions to post-war German politics Wolfgang Mommsen speaks without hesitation of 'nationalistic elements' when he assesses Weber's speeches around the foundation of the DDP and the campaign for the Constituent Assembly in January 1919 (Mommsen 1991: 159). Mommsen thus did not see any reduction of 'nationalism' in Weber's post-war writings. In order to criticize this view, I shall analyse Weber's own vocabulary in detail. Mommsen does not make use of the nuances in Weber's formulations, which, however, would be necessary for understanding the seemingly small yet potentially significant shifts in Weber's conceptual horizon.

One way of analysing Weber's horizon of 'nationalism' is to draw attention to its rhetorical re-descriptions (see Skinner 1996: Ch. 4; Skinner 1999), that is, to expressions which are sometimes used synonymously to nationalism, but which have different normative connotations. One such expression was, of course, 'chauvinism'. If we compare Weber's vocabulary from the 1890s with his post-war vocabulary, the role of chauvinism is clearly different. According to the index of volume I/4 of the *Max-Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, Weber refers only once in the 1890s to 'chauvinism', and then in quotation marks, in order to avoid obvious objection to his views on the 'national' policy of Germany in the East Elbian areas:

wer glauben sollte, dass wir im Osten nationale Politik aus 'Chauvinismus' treiben—nun, der kann oder will nicht verstehen, um was es sich handelt (Weber 1893: 182).⁴

Weber then clearly saw that his defence of a 'national policy' was falsely accused of 'chauvinism'. This was a defensive argument. However, in his post-war writings, he himself on several occasions turned 'chauvinism' into a description of probable and dangerous consequences, which would threaten Germany if it were not treated in an 'honourable' manner in the peace negotiations:

4. 'anyone who might think that it is for 'chauvinistic' reasons that we follow a national policy in the eastern areas either cannot or does not want to understand what is the issue'.

das alles würde selbstverständlich dazu führen, daß auch der politisch radikalste Arbeiter Deutschlands—nicht jetzt, wohl aber nach Jahr und Tag, wenn der jetzige Taumel und die folgende Ermattung vorüber sind—zum Chauvinisten würde (Weber 1919c: 61).⁵

The reference to German *irridenta* is interpreted by Mommsen (1991: 159) as a 'crescendo' of Weber's post-war nationalism. Weber refers to *irridenta* on two occasions, again in the manner of a prognosis of the consequences of a peace not worthy of a great power, and not as a claim of self-identification (Weber 1918a: 126; 1919a: 31). On the first occasion Weber uses the word 'nationalism' with a certain positive connotation in the imaginary situation of defending the German *irridenta* in the east against 'foreign' rule. Here 'nationalism' refers to a kind of defence of the German *Staatsräson*, as opposed to the sort of 'nationalism' that was practised by the proto-militarist student corporations.

Der Redner wandte sich an die Studentenschaft... Wer in der drohenden deutschen Irridenta nicht bereit ist, revolutionäre Methoden anzuwenden und Schafott und Zuchthaus zu riskieren, der soll sich künftig nicht einen Nationalisten nennen (Weber 1918a: 126).⁶

Once again, 'nationalism' is given a slightly ironic tone, referring to the Weberian distinction between an ethics of conviction and an ethics of responsibility presented a couple of months later in *Politik als Beruf* (Weber 1919b). The nationalism of the student corporations was only a *Gesinnung*, while a consequent 'nationalistic' value orientation in the post-war situation would have required taking responsibility for a definite policy and all of its consequences. However, there is no hint in the quoted passage that Weber would have identified himself with this sort of 'nationalistic' variant of the ethic of responsibility.

On the contrary, there are clear hints that Weber, in the post-war context, consciously dissociated the 'national' from neighbouring concepts (Skinner 1996), with which it was often associated. In early November 1918, a few days before the German capitulation, a newspaper report used the following formula for Weber's speech:

5. 'all this would obviously lead to a situation in which even the politically most radical German worker would turn to chauvinists—not now but after a year and a day, after the present unrest and the following exhaustion have passed away'.

6. 'The speaker addressed to the students... Who, in the face of a danger to German *irridenta*, is not ready to make use of revolutionary methods and to risk scaffold and prison, should not in the future call himself a nationalist'.

Wir stehen nun vor der Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Neuorientierung der äusseren Politik. Dies soll national, aber nicht imperialistisch sein (Weber 1918b: 114).⁷

'National' is here used as a counter-concept to 'imperialistic'. The qualification of the policy *antinationalistisch*, *nicht antinational* a month later is clearly a variation of this thesis, although a more radical formulation. Not only is 'nationalism' then distinguished from its 'compromised' variants, but Weber takes a step further in the rhetorical redescription and replaces the opposition 'national vs. imperialistic' with a distinction between 'national' and 'nationalistic'. In addition, although we must once again be cautious in regarding this as Weber's conviction, it is remarkable that, at least with regard to a situational strategy for German foreign policy after the defeat, he is prepared to support an 'anti-nationalistic' policy.

Weber speaks in a similar sense, but again using 'imperialistic' as a counter-attribute to the 'national', in his brochure *Deutschlands künftige Staatsform*, written at approximately the same time as the Wiesbaden speech. In his theses, he writes in the first paragraph on new 'tasks' of renouncing the imperialist dreams:

Klare Verzicht auf imperialistische Träume und also rein autonomistisches Nationalitätsideal. Selbstbestimmung aller deutscher Gebiete zur Einigung in einem unabhängigen Staat zur rückhaltslos friedlicher Pflege unsrer Eigenart im Kreise des Völkerbunds (Weber 1919a: 30).⁸

Thus, although Weber's use of the 'anti-nationalistic' attribute is only occasional and is quoted from a newspaper report, there are other expressions in Weber's post-war writings which distinguish between 'national' and 'nationalistic'. These expressions make it wholly plausible that Weber really could advocate an 'anti-nationalistic' policy. In other words, close attention to rhetoric and vocabulary indicate that Mommsen's attribution of the title of 'nationalism' to Weber's post-war writings is contrary to Weber's own usage.

In this sense, I argue that the shift in Weber's conceptual horizon from a (qualified) 'nationalism' of the 1890s to a distancing from the use of this concept in 1918–19 represents a real and significant conceptual change.

7. 'We are now facing the necessity of a complete re-orientation of the foreign policy. This should be a national but not an imperialistic one'.

8. 'A clear renunciation of imperialistic dreams and adoption of a purely autonomous ideal of nationality. Self-determination of all German areas aiming at unification into an independent state for the purpose a peaceful care of our own qualities within the sphere of the League of Nations'.

4. Weber's Changing Conception of 'Nationalism'

The arguments I have presented so far seem to imply a clear tendency towards narrowing the meaning of 'nationalism' in Weber's vocabulary. Now I shall check this thesis by taking 'snapshots' from Weber's other writings and also through the contextual evidence provided by the secondary literature. Weber's attitude toward this narrower concept of 'nationalism' was clearly much more critical than that toward his earlier use of the concept. The eventual change in attitude will be discussed in the next section.

Weber's intellectual background was in the National Liberal party, which accepted Bismarck's policy in 1866. His 'uncle', the historian Hermann Baumgarten, was an important ideologist of this political move (see Baumgarten 1974 [1866]), and his father also sat for some time on the Reichstag. From his early youth onwards Max Weber was accustomed to talking politics, and in the 1880s Baumgarten, who by then, however, had severed ties with Bismarck, became Weber's political mentor (see Weber 1936). In the early 1890s Weber moved towards pastor Friedrich Naumann's 'National-social' Association. It is Weber's reformist interest in the social and political consequences of the German-Prussian economic policy that can be seen in the background of his 'economic nationalism' (see Mommsen 1974: 1-36, 132-46; Scaff 1989: 11-72). The older, purely etatist view on *Staatsräson* was not alone sufficient, and both domestic and socio-economic elements had to be included in the concept and in the political judgment of the relations between the great powers.

The introduction of the socio-economic dimension to the concept of the 'nation', especially the aspects of social integration and political participation, added a 'French' connotation to Weber's views, as opposed to the *Staatsräson* of the Prussian *Obrigkeitsstaat*. This does not, however, mean the neglect of the international dimension of the *Staatsräson*; on the contrary, this dimension was explicitly present in Weber's extension of the concept to domestic issues. Weber was committed to the *Weltpolitik*, to the extension of the competition between the 'great powers' outside Europe, which is visible, for example, in his advocacy of an export-oriented view on the German economy (e.g. Weber 1897). In contexts such as this, Weber does not, however, speak of 'nationalism'.

Weber joined the *Alldeutscher Verband* in 1893. According to Mommsen he originally did not reject clearly the 'ethnic' nationalism of the association. But Weber left the association in 1899 on the

grounds that it was not radically enough opposed to the agrarian interests of their use of Polish agrarian workers (Mommsen 1974: 58-59). A new *völkisch* type of 'nationalism' with anti-Semitic connotations arose in the 1890s in both Germany and France, and the *All-deutscher Verband* soon became one of the representatives of this kind of nationalism in Germany, of which Weber wanted no part. The Social Darwinist legitimation of nationalism was another aspect that aroused Weber's opposition (see his critique of 'rein zoologischen Nationalismus' from 1911, quoted in Mommsen 1974: 70).

'Cultural' nationalism, however, remained a challenge for him, and he seems to have found a new perspective on this through his studies on the Russian Revolution of 1906. He speaks of 'extreme nationalism' without the slightest sympathies (Weber 1906: 29, 60). He was impressed above all by the programmes of Russian liberals, especially those based on the views of the Ukrainian federalist Dragomanov from 1880s on cultural autonomy as a means to deal with the nationality questions (Weber 1906: esp. 21-31; see Mommsen 1974: 60-64). During the first World War he used this idea in his proposals to integrate the Poles into the German Empire (Weber 1916a: 75).

Weber's most explicit discussions on the concept of the nation can be found in two discussion statements at a meeting of the German Sociological Association in 1912 as well as in two chapters of the older parts of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, written around 1913 (Mommsen 1974: 55-56). His remarks on all of these occasions are primarily academic and non-committed. The general tone stresses the complexity of the problematics, but in his reply to Paul Barth, Weber does cautiously formulate a kind of working 'definition' of the nation as a community based on emotions:

Es liesse sich ein Begriff von Nation wohl nur etwa so definieren: sie ist eine gefühlsmässige Gemeinschaft, deren adäquater Ausdruck ein eigener Staat wäre, die also normalerweise die Tendenz hat, einen solchen aus sich hervorzutreiben (Weber 1912: 484).⁹

From today's perspective this view looks anachronistic when universalizing the connection between 'nation' and 'state'. The same is even more clearly true for two discussion statements, in which Weber speaks of 'nationalist' reaction against the papal imperialism in the late Middle Ages (Weber 1912: 486).

9. 'It would be possible to define the concept of the nation roughly as follows: it is a community based on feelings, for which an independent state would be an adequate expression; it is normally the case that the community brings about such a state'.

Instead of this un-historical use of concepts, Weber proposes a kind of 'deconstruction' of the concept in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. The general point of the chapter on the *Nation*, as political community in particular, is to illustrate with historical counter-examples the insufficiency of all commonly proposed candidates for 'defining' the nation and the hopelessness of the search for a definite concept. Weber, however, offers a minimalist and paradoxical proposal:

'Nation' ist ein Begriff, der, wenn überhaupt eindeutig, dann jedenfalls nicht nach empirischen gemeinsamen Qualitäten der ihr Zugerechneten definiert werden kann. Er besagt, im Sinne derer, die ihn jeweilig brauchen, zunächst unzweifelhaft, dass gewisse Menschengruppen ein spezifisches Solidaritätsempfinden anderen gegenüber zuzumuten sei, gehört also der Wertsphäre an (Weber 1922: 528).¹⁰

What, however, remains of such an allegedly common value after Weber's nominalistic destruction of all attempts to 'define' the concept by empirical criteria? The minimalist 'definition' turns the concept into a mere matter of value. As an analytic concept 'nation' only refers to a vague expectation of a feeling of solidarity. Weber's concept of 'nation' can thus be characterized as a 'descriptive-evaluative concept' (Skinner 1974), in which a tacit normative connotation is used to cover the emptiness of the common content among the users of this concept.

The normative, but, in its reference, empty character of the concept is also alluded to in an ironic passage emphasizing the most eager 'nationalists' to be often of foreign origin (Weber 1922: 528). This is the only mention of 'nationalism' in the *Nation* chapter, and according to Winckelmann's index, this is the only appearance of the concept in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*.

After these moves of dissolving the core of the concept of the 'nation', it becomes more intelligible that Weber himself, despite his continuous commitment to the 'value' of the nation, distances himself from 'nationalism'. He obviously viewed nationalism as presupposing the 'givenness' of the nation and hypostatizing a policy into an 'ism'.

As is commonly known, Weber did, as many others, initially show

10. 'If the concept of "nation" can in any way be defined unambiguously, it certainly cannot be stated in terms of empirical qualities common to those who count as members of the nation. In the sense of those using the term at a given time, the concept undoubtedly means, above all, that it is proper to expect from certain groups a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups. Thus, the concept belongs in the sphere of values' (Weber 1978: 922).

some enthusiasm for the war and served a year as a voluntary administrative chief of a military hospital. Then, from autumn 1915 until the end of the war, he wrote several contributions against expansionist war aims—how far his own aims could be judged as ‘expansionist’ in retrospect does not matter here—and urged for a democratization of the suffrage in Prussia. A commitment to a ‘national viewpoint’ remains central in Weber’s war-time writings (e.g. Weber 1916a: 63), and he used the distinction between *Machtstaaten*, such as Germany, and *Kleinstaaten*, such as Denmark or Switzerland, as an instrument against the pacifist propaganda (esp. Weber 1916b: 39-41). This distinction was again based in his view of world politics as one in which only the great powers were the real players and the small states were dependent on the balance between the great powers.

The only reference to ‘nationalism’ in the index of the volume *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg* alludes to a passage from Weber’s plea for the universal suffrage and parliamentarism in Germany. Weber claims that just democratic parties are everywhere the main agents of nationalism:

überall sind *mitherrschende* [sic] demokratische Parteien Träger des Nationalismus. Der zunehmende Nationalismus der gerade der Massen ist nur natürlich in einem Zeitalter, welches die Teilnahme an den Gütern der nationalen Kultur, deren Träger nun einmal die nationale Sprache ist, zunehmend demokratisiert (Weber 1917: 156).¹¹

This is a cool academic statement on the consequences of democratization in a brochure in which Weber argues in great detail against all kinds of ‘alternatives’ to a democratized suffrage. According to Weber bourgeois parties have no reason to be afraid of democratization and democratization by no means *per se* favours a Socialist revolution. At the same time in the quoted passage he alludes to a situation that the dangers of nationalism should be faced as a by-product of democratization.

Even before the First World War Weber, then, was careful not to identify himself as a ‘nationalist’, and his war-time writings did not mean a backsliding into his earlier vocabulary. I can think of at least two different reasons why, while keeping with the ‘nation’ and ‘national policy’, he dissociated himself from ‘nationalism’—to the

11. ‘Democratic parties which *share in government* are bearers of nationalism everywhere. It is only natural that nationalism should be spreading amongst the masses in particular in an age that is becoming increasingly democratic in the way it provides access to the goods of national culture, the bearer of which is, after all, the *language of the nation*’ (Weber 1994: 82).

point of advocating an 'anti-nationalist' policy in the situation following Germany's defeat in the war. First, the most vociferous 'nationalists' advocated extremist policies to which Weber was strictly opposed, that is, anti-Semitic, racist, chauvinist or expansionist policies. Any advocate of a 'national' policy at this time had explicitly to deny any support of these sorts of policies.

Secondly and more interesting is Weber's own style of concept formation. He was a strict nominalist who abhorred any essentialist, substantialist or collectivist concepts. If we look closely at his conceptualization of the nation in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, it is based on the expectation of a feeling of solidarity. Like other concepts of expectation (cf. Weber 1913), it should be understood in terms of *Chancen*, which is a key concept for Weber. (For a closer discussion Palonen 1998: 133-42, 209-16). The 'nation' is based on an expectation of the availability of certain chances of solidarity. For Weber 'nation', like other *Ordnungen und Mächte* (his original title for *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*), is a highly contingent product. For him to advocate 'nationalism' would obscure its contingent character.

5. Nationalism and Nation

A shift in Weber's relation to 'nationalism' can thus be made intelligible. He moved towards using the concept in a narrower sense, and this move also enabled him to sever the link between 'nation' and 'nationalism' which he clearly presupposed in the 1890s. Or, using a football metaphor: Max Weber remained an engaged 'fan of Germany', but over the course of time he made it explicit that this did not imply harming the competitors, in particular, the smaller states. Their 'cultural tasks' in world politics were merely different from those of Germany as a great power (Weber 1916a).

However, my discussion leaves open the question of whether we can speak of a change in his normative orientation toward 'nationalism' independently of the changes in the concept. In order to answer this question, a certain link between 'nation' and 'nationalism' cannot be denied. Did Weber's increasingly critical attitude towards 'nationalism' also mean that the value of the core concept 'nation' was to some extent devalued, especially as compared with the state?

Weber's concept of the nation is not entirely distinguishable from the state, and both in the Freiburg lecture and later he explicitly uses the concept *Nationalstaat*, although he also problematizes, if not deconstructs, the relation between them in his discussion in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. His views in the 1890s transcended the conventional view

on the *Staatsräson* in the name of the nation, but then, for example, his views on the cultural autonomy within a federal state again meant a step toward the primacy of the state. In his war-time writings, however, the 'nation'—in the 'French' sense of an integrative and participative unit—again gained superiority over the state, but was now dissociated from its *völkisch* connotations.

The advocacy of an 'anti-nationalist' policy for the defeated Germany meant perhaps a renewed emphasis on the state, as the key unit, that participates in the competition of great powers. The affirmation of Germany's role as a *Machtstaat* appears in Weber's thinking to have retained its priority over the nation throughout the period. In other words, his ultimate point of reference is the political struggle between the great powers. Weber's post-war commitments, including his rejection of the Versailles Treaty, seem to refer to a danger of replacing the balance between competing powers by the hegemonic situation of one of them (see his remarks on Woodrow Wilson as 'der erste wirkliche Weltbeherrscher' [Weber 1918b: 113]). It is not the fate of Germany but the presence of a plurality of 'powers' in world politics that is Weber's main anxiety after the First World War.

I could invoke other Weberian value concepts, such as freedom and individuality (cf. Palonen 1999), but he hardly ever opposed them to the 'nation'. They, however, illustrate a perspective towards which his 'deconstruction' of the concept of the 'nation' was never followed at the level of his own political identifications. Unlike *Macht* and *Staat*, explicated as complexes of chances (Weber 1922: 28-29), *Nation* remained for Weber a quasi-mythical label containing a positive value, and he upheld this value by disregarding the specific chances contained in his own nominalist dissolution of the concept. In this sense, it seems to me that the relatively marginal change at the level of the attitudes makes it justified to call Weber, although not a 'nationalist', an apologist of the nation state within the concert of great powers.

6. Conclusions

The received view of Weber as a 'nationalist' remains strong, not only in the Weber literature, but also through an 'impressionistic' reading of Weber's own texts. A revised interpretation of Weber's standpoint is achieved here through giving more systematic attention to his own vocabulary and rhetoric as well as to the conceptual shifts over time.

It seems to me that the critique of textbooks and anachronisms, present in the Anglophone political thought at least since Collingwood (1939, 1994), is even today not fully recognized. I regard this as a

remnant of a 'foundationalism' which assumes that at least some common core must be presupposed when using common concepts. Both rhetoric and history of concepts can, however, be used as heuristic instruments of analysis in order to avoid this sort of foundationalism. A source for this anti-foundationalism can also be found in Max Weber's perspectivist view of knowledge, as presented in his famous *Objektivität* article (Weber 1904).

Weber's writing on the concept of the *Nation* in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* could also be used as a fine example of dissolving the foundationalist assumption. The clue, suggested by Weber himself in his 1918 Wiesbaden speech, is problematizing the link between 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The *Spielräume* for both historical changes and rhetorical variations in Weber's thought can be analysed in terms of his own rhetorical moves. Interpreting Weber as a nominalist theorist who rethinks politics in terms of the operative contingency of *Chancen* (Palonen 1998) allows me to make the gap between 'nation' and 'nationalism' intelligible. Furthermore, we can ask whether his commitment, after all (*dennoch*), to the 'nation' or 'Germany' remains a private belief, poorly adapted to his nominalist perspective to action and politics.

In this article I have practised a kind of microscopic variant in the study of the history of concepts. I have used a single author, a single concept, and two short quotations of different periods as point of departure, which is then completed by further textual evidence and contextual background knowledge both of Weber and of politics and history in his time. While the programmatic history of concepts (e.g. Koselleck 1979) is mainly interested in macroscopic studies with extensive materials, my study indicates that a concentration on conceptual changes can gain advantages over the conventional history ideas also when short-term changes in the political usage of the concepts are studied.

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