

A Preliminary Discussion on the Notion of Nationalism in Weber's Thought: Max Weber and His Cogitation of Nationalism

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Abstract: Nationalism is known as the product of the continuation of the Enlightenment in Western Europe. Although this ideology has an established place in studies on political science and has been a subject studied by political scientists, discussing whether the founding fathers of sociology had deliberated or not on this would be interesting. Max Weber seems to have developed an interest in the concept of nationalism after getting his professorship in economics. Once nationalism became a mainstream phenomenon among the world communities at the end of 20th century, Weber's approach evoked interest among social scientists. This paper pays attention to Weber's discussion of this notion in the context of German nationalism mostly based on the socio-political changes he witnessed. The basic question is what was Weber's idea about nationalism and its place in his sociological and economic views? This paper tries to answer this question by comparatively going through sources. This preliminary work intends to review the ideas of Weber's nationalism by engaging in the existing literature which is believed to be meaningful. This article limitedly addresses the reconstruction of Weber's concept of nationality based on the availability of relevant data by revealing the academic discussion.

Keywords: Max Weber, Germany, nation, nationalism, national economy.

Öz: Milliyetçilik, Batı Avrupa Aydınlanma sürecinin bir ürünü olarak bilinmektedir. Bu ideoloji, siyaset biliminde yerleşik bir nitelik arz etmesine ve siyaset bilimciler tarafından ele alınan bir konu olmasına rağmen, sosyolojinin kurucu babalarının tartışma konusu yapıp yapılmadığına bakmakta yarar var. Bu çerçevede, Max Weber, ekonomi alanında profesörlüğü almasıyla birlikte milli/yetçilik kavramına ilgi gösterdiği anlaşılmaktadır. 20. yüzyıl sonlarında milliyetçilik dünya toplumlarında öne çıkan bir olgu olmasıyla birlikte, sosyal bilimciler arasında Weber'in yaklaşımı ilgi çekmiştir. Bu çalışma, Weber'in Alman milliyetçiliği bağlamında ve özellikle de, tanık olduğu sosyal-siyasal değişimler temelinde bu kavramı ele alışı üzerinde durmaktadır. Temel soru şudur: Weber'in milliyetçilik hakkındaki ve bu olgunun onun sosyolojik ve/ya ekonomi görüşündeki yeri nedir? Bir ön çalışma kabul edilebilecek olan bu makalede, ilgili kaynaklar karşılaştırmalı bir yöntemle ele alınmak suretiyle, Weber'in milliyetçilik kavramı hakkındaki görüşü incelenerek, söz konusu soruya cevap aranmaktadır. Bu makale, mevcut kaynaklar üzerinden Weber'in milliyetçilik kavramının yeniden inşasını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Max Weber, Almanya, millet, milliyetçilik, milli ekonomi.

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Introduction

The notion of nationalism has a long formative history starting with some of the premature ideas and structures during the time of the Romans until the end of the French Revolution in the late 18th century (Renan, 1992, p. 2). Although the concept of nation is no doubt a complicated phenomenon, what has made it notorious over the centuries is its connection with the initiation of modern capitalism (Anderson, 2006, p. 37). Moreover, nationalism as an ideology is the product of modernity, whose fundamental characteristics have been molded by Enlightenment thought in Western Europe.

This notion obviously developed throughout successive periods such as the Reformation in the first part of 16th century, the religious wars between the Protestants and Catholics as observed mostly in the second part of 16th and first part of the 17th centuries, as well as in the Renaissance and the French Revolution (1789). As the consequence of this *longué durée*, modern nation states were constructed in alignment with a certain type of ideological stance toward nationalism, which observed the “transformation of the community of subjects to the community of citizens” (Scott, 2017, p. 163; Ay, 2004, p. 224).¹ This crucial change has been functionally and definitively studied in European social science. As socio-political changes happen, social scientists in particular take these changes into account and venture to conceptualize them. Meanwhile, the question also occurs as to whether scholarly circles have ideological affiliations with nationalism.

The modern concept of nationalism attracted the attention of social scientists such as Max Weber in the 19th and early 20th centuries. When compared with the other founding fathers of sociology, Weber can be seen to have had a peculiar way of understanding nationalism. As will be clarified in the following pages, Weber described himself as an “economic nationalist” (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, pp. 436, 438, 442; Roth, 2006, p. 185; Palonen, 2001, p. 197; Church, 2011) in relation to his approaches to certain economic aspects of the German state. This is believed to have been mostly initiated by his study of economics focusing on the agrarian problems of the then German industrialized nation-state, which Weber advocated as having strong capitalist foundations. This approach is observed in his statements against the economic stance of the *Junkers*, which were creating disadvantageous conditions

1 This notion is connoted with the reformation movement that emerged through the accounts of Martin Luther in Germany or German Humanists and are credited to the premature context of nation/nationality which was developed to be anti-Italian and anti-papal. The latter at the same time, refers to the secular content of the concept (Scott, 2017, p. 162).

for the German economy in competition with other nation-states (Swedberg, 2003, p. 287; Kim, 2002, p. 443).

Highlighting some pertinent questions is appropriate here, such as what was Weber's notion of nationalism about? What spurred him to work upon this theme? In which context did he deal with the concept of nationalism? What discussions did his thought result in among scholarly circles? One should note this paper does not describe the notions of nationalism and sociology of nationalism Max Weber developed. However, referring to Weber's own writings and the critical perspectives developed by other researchers is inevitable when trying to comprehend the issue of nationalism. His stance against the notion of nationalism will be analyzed by referring to the established literature and his own writings as much as possible and by reaching a conclusion after all the discussions. Although no exact definition of nationalism is found in Weber's accounts, he is assumed to have related nationalism with modern states that have the peculiarity of having determined territories (Weber, 2004, pp. 33, 38).

These features might be regarded as restrictive forms of German peculiarities during his lifetime. In the following decades, Weber additionally became closely observant of the developments commencing from the social and political symptoms of World War I, in particular the issue of nation-states and international politics in Europe afterward. Although he was not actively involved in any political parties, he was affiliated with certain professional bodies.² For instance, this institution's primary interest in political parties was what attracted him to becoming a member of *Verein für Sozialpolitik* in 1873 (Mayer, 1956, pp. 23, 25; Mueller. 1986, pp. 4, 5;

2 Weber entered into quasi-socio-political movements, such as the Protestant Social Congress in which his cousin Otto Baumgarten had played a salient role since its establishment in 1890 (Roth, 1993, p. 152), as well as some others such as the Union for Social Policy and the Christian Social Congress (Mueller, 1986, p. 4). Similarly, he attended some meetings of political institutions such as the National Social Party (1896) and the Pan-German League, which he abandoned in 1899 (Zimmerman, 2006, pp. 53, 63). Most importantly, however, he criticized the political system during the Wilhelmine Period in Germany, and once the German army was defeated in WWI, he strongly opposed labor associations' attempts to gain power. During these few years he participated in two addresses of the Democratic Party during election process and became an active member of a commission to design the new constitution (Schröder & Whimster, 2013, pp. 16, 19, 22).

Weber was of the opinion that Germany was a "European world power" (Owen, Strong 2004, p. xxxix). Despite justifying the influence Heinrich von Treitschke had on Weber's political thought as observed in the Weber's emphasis on "German's world power policy" in the Freiburg lecture, Mommsen similarly assumed Weber's acquisition of Treitschke's imperialist view to be very limited (Mommsen 1990, p. 10), and as a family friend of the Weber family, Mommsen projected that young Weber would become a prospective politician (Mueller, 1986, p. 2).

Mommsen, 2006, p. 6).³ Weber also wrote the book *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland* [Suffrage and Democracy in Germany] in 1917 about the election and its legislation processes and importantly proved that he had observed the political development in his country (Barbalet, 2001, p. 140; Golovin, 2019, p. 138; Adair-Toteff, 2019, p. 225). One should remember that his involvement in national and foreign policies is observable in his critical approach to the right-wing nationalists who had the upper hand just after the post-war politics (Swedberg, 2003, p. 287).⁴

In a sense, this paper is a quest to generally comprehend the discussions on the concepts of nation and nationalism as Max Weber had accentuated in some of his writings pertaining to the above-mentioned changing economic structure in the field of agriculture and some other regional and international politics based on World War I. This study believes two distinct aspects of nationalism exist in the discussions on Weberian sociology. One relates to the sociology of nationalism, which Max Weber can be argued to have developed himself. The second is the issue of whether Weber was a nationalist or not. In this regard, social scientists have tried to provide answers, with some appearing to have obfuscated Weber's nationalist stance.

This article will explore more on the second issue through a critical analysis of some researchers as well as by expounding upon both these works and Weber's own relevant papers. Here one should remember the reason for the Weberian stimulus in the past few decades regarding the notion of nationalism to be its fundamentally ties to the translations of his major works into English for the purpose of serving the readers in English-speaking countries (Swedberg, 2003, p. 284). These translations have also allowed scholarly circles to comprehend Weber's recently discovered notion of nationalism and evaluate contemporary developments, particularly the post-1989 epoch of increased nationalism. Because some sociologists' works on this theme are quite inciting, this study will analytically approach and evaluate them by comparing them with Weber's original texts.

This approach will be used in an attempt to restrictively frame Weber's idea of nationalism. As Weber's discussions on nationalism kept changing throughout his life, some researchers, who may be called Weberologists, have framed the debate

3 *Verein für Sozialpolitik* was a representative academic institution and/or "political organization" as implicitly argued by Zimmerman, harboring conservative politics aligned with the "racial politics of the Prussian state" (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 61).

4 Weber's involvement of the domestic, regional and global political issues is quite interesting. His prediction of the US entry to the WWI made his mind occupied by new ideas. For that purpose, though reluctant, contributed by his writing to a compilation titled *Mittel-Europa* during the war years. He was invited to take part in the committee of German state in Versailles Treaty in Paris (Mayer, 1956, p. 58).

around his *Antrittsrede* [Freiburg Inaugural Speech] on May 13, 1895 and on another speech in December 1918 after the end of World War I. These two distinct periods are believed to show that not only Weber's thoughts but also the *realpolitik* in Germany had changed significantly (Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 11; Palonen, 2001, p. 197; Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, p. 145; Norkus, 2004, p. 392; Kim, 2002, p. 443). Certain works from Weber and other scholars' critical papers will be outlined to mark the process of how Weber had conceptualized nationalism. This approach will allow understanding of how and through which processes Weber had developed the concept of nationalism as a delicate ideological perspective.

Perceiving the Weberian Concept of Nationalism

When analytically searching the literature that tells something significant about the notion of nationalism in Weber's work, although no polemical account of Weber exists, a certain division of sorts does occur among the interpreters. In a general sense, although he is considered to have been a German nationalist throughout his life (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p. 21), scrutinizing his sociological context and inquiry about this theme is also crucial for being able to arrive a certain clarification about the background of Weber's nationalist stance.

As such, one should assert that Weber cannot be easily labelled a nationalist by reducing his statements in the Freiburg lecture to a mere political ideology. Very briefly inspecting the general framework of Weber's theory of political democracy as argued in *Economy and Society*, which offers an alternative to some other political ideologies including nationalism, would be salient for this purpose (Roth, 1978, p. xxxiv).

In this regard, while Marianne Weber described his stance "as a fervent nationalist", Guenther Roth, another biographer of Weber, challenged Marianne's opinion contending that Weber "was not simply a nationalist..., rather there was a tension in his personality between nationalism and cosmopolitanism" (Swedberg, 2003, pp. 284, 286, 287). Aside from this, some other researchers also evaluated Weber's statements to be simply in a form of "the most ardent form of his nationalism" (Kim, 2002, p. 435.). However, this study argues Weber to have remarked on the concept of the value teleologically while emphasizing the political significance of the sovereign nation-state, which was a dominant issue throughout Europe during his own lifetime (Kim, 2002, p. 435; Ay, 2004, p. 226; Norkus, 2004, p. 391). Giving Weber's brief explanation in *Economy and Society* would be better in terms of helping to comprehend this situation. Without providing a well-structured definition, he

asserted the notion of nationalism to be related to an expectation “from certain groups a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups” (Weber, 1978, p. 922).

As such, Weber himself criticized his Freiburg lecture by claiming, “immature as it may have been in many regards, it fought in the most ruthless manner for the sovereignty of national ideas in the field of practical politics” (Roth, 1993, p. 152).⁵ Without disregarding this comment from Weber on his initial thoughts about the nationalist stance being publicly declared, he attributed sociological notions mostly within economics (Swedberg, 2003, p. 284; Norkus, 2004, p. 398) and arguably proposed something strongly related to economic relations as a scholar, calling himself a “political economist” in the above-mentioned lecture (Weber, 2004, p. 1). Asking for a future discussion on whether any differences would be found in understanding Weber’s discussion on nationalism by defining him as an economist or sociologist would be pertinent here.⁶

A preliminarily look can be had at whether he was addressing the concept of nationalism or referring to two of his major lectures (i.e., the Freiburg Address and Politics as a Vocation), the first of which he gave after acquiring the Chair in Economics in 1895 and the second after WWI in 1918; some researchers have subjected these to a unique sociological inquiry (Swedberg, 2003, p. 287). These papers give an overview of Weber’s idea of nationalism, which seems to have been limited by the certain *realpolitik* of Germany and the *Weltpolitik* in general toward the end of his lifetime (Roth, 1993, p. 153; Bellamy, 1992, p. 499),⁷ and this process undoubtedly caused a tendency toward change in Weber’s conceptual revisions in his reference and gave a certain novel meaning (Palonen, 2001, p. 197). This proves that Weber had not significantly developed the concept of nationalism during the 1890s.

This study opines that a few characteristics had impacted Weber’s life, such as being a member of a bourgeois-capitalist family who enjoyed certain liberal political

5 However, Weber does not give details about the points in the lecture with which he did not agree nor to the scale he had corrected himself (Roth, 1993, p. 153). Meanwhile, Weber himself admits in the very initial sentences of this speech that the title of the paper “*Die Nationalität in der Volkswirtschaft*” [Nationality in the Economy] is a prospective, which means the paper was not yet well structured (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 428).

6 After getting the responsibility of the journal *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (1904), Weber and some other members commenced a program called social economics (Roth, 1988, p. 307).

7 Probably because of this *realpolitik*, Aldenhoff-Hübingen stated that Weber had responded to different types of audiences at distinct times between 1895 and 1919 (Roth, 1993, p. 150; Mayer, 1956, p. 16). Not surprisingly, some scholars claim that he “had a good eye for Realpolitik” and was liberal to an extent (Swedberg, 2003, p. 283).

views (i.e., National Liberalism; Mommsen, 1990, p. 2; Brechtken, 2004, p. 446);⁸ by affiliating himself with a strong historical school of thought and with scholars⁹ who closely observed the changing political situation of the Prussian/German State, Weber leaned on the advocacy of his own social class and the future of the state. Overall, Weber seems to have given priority to the “supremacy of the national state” (Weber & Fowkes, 2007, pp. 436, 439; Barbalet, 2001, p. 130). This novel socio-political environment no doubt left its own print on Weber as well (Ay, 2004, p. 224; Kim, 2002, pp. 435, 437). Because the phenomenon of raising nation-states as a new political entity after imperial states required “the formation of public citizenship and moral personality in a modern industrial society,” Weber resorted to the concept of nationalism as a new vehicle to describe the novel relationship. In other words, nations in this new polity were instrumentalized to be morally functional entities. When this stance is regarded because of teleological reasons, Weber defining himself to be an economic nationalist corresponds to an abstract of “universal principles instantiated in the modern state” and the relations between states and economic policies (Church, 2011; Weber & Fowkes, 1980, pp. 436, 438, 442).¹⁰ In this regard and through the arguments developed in Freiburg lecture, Weber can be argued to have not evoked merely a nationalistic issue, which he stated to be “empirically entirely ambiguous” (Weber, 1978, p. 925), but to have rather developed methodologically sociological typologies on the basis of differentiating certain groups (i.e., the German and the Poles).¹¹

- 8 As the son of a father who was “one of the national founders of Bismarck’s Reich,” Weber called himself a “class-conscious bourgeois.” His father belonged to a group of textile manufacturers and was also a parliamentarian (a member of the National-Liberal party) during the reign of Otto von Bismarck (Roth, 1993, p. 151; Bendix, 1977, p. 1).
- 9 A few names such as Hermann Baumgarten and Heinrich Goothard Freiherr von Treitschke (1834-1896), known as national liberals, are found in particular who constructively built nationalist and idealist sensitiveness in Weber’s thought. “Weber became the political confidant” of Baumann who was also a member of the Weber family (Mayer, 1988, p. 18; Mommsen, 1990, pp. 5, 7, 9).
- 10 Weber precisely stated the protection of German character and the (German) state should have an appropriate economic policy pertaining to the above-mentioned economic degradation in the Eastern part of Germany. The fundamental argument behind this policy offer was emphasized through the following sentence: “Our state is a national state” (Weber & Fowkes, 2007, pp. 436, 439). Richard Bendix’s statement in his biography on Weber about him being “a dedicated German nationalist” should be taken into consideration as quite a strong emphasis. He is also understood to have had a certain interest in joining the army; however, he was unsuccessful due to being physically unfit (Bendix, 1988, p. 29). During the same years, after a long period of not being able to produce any work, he initiated enthusiastic contributions to intellectual discussions thorough his writings and public meetings (Shröder, 2013, p. 15).
- 11 Zimmerman stated Weber’s early works between 1892 and 1895, which also includes Freiburg lecture, to have set the fundamentals of his sociological method (2006, p. 61).

One can also claim that this approach also had connections with the economic and political decision-making processes of each nation state. In fact, what Weber implied through the concept of economic nationalism refers to the interests of national power, namely the power of the German state (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 438).

Reviving the Notion of Nationalism

Weber initiated his sociological inquiry into nationalism in line with his doctorate while collecting data in Western Prussia and the Eastern region of Elbe in the early 1890s. He completed his doctorate in 1894 at Freiburg University, and as a tradition in Germany at the time, he gave a lecture originally titled “Nationality in Domestic Economics” the next year in 1895 after being appointed as Chair in the department of Economics and Finance (Barbalet, 2001, p. 128; Roth, 1978, p. xlvii).¹²

Discussions on Weber’s affiliations with nationalism entail two aspects: the meaning of the concept of nationalism in the field of political science and whether the critics have a nominalist or essentialist position.

Weber commented on some concrete issues such as the Polish migrant agricultural workers and peasants in the Western Prussia while discussing economic policies and the concept of nations in his speech (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 428).¹³ He is argued to have been prone toward being anti-Polish due to their lower standards of living and their replacement of German peasants in Western Prussia.

12 Weber had the opportunity to teach at the faculty due to his professor, Professor Goldschmidt, having health problems in 1892 and was appointed professor *extraordinaire* (Mayer, 1956, p. 28). The original title in German is as follows: “*Die Nationalität in der Volkswirtschaft*” [The Nationality in the Economy]. However, Weber replaced this title in the published version as “*Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik*” (The Nation State and Economic Policy). The reason he changed the title was because he hadn’t purposed the theoretical aspects of this subject matter (Bergstraesser, 1957, p. 1; Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, p. 148). What also makes this early lecture and writing important about agrarian issues and economy politics including religious affiliation, economic categories, and national composition pertaining to Eastern Elbe is that the subject was continued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905), Weber’s masterpiece (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 429; Barbalet, 2001, p. 127; Kim, 2002, p. 444). Max Weber initiated more sociological perspectives that also include inquiry into nation and nationality once he switched from Law to Economics in his academic career. After completing his doctorate in Economics in 1894, he appeared competent at highlighting his opinion in front of scholars in his 1895 lecture. Weber and his friend and colleague in the same institution, Werner Sombard, had the opportunity to have a critical approach to the established German Historical School by remarking on values and orientations in giving certain directions to political goals (Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, p. 144). Weber defended his first doctorate at the Law Faculty in 1889 with the title “A Contribution to the History of Medieval Business Organizations” (Bendix, 1977, p. 1).

13 Weber encountered the issue of agricultural labor in Eastern Elbe when his “reserve unit was transferred from Alcase to Posen during his military service in 1888 (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 61).

This supports the interpretation that he was a Prussian nationalist (Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, p. 146).

However, one should clarify that Weber's anti-Polish stance was not in any sense because he was racist. Rather, Weber criticized the policies of manorial *Junkers* who explicitly preferred a "cheap seasonal labor force" that disfavors German peasants and neglects their economic welfare. The fact that the *Junkers* were on the way to self-transformation from petty nobilities into "capitalist entrepreneurs in the second part of the 19th century" and advocating a new policy on tariffs became a danger to the economic and social sustainability of the German state in Weber's eyes (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 433; Roth, 1978, p. xlvi).

This serves as a reminder of the relevancy that some issues such as territory, economic activity, linguistic group, and population have with the concept of nationality. One can assert these characteristics to also be observed as legitimate elements for a nation-state. These and similar issues are considerable ventures to contest for a certain social group whose members are bound to each other and are distinct from some others.

Some critics appear to have targeted this idea, especially those in socialist circles such as Ralf Dahrendorf, who argued that Weber leaned toward a more nationalistic view compared to Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898), the prime minister of Prussia (Bellamy, 1992, p. 499). Although some researchers have obviously made attempts to attribute this notion to Weber they cannot be argued to have reached a consensus about it (Norkus, 2004, p. 391). However, an established apprehension has been observed regarding Weber being a German nationalist. This does not come from any statement from Weber himself but is rather a construction made through the readings of his works done by the researchers who have given importance to this issue (Palonen, 2001, p. 196). Sociologists, at least those who are considered to have a certain sociological perspective such as the Marxist approach, are understood to tend to implicitly repudiate this and to avoid any inquiry into Weber's sociology pertaining to this issue (Zimmerman, 2006).¹⁴

Some the various aspects of researchers' arguments about Weber being a nationalist should be taken into consideration in this regard. The concept of nation and related notions such as nationality, nationalist, and nationalism more likely became important subjects of discussion not during his own time in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but after his death, the reason being that the concept of

14 See Zimmerman (2006).

nation and its correlation mostly with power had caused imperialism. Nevertheless, Weber's large scope of political thought does lead to a more mature understanding of his conceptualization (Kim, 2002, p. 434).

First off, one should remember that researchers basically refer to Weber's two distinct papers that stand at opposing poles in his academic and intellectual career. The first is his Freiburg lecture originally titled "Nationality in Domestic Economics" in 1895 after becoming a Chair in the department of Economics and Finance (1894); this can be regarded as one of the very first lectures (Weber & Fowkes, p. 1980). The second is his 1918 lecture about politics as a vocation just after the end of World War I (Weber, 2004).¹⁵

As mentioned above, Weber's statement of being an "economic nationalist" in the Freiburg lecture has attracted much attention from scholarly circles. Roth (2006, 1978), Aldenhoff-Hübinger (2004), Palonen (2001), Barbalet (2001), Spencer-Wollmann (2002), Bellamy (1992), and Mommsen (1990) have all referred to this statement and emphasized the phrase of "economic nationalist" to identify him as a German nationalist. Aldenhoff-Hübinger (2004, p. 146) stated Weber's view on nationalism to be subjective and labeled Weber as a Prussian nationalist by referring to the discussion in the Freiburg lecture about the case of the Polish migrant agricultural workers and peasants in Western Prussia. Weber was also opposingly positioned by being labelled a representative of the bourgeois sociologists (compared to the worker/peasant discussion). Barbalet (2001, p. 129; Roth, 1965, p. 126) asserted Weber's 1895 lecture to be "notorious" because it disseminated the idea of "strident nationalism."

Weber was obviously acting there for the purpose of advocating the national interests of Germany, which by then had already become a nation-state (Judson, 2011, p. 499; Barbalet, 2001, pp. 128, 129). While some researchers preferred not to mention his lecture in their analyses of Weberian sociology, others have tried to understand the exact meaning of what Weber was remarking upon in this lecture (Barbalet, 2001, p. 129).

Calling Weber a mere nationalist becomes quite contestable when recalling that he had had a close relationship with the organization *Kathedersozialisten*,¹⁶

15 Norkus asserted that Weber's changing ideas over the course of time (i.e. between the 1890s and the late 1910s) can be described in terms of "narrowing" then "widening" the concept of nationalism (2004, 393). The latter process can be traced through some of the opinions Weber published in *Die Frankfurter Zeitung* during World War I. Furthermore, Weber's changing ideas regarding the notion of nationalism are proved in particular through his personal letters with his family members and close friends (For a few examples, see Mayer, 1956, p. 58).

16 It means "Socialists of the chair" and was an organization founded in 1873 whose doyen was Gustav

which had bolstered the role of the state being given the task of “patronizing social policies” (Kim, 2002, p. 435).

One other issue that needs to be highlighted here is that some researchers such as Aldenhoff-Hübinger (2004, pp. 144–145), Mommsen, 1990, p. 1) had argued Weber as having had strong ties with traditional German idealism. The idea that German idealism had caused differentiation of “reality and values,” something this paper is unable to discuss deeper, is represented in the Weberian perspective in the form of typologies based on abstracted realities in daily life. Similarly, determining Weber’s stance as a patriot by borrowing from the Hegelian concept of patriotism that includes “the customs, morals, and cultural meanings and goods that make up a nation” (Church, 2011; Mommsen, 2006, p. 3) would be more appropriate than calling Weber a nationalist with a connotation of chauvinism. In this regard, Weber having suggested economic policies to give direction to the *Juncker’s* actions might be considered a formula based on ideals (Scaff, 1984, p. 195).

One of the most prominent scholars who had a say regarding Weber’s nationalism project was Wolfgang J. Mommsen. In his famous work, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, he bitterly remarks that Weber was not only a nationalist but that he also regarded the values of the state as being the ultimate. Thus, national interest should reign over any other goals or interests (Mommsen, 1990, p. 38). Some other scholars have criticized Weber on this stance, arguing that he had advocated the values of the bourgeoisie. In fact, Weber had referred to himself as a “bourgeois scholar” (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 443). Moreover, he was a member of a big capitalist family who had significant merchant and industrial ventures both in Europe, the British Isles, and other parts of the globe (Roth, 2002, pp. 64-66).

The Notion and Fundamentals of Nationalism

This study will present an overview so that the changes Weber experienced over his lifetime can be understood through the lens of historical changes from the beginning of his academic career until his death in 1920. Understanding the process of this change helps determine how Weber re-evaluated his social-scientific concepts and accounts pertaining to the notion of nationalism. Two distinct parameters should be said to exist, one being his social scientific stance and the other being the historical changes he witnessed (Palonen, 2001, p. 197; Mayer, 1956, p. 28).

Schmoller, a member of German Historical School and one of the mentors of young Weber (Kim, 2002, p. 436; Mueller & Weber, 1982, p. 152).

As a member of the long tradition of Enlightenment (Mommsen, 2006, p. 3), Weber explained nations in his *Economy and Society* as communities with common traits. In this regard, what makes this concept of nation considerably unique is how it unites a societies that possess certain commonalities. Weber tried to clarify the concept of nationalism in terms of the modern developments that had occurred around this concept by referring to certain idiosyncrasies such as language bonds, shared past, desire for political union, customs, cultural values, and tradition of a large military power. Thus, each single individual regards themselves as a member of a larger social group (Weber, 1978, pp. 396, 398, 924; Renan, 1992, p. 3).¹⁷ Weber also insisted upon creating a bond between state and nation because he understood that the impossibility of establishing a community through brute force when the members of such a community do not adhere to these values (Weber, 2004, p. 33; Renan, 1992, p. 3).

Weber contributed to the ongoing discussions by analyzing certain historical changes and developing the notion of nationalism, because he had witnessed the rise of a nation and nation state in Europe, namely the development and establishment of the nation-state of Germany by its first Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck (1871-1890). His first-hand observations help one grasp this wide-ranging topic more effectively. Another reason why he had gotten interested in the notion of nationalism was due to the growing rivalry among Western colonial powers, Germany included. Additionally, the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71, which had resulted in Prussia unifying and France's defeat, proved the usefulness of a national spirit. Afterward, French influence in the region diminished and Bismarck's Prussia advanced economically. In Max Weber's Freiburg speech, he may possibly have been influenced by these and similar events. Though Weber criticized Bismarck, probably because the latter had been claimed to be responsible for the "political immaturity of most groups in the German social structure" for his role in the post-unified Prussia, the unification was a necessary geopolitical task that needed to be done, and Bismarck received the gratitude of the nation for his role (Mayer, 1988, p. 24; Baehr, 1988, p. 150; Mommsen, 1990, pp. 6, 12).¹⁸

17 As seen over here, religion does not play much role, in particular, after revolutionary upheavals in 1848, national movements became vernacularized in the continental scale. And during this process language replaced religion as importance of national bounds and contributed to the creation of new zones (Anderson, 2006, p. 138).

18 A growing competition was found among the colonial powers, in which Germany had strong intentions to participate. Through this process, national economies emerged as a logical and practical conclusion of the economic spaces established through colonialism. This study believes that the new borders reflecting the "economic interests" (Norkus, 2004, p. 399) were the major reason for Weber's discussion of nationalism.

As has been asserted, Weber's advocative stance toward the policies of Bismarckian government was a result of the specific influence of Heinrich von Treitschke, a contemporary historian. This historian vindicated the "ambitious policy of imperialist expansion overseas" to be the result of the late colonial attempts of the German state (Mommsen, 1990, p. 10; Mayer, 1956, p. 16).

In addition to the above-mentioned argument, Weber also seems to have focused on the issue of nationality in line with certain economic changes that had happened gradually throughout 19th century; methodologically, this subject became disseminated through the scientific works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. As Weber himself emphasized indirectly, the salience of economic development had caused "the creation of an economic community of nations." When Weber discussed the issue of nationalism, his emphasis was on this exact economic community. Although the later had become an issue of international science during the last decades of the 19th century, Weber had developed a distinct perspective, arguing that value judgements should exist that reflect the mark of humanity. This study believes this idea also includes to some extent the concept of Germanness (Weber, & Fowkes, 1980, p. 437). In fact, not disregarding this point is very important for all the discussions various research has highlighted.

The Basic Discussion About the Issue of Nationalism

The relation between Weber and his being nationalist or not has obviously become a matter of inquiry among researchers, particularly among Weberologists. The fundamental point of the discussion involves one of Max Weber's early lectures. In this regard and in order to define Max Weber's nationalism, his *Freiburg Inauguration* lecture in 1895, an academic presentation given on the completion of his doctorate in economics, is important in two contexts. One was that it was apparently the initial stage of his striking views that caused certain controversies about nationalism and its development as a notion. The second context is this lecture was the initiation of his methodological thinking through data comparisons and was based on field work conducted for the purpose of his doctorate between 1871-1885, which focused on differentiating the German and Polish populations and the religious and economic activities in the Western part of Prussia (i.e., East Elbe; Weber & Fowkes, 1980, pp. 429, 430).¹⁹

19 *Die Lage der Landarbeiter in ostelbischen Deutschland*. Weber's fieldwork is understood to have been part of the larger project regarding the problem of farm labor in Germany's various regions, including the Eastern part, also known as Western Prussia, East of the Elbe River (Bendix, 1977, pp. 14-15).

The single most striking fact in terms of Weber's nominalist stance was witnessed during the lecture held in Freiburg when Weber defined himself as an economic nationalist (Palonen, 2001, p. 197). However, his stance was partly contradictory, as he used this concept in both the nationalistic and national senses (Palonen, 2001, p. 198). Moreover, because of the nature of the concept of nationalism and the drastic changes in *realpolitik* he had witnessed during his lifetime, certain controversies that had occurred are encountered in both Weber's accounts and commentaries.²⁰ What he had purposed to say appears to have been to advocate the policies the newly established nation-state of Germany had designed, where Germany should be understood as a neutral political entity. However, his argument that these nation-state policies should not be nationalistic reveals a certain differentiation pertaining to his ideological stance. While analyzing Weber's stance toward and conceptualizations of the socio-political developments, the material conditions that had been caused by Germany's defeat in WWI should no doubt be judged accordingly.²¹

Although there are some claims about Weber's being nationalist, it seems Weber introduced some distinct concepts such as nation and nation-state which should not be entangled. Recognizing the importance of nation-states as the reality of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Weber did refer to the economy-political reality of the German state. This approach cannot be used as a vehicle to label him a nationalist just by highlighting a few sentences from his lecture. A sort of systematic opposition to Weber having nationalist tendencies can be argued to have occurred. Weber's point here of economically defending German interests has caused some researchers to criticize him as having had become a German nationalist. When deducing from his words "the role played by racial differences" in the very opening sentences of his lecture, Weber's stance against the Polish labor appears to have no direct relations with racial interests. Instead, according to this study's interpretation, his argument is based on the Freiburg lecture and *Economy and Politics* and is related to making economic and political differentiations between Polish and German peasants, differentiations that include memories, statehood, and language, as well as racial characteristics (Weber & Fowkes, 2007, pp. 428, 434; Weber, 1978, p. 398; Norkus,

20 For detailed discussions, see Palonen 2001. Weber had witnessed the end of the German Empire and was closely involved in finding some solutions to the political turmoil in the post-war process (Hopkins, 2007, p. 187).

21 Treitschke asserted the newly founded nation-state to be about "reestablish[ing] the state upon an entirely new foundation [*sic*] as a unified power... resum[ing] her place in the ranks of the nations." (1915, p. 3). Weber analytically observed developments just after WWI, in particular regarding "the handing over of war criminals" that the Allies had written in the Treaty of Versailles as an "unacceptable humiliation" (Schröder & Whimster, 2013, pp. 22–23). One may assert that this issue, similar to that in the Soviet-republic in Bavaria just after the war, had caused Weber to have certain reactions and to express his national sensitivity against the external powers.

2004, p. 398). In this context, racial as a word refers to a certain nationality. Again, Weber's clarifications in the following pages of the lecture can be traced as follow: "The economic policy of a German state [*sic*] can be nothing other than a German policy and a German standard" (Weber & Fowkes, 2007, p. 437).²²

The second aspect to take into account is the socio-political landscape related to the various socio-political realities caused by developments before, during, and after WWI. These processes are considerably related to the sovereignty of the German state in international politics and power relations. As is understood, both phenomena are related to economic policies, despite the distinct conditions. Weber's interest in these developments and advocacy of a certain approach led him to be called an economic nationalist and cosmopolitan nationalist (Roth, 2006, pp. 184, 185).

Yet considering these drawbacks Weber's contemporary social scientists encountered when structuring nationalism into a framework, Weber encountered the same challenge for two reasons: a) The scarcity of knowledge regarding nationalism during Weber's time had resulted in an inefficient understanding of Weber's own society, and b) Assertion on nationalism from Weber's writings is limitedly juxtaposed from his Freiburg speech.²³ Nonetheless, keeping this limitation in mind, one could attempt to put Weber's theory of nationalism into a framework.

The Freiburg lecture is the only speech where Weber associated himself with a nationalist view (Palonen, 2001, p. 198). Weber even modified the original speech

22 One can assume this discussion to have also included the notion of "great culture," which Weber had emphasized strongly to pertain to the national characteristics of German people (Mayer, 1956, p. 57). Weber referred to "cultural achievements or cultural contributions" and necessitated them as supportive forces to establishing political and economic power (Norkus, 2004, p. 397). Weber also gave prominence to the "cultural degeneration" of the German people in Eastern Prussia (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 61).

23 Although the text of this lecture gives some understanding of Weber's affiliation to nationality, his biographies also tell something at least about the clues that might be considered the root of the national feeling that had taken hold in young Weber. For instance, during his university education in the Law Faculty at Heidelberg, he had acquired a large scope of knowledge from the fields of not only law but also national economic history and philosophy. In addition, the young Weber is believed to have memorized patriotic songs as a school practice, echoing the presence of strong German nationalism during tertiary education in Berlin. As continuity of this philosophical-historical creation of weltanschauung in young Weber, in 1883 at the age of 19, he conducted his military service in Strassburg. Later on, he attended military exercises for shorter stretches in 1885, 1887, and 1888 (Mayer, 1988, p. 23; Mommsen, 1990, 4; Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 7; Bendix, 1977, p. 1; Kaelber, 2003, p. 30). He quite interestingly was observed to have attended military maneuvers along the Slavonic border in the southern region of Prussia in 1888. He had encountered not only the militaristic reality of the day, but more than this, he was influenced by the separation of cultural zones in the Germanic and Slavic nations. As such, Weber developed the same national interest-based approach pertaining to the economic production and values of Eastern Germany in the Freiburg lecture by referring to the "Slav Hungary colonies" (Weber & Fowkes, 2007, p. 435). Thus, the changing situation in the agricultural production system in Eastern Prussia would cause not only a type of economic danger to the state but also to the culture of the German nation as well (Zimmerman, 2006, p. 62).

himself in its published version. The title of the work was replaced with a new one, and he made some additions over the course of time. The original title was “Nationality in Domestic Economies” and the latter title was “The Nation State and Economic Policy.” The modification was necessary because he had left out the methodology section in the original speech, a section he included in the published form where he discusses three main topics (Bellamy, 1992, p. 500; Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, pp. 144–145).

In 1918, Weber wrote a newspaper article showcasing his surprising anti-nationalist views. This could have been a result of WWI, where he had witnessed the trauma of nationalism. His transition from economic nationalism has caused Weberian scholars to question its significance. For instance, Palonen explained it through two aspects, first as an economic system that protects the rights of German people and then as one that accomplishes this though political means. Weber moves forward by proposing that, in order to attain the end result of economic nationalism, the interests of a few German landowners who hire cheap Polish labor must be overcome. So, what made Weber change his view from being nationalist to anti-nationalist? One should note not everyone had agreed with this transition, though. For example, Mommsen, could find no clue as to what had been able to reduce his view to anti-nationalism after reading Weber’s post-war writings. Yet, Palonen argued that a different conclusion can be reached by scrutinizing Weber’s different vocabularies. One such method is the method of redescribing rhetoric. Weber’s goal can be understood by going through the expressions that are analogous to nationalism. After all, Max Weber was one who wrote ambiguously. One of the words he used was chauvinism. While reading Weber, one can easily be misguided to conclude that he had not been opposed to nationalism in his post-war writings. However, his mentions of the many extreme consequences of chauvinism can safely be said to show that he had not been proposing but rather opposing all nationalist views in national policies (Palonen, 2001, p. 202).

Weber as an Advocate of the German Nation

From a general perspective, Weber was observed to have developed an interest in the concept of nationalism during two distinct spheres in his lifetime. In another sense, these epochs can be separated in relation to his illness: pre-illness between 1897 and 1902 and post-illness.²⁴ How and to what scale his illness impacted his

24 He was just recovering from his illness in 1903. Before 1903, Weber’s works were mostly about legal and economic issues (Barbalet, 2001, p. 127). This 10-year period is known as the Lost Decade and had resulted in a hiatus of scholarship in Weber’s life. However, the pre-illness period included the publication of a book developed from his dissertation titled “The History of Commercial Partnership in the Middle Ages” (Kaelber, 2003, pp. 27–28).

sociological thought is yet to be scrutinized alongside the changing nature of the political conditions in Germany starting in 1871 up to the first part of the 20th century (Mommsen, 1990, p. 5; Bellamy, 1992, p. 499).

The material in the Freiburg lecture appears to have been compiled from his field works where at the start of the 1890s he had applied a questionnaire study regarding the conditions of rural laborers as a part of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* [Association for Social Policy] and dealt with the social problems of the time in Imperial Germany (Roth, 1978, p. xlvii; Barbalet, 2001, p. 128).²⁵ Through this questionnaire study, Weber had reached the conclusion that, unless certain policies were not implemented, the changes happening in rural societies would cause a disastrous result similar to what had happened to the Roman Empire (Roth, 1978, p. xlviii). What makes his 1895 lecture quite interesting is that he shared the general sociological opinions of the nation based on some empirical data from the Western part of Prussia (i.e., East of the River Elbe); this was no doubt closely connected to Germany's sociopolitical status at the time.²⁶

Upon taking a closer look at the notions of nation and nationalism, two distinct phenomena appear. The first is related to the advocacy of German peasants in the agricultural economy as embodied in his inaugural 1895 lecture. His argument covers class establishment through the intentional and unintentional approaches of the *Junkers*²⁷ who wished to recruit cheap labor from the Polish migrants and peasants. He seems to have positioned himself against this not only because this potentially novel class structure would cause a deficit in the economic policies of the state but

25 Weber was affiliated as a member in this institution in 1888 (Roth, 1993, p. 151). These research processes marked the importance of sociological methodologies Weber held back from commencing his early studies in economics. He propounded on Agrarian economy in East Elbe in his 1895 lecture. The Protestant Ethic thesis was published first in the form of articles focused on economic activities and the values of the social groups such as German-Polish peasants and Protestants and Catholics (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, pp. 429, 430; Scaff, 1984, p. 193; Barbalet, 2001, pp. 127–128).

26 Germany faced an agricultural problem in the last decades of the 19th century. Although the government had approved a free-trade policy, the global situation had stopped favoring German producers. This global change also caused certain unexpected developments in the form of the migration of foreign labor, which disproportionately decreased the populations of German peasants in certain areas (Bendix, 1977, p. 13). This was the reality Weber was focusing on in his first PhD dissertation and highlighted later on during his 1895 lecture.

27 The petty land owners who encountered some difficulties owing to the Bismarck's anti-economic liberalism and policies of protective tariffs (Mayer, 1988, p. 19; Roth, 1993, p. 151). Thus, those who had manors were looking for cheap labor from the Polish and peasants owing to certain geographical and agricultural degradations that reinforced the migration of German peasants in Western Prussia. Weber in his lecture asserted the problematic situation of the German middle class (*Junkers*) in Western Prussia would cause dissatisfaction with national interests (Barbalet, 2003, p. 129). However, Weber in another article had a similar but deeper discussion, arguing that estate owners lacked capital, and peasant-farmers held smaller parcels of land that did not facilitate machinery (Weber, 2006, p. 210).

also because of other reasons such as migration, a decline in the German population, and the potential of losing their *Vaterland* [fatherland] to foreigners (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 433; Barbalet, 2001, p.131).²⁸ This study can assert that Weber had become implicitly detached from two distinct problems. One was the economic attitude of the *Junkers*, and the other was the potential threat of Polish migrant groups' involvement in revolutionary types of movements in German lands. The latter is assumed to have caused anti-Polish prejudices to reignite (Roth, 1993, p. 149).

During this time, the people witnessed the German state's active foreign policy after consolidating its political power by unifying in 1871, leading to the first modern nation-state of Germany under the reign of Otto van Bismarck (Judson, 2011, p. 499). Meanwhile, Weber's intellectual activities before, during, and just after WWI should also be considered as a new phase contributing to the concept nationalism. Beyond all these aspects was the reality of ideological clashes in Europe at the time (i.e., communism and nationalism). While the former was developed as the venture of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who had proposed communism as the salvation for all labor classes throughout Europe (Llobera, 1998, p. 13), nationalism became the antithesis to communism and attained a significant place in state policies throughout Europe, including in Germany.

Because the competition among the industrialized states to gain sovereignty of new colonial territories for the purpose of acquiring certain raw materials to expand production and markets for selling the outputs, Germany became increasingly involved with the colonialization process in the 1890s. Weber also vindicated liberal imperialism, which supported his country's colonial engagement. As a continuity in this regard, Weber proposed a new political party to establish bourgeois freedom in 1905. Weber's advocacy of liberal values is related to his general sociological view of modernity, which he defined as an "iron cage"²⁹ owing to the increasing level of rationalization and bureaucratization (Bellamy, 1992, p. 499).³⁰

28 An almost similar development occurred some years after this lecture (1903) with the preparation of a bill that Weber argued would create just a handful of rich possessing "accumulated land and capital," engender German peasants being driven out, and invite in the Slavs (Barbalet, 2001, p. 139).

29 "Puritanism played a part in creating the 'iron cage' in which modern man must exist" (Parsons, 1992, p. xviii).

30 Weber's political stance in 1887 while young was to critically approach the Progressives' opposition to the very modest colonial policy of the 1880s (Mommsen, 1990, p. 13). Almost a decade later, a salient discussion on building a large fleet for this particular colonial engagement had occurred (Roth, 1993, p. 151).

Conclusion

The novelty this article brings is an overview to the concept of nationalism and puts this forth in line with certain socio-political changes during Weber's lifetime in particular that occurred in the "forms of agricultural enterprise and the tremendous crisis in agriculture," as Weber himself had mentioned since the beginning of his sociological thought until his death in 1920 (Weber & Fowkes, 1980, p. 434). Weber's idea of nationalism came up in his 1895 Freiburg lecture as a professor of economics, which was an academic presentation given after he completed his doctorate in economics at the University of Freiburg (1894); he later on developed this concept on his own (Gerth, & Mills, 1946, p. 11; Mayer, 1988, p. 38). Although this lecture is not often circulated among social scientists, some scholars have referenced it to deduce Weber's ideological stance.

In this regard, the Freiburg lecture may no doubt be asserted as a milestone in Weber's academic career. Throughout his doctoral studies and after acquiring his doctorate in Economics, he raised significant interest in economics and dealt with this concept when engaging the structure of agrarian societies, commencing from agrarian economy in Roman times to contemporary situations such as Western Prussia. Through his field works in this region between 1892-1893, he completed his second doctorate and gained the title of Chair of Economics. Because his lecture was a requirement for academic tradition, he appears to have been expected to prove himself with a novel argument.

Though Weber's position on nationalism may sound puzzling to many, he was one of the first to propose it as a concept. For Weber, this concept was something too obscure, a power whose conceptual clarity could not be easily gained. Starting from 1895 until WWI, Weber had espoused variegated forms of nationalism. However, this can be justified once again by saying that his views were subject to change based on political situations (Aldenhoff-Hübinger, 2004, pp. 146-147). From 1895 onward, he was a supporter of nationalism and a nationalist himself; after WWI, he propagated to a non-nationalist image of Germany. During Weber's later years, drastic political changes had occurred, and these changing circumstances entailed revisions in his thought (Bellamy, 1992, p. 499). In this context, one may argue that his presence first during and after the War in Vienna and then later on in Munich had contributed much to his developments regarding the new ideas of nation and nationalism (Sell, 2017, p. 317), mostly as a result of crucial changes such as the defeat of the Germans in the War. However, his long period of mental illness had likely hindered him and not allowed him to be able to engage in the political developments either in Germany or in Western Europe compared to the 1890s.

Weber was unable to posit himself in one particular stance in his argument on nationalism. Due to volatile sociopolitical conditions, Weber instead took distinct stances at various times of his life. As this paper has brought briefly to the fore briefly, Weber's views are understood to have not been completely detached from his surroundings in spite of his many conflicting views on nationalism. As a social scientist, his main concern was society and its changing nature through the eyes of economics due to his preoccupations as an economist.

All of Weber's efforts at comprehending the social phenomenon of nationalism have been revived in recent decades due to political changes and the growing notion of nationalism in contemporary societies. While interest in Weber's works was triggered by introducing them to the Anglo-Saxon world, distinct evaluations have emerged, particularly regarding his notion of nationalism. Although some researchers seem to have developed a sort of bias against Weber's stance and others have been prone to label him as a nationalist by simply assessing his statements in the 1895 Freiburg Lecture, importance is had in taking the drastic changing processes of Weber's course over time into consideration.

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